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SELECTED WORKS FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO BY CHEN YI:
WESTERN INFLUENCES ON
THE DEVELOPMENT OF HER COMPOSITIONAL STYLE

by

Xiang He

A Doctoral Document

Presented to the Faculty of
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SELECTED WORKS FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO BY CHEN YI:
WESTERN INFLUENCES ON
THE DEVELOPMENT OF HER COMPOSITIONAL STYLE

Xiang He, D.M.A.

University of Nebraska, 2010

Adviser: David C. Neely

This document is a study of the violin and piano pieces, *Fisherman's Song* (1979) and *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in* (1998), by the leading Chinese-born American composer, Chen Yi (b.1953). The two pieces are representative works of Chen Yi's Chinese (college) period and American period respectively. Through detailed analysis, comparisons, and consultation with Dr. Chen Yi, the document attempts to reveal Chen Yi's stylistic changes caused by the Western influences.

Chapter One provides a brief summary of the changes of compositional style throughout five generations of Chinese composers (from 1920s to present), which resulted from Western influences. Chapter Two examines the historical backgrounds of and analyzes two *Fisherman's Songs*: one by Chen Yi, a fifth-generation composer, and one by Li Zili, a fourth-generation composer. The stylistic similarities resulted from their Chinese roots, and differences caused by different levels of Western influences are discovered. Chapter Three investigates Chen Yi's professional experience and stylistic change after college as the historical background of composing *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in*, and then analyzes the work. Through the comparison to *Fisherman's Song*, the changes of compositional approach in *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in* resulted from her

experiences in the United States are discussed, and their significant meaning to the Chinese-Western “fusion” is explained. The conclusion summarizes the changing course of Chen Yi’s compositional style caused by the ever-growing force of Western influences in her life, and evaluates the significance of her approach of the Chinese-Western fusion with respect to a new era of it and an enrichment of the world’s inter-cultural music.

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CHAPTER ONE: A Brief Summary of the Development of Contemporary Music Composition in China Since the 1920s

In order to understand Chen Yi's compositional style, a look at a brief history of Chinese musical composition is necessary. The term "Chinese music" that I will be discussing in this chapter, refers only to the Chinese counterpart of Western Classical Music, excluding Chinese folk music, pop music and traditional music. The development of "Chinese music" is based on two incidents: first, Western classical music was introduced in China only about twenty years before the People's Republic of China was formally established;¹ second, after the classical and romantic periods, music in the Western world was entering a new era – twentieth-century music. The old concepts of classical music were being challenged from every aspect by different schools of composition with modernized music language.

The start of this Chinese counterpart of Western classical music emerged gradually. Up to the present, the course of development of Chinese music spans a period of about eighty years, but during the first one fourth of this course, before New China's creation, there were only minimal evolutionary steps.² Music was one of the greatest weaknesses of the early traditional Chinese culture, whereas Chinese art, literature and philosophy all maintained a high level of recognition in Western culture in early twentieth century.³ With a distinct aesthetic of Chinese culture, Chinese music evolved in a different way

¹ Han Shan, "Leave Behind the Truth in the Sound," (in Chinese) *Beijing Daily*, 31 August 2009, 14.

² Wu Huiming, "The Inheritance and Development of Traditional Music Legacy in Modern China Music Compositions," (in Chinese) *Theory and Criticism of Literature and Art* 05 (2009): 127-128.

³ Ming Yan, "An Overview to the Achievements and Limitations of New Music of China in the 20th Century," (in Chinese) *Tianlai-Journal of Tianjin Conservatory of Music* 01 (2007): 24-27.

from Western classical music during the hundreds of years when the Western people experienced music developing from Gregorian chant to Beethoven's symphonies.

Chinese music was developed by musicians and theorists who understood music as a self-entertaining facility. Since the composer would be both the performer and the audience, there was no need for a systematic compositional approach, in which the Western formal design or motivic development would have been taken into consideration. So, the composition was spontaneous.⁴ Several results followed: First, Chinese music had few works for a group of performers. Even in an ensemble work, the composition required performers to take turns as solo parts, which left no room for homophony to develop, and resulted in a one-dimensional melody rather than a three-dimensional sound structure. To rise or fall, to be full or hollow, to accelerate or slow down, to be fluent or to pause – all these elements of linear sound were a composer's central concern. Second, Chinese music aimed at directly expressing the mind using the fewest possible compositional devices. The ideal compositional outcome was simple but vivid – the simpler and the more vivid, the better. It is said that the Chinese musical aesthetics was based on inner logic to develop the inner characteristic (the conceptual meaning) rather than the appearance (visible compositional device).⁵ Under the inner logic, the meaning and function of music developed tremendously⁶ while the surface remained unchanged –

⁴ Liu Chenghua, "The Phenomenal Difference and Cultural Meaning of Western and Chinese Music," (in Chinese) *Huangzhong-Journal of Wuhan Conservatory of Music* 03 (1997): 3-7.

⁵ Liu Chenghua, "The Logic Form of Chinese Musical Aesthetics," (in Chinese) *Chinese Music* 03 (2007): 35-41.

⁶ For example, on the function of music, *Bai Hu Tong* by Ban Gu (27-92) stated a pure Confucian viewpoint of denying self and observing the proprieties: "Ch'in means restraint. It is for restraining the evil thoughts so that the noble could be confined to good deeds." *Qin Cao* by Ji Kang (224-263) stated a combined viewpoint of Confucian and Taoism – music is for both restraining and

almost no development in the composition, especially in comparison with the hundreds of years of Western development. This lack of change affected every other aspect of music, such as music theory and performance.

In the 1920s, the most important existing musical sources in China included Chinese folk songs and operas. Chinese folk songs, in general, had “a four-phrase structure that consisted of an introduction, an amplification, and a conclusion...Another important characteristic of the folk songs is that the music of a particular region was governed strictly by the tonal inflexions of the words...The melody remains heavily influenced by the intonation characteristic of the dialect unique to a particular region.”⁷

Example 1-1: *Jasmine*, a Jiangsu Folk Song (mm. 8-21)

好 一 朵 茉 莉 花， 好 一 朵 茉 莉 花，
 满 园 花 草 香 也 香 不 过 它， 我 有 心
 采 一 朵 戴， 看 花 的 人 儿 要 将 我 骂。

Chinese operas synthesized the stage arts of music, dance, mime, acrobatics, and drama. Chinese operas traditionally had no attributable composer and were closely associated with specific geographical areas in their use of dialects and regional musical styles. Musical materials were drawn from the folk melodies that had been handed down

entertainment: “The most suitable tool to guide and restore strength, let-out the emotion and ambition, stay away from depression when poor and isolated is music.” *Qin Fu* by Li Zhi (1527-1602) spoke for the first time of self-expression: “Ch’in is for singing out one’s mind.”

⁷ Chen Xiang Hallis, “Chinese Art Song from 1912 to 1949,” (D.M.A. Treatise, The University of Texas at Austin, 1995), 20-25.

for many generations. *Kunqu* Opera, for example, was an important component of the more than four hundred types of local operas in China. A *Kunqu* Opera contained a three-part structure: a vocal prelude, a song cycle, and a vocal postlude, which is sometimes followed by a finale. The prelude and postlude were in a free meter. The song cycle generally began in a slow tempo, and gradually reached a fast tempo in a diminutive meter through a progression that change from 4/4 to 2/4, then to 1/4 meter. The grouping of strong and weak beats of the meters did not follow the regular grouping evident in the Western music; the Chinese rhythmic structure was much more flexible. For example, in traditional Chinese operas, there were many different grouping of four beats: with one strong beat (Chinese meter name: *yi-ban-san-yan*), two strong beats (*yi-ban-yi-yan*), four strong beats (*liu-shui*), or no strong beat (*yao-ban*). The meter name implied the tempo, and thus there was no specific terminology for tempo indications. Generally, the more frequently the strong beat appeared, the faster the tempo became.

Southern style was one of the melodic styles of *Kunqu* Opera. It was commonly characterized by the following traits: prolonged pitch duration, melismatic phraseology, repeated pitches, accented grace notes, and rhythmic beat punctuation as dictated by the poetic textual phrases.⁸

Example 1-2: Southern Style Motivic Refrains



⁸ Chen Xiang Hallis, 27-28.

In the 1920s, the primary concepts of Western classical music, from form to harmony, had no counterpart in traditional Chinese music because, in the early twentieth century, Western classical music was totally unknown to Chinese musicians. The Chinese musicians had barely caught up with Western classical concepts when their Western counterparts decided they had had enough of them and needed to oppose those long-standing fundamentals. All kinds of dazzling new concepts of twentieth-century music rose up in the West to challenge those of classical music. Chinese musicians were thus exposed to both classical and twentieth-century music at almost the same time. Their acceptance of both these Western styles was slow and difficult.

The first-generation Chinese composers who were active in the 1920s and early 1930s included Xiao Youmei, Huang Zi, Zhao Yuanren, and Li Shutong. They studied mainly in Germany, Japan or the United States and majored in mathematics, psychology, art or music. The first-generation composers produced only simple, short pieces with themes from Chinese literature and embraced a combination of Chinese and Romantic style.⁹ Art songs were an important component of their works. The art songs, as a Western genre, in themselves represented the influence that the first-generation composers experienced from the Western music tradition. At the same time, these art songs were enriched by several Chinese musical sources including Chinese folk songs and operas. The art songs are still a substantial part of the repertoire taught and performed frequently throughout the conservatories in China.

⁹ Gao Tiankang, ed., *Dictionary of Music*, (in Chinese) (Lanzhou: Gansu People Press, 2003), 363 and Wang Guangxi and Zhou Guanwu, ed., *Chinese Modern Arts Dictionary*, (in Chinese) (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Ancient Books Press, 1998), 925.

Xiao Youmei was one of the earliest composers to have studied Western compositional techniques, and blended these elements into the traditional style of Chinese music. He composed over one hundred songs. His patriotic song, *Question*, 1922, illustrated the tendencies of German lieder.¹⁰

Example 1-3: *Question* by Xiao Youmei (mm.1-11)

J=60 悠快地
 p
 1. 你 知 道 你 是 谁? 你 知 道 半 年 如
 2. 你 知 道 你 是 谁? 你 知 道 人 生 如
 水? 你 知 道 秋 声 添 得 几 分 憔
 悴? 你 知 道 秋 花 开 出 为 何 沉
 悴! 垂 垂! 垂 垂! 垂 垂! 你 知 道 今 日 的 江 山
 醉? 吹 吹! 吹 吹! 吹 吹! 你 知 道 尘 世 的 波 澜

The second-generation Chinese composers were active in the late 1930s and 1940s. They learned the Western harmony and orchestration systematically, and as a result, these second-generation musicians composed music with more complexity. During this period, two distinct kinds of Chinese composers were simultaneously developing Chinese musical composition.

The first kind was musicians in Beijing and Shanghai with overseas travelling or study experience, who were modeling most of their works after the Western classical and romantic style. The representatives included He Lüding, Ma Sicong, Jiang Wenye, and Liu Xue'an. Their complex works demonstrate the high standard of the composers'

¹⁰ Chen Xiang Hallis, 50.

compositional technique. However, these composers had a minimal audience following.¹¹

An example of this first kind of composer was Jiang Wenye, who was influenced by Western compositional techniques when he was studying vocal music in the Ueno Music Institute in Japan from 1929. He composed in many genres, including piano music, vocal music, choral music, orchestral music, chamber music, concertos and operas. His *Piano Sonata Number Three* was written in March 1945, which was patterned on the traditional *Pipa* composition, *A Moonlit Night on the Xunyang River*. Jiang Wenye used the piano to imitate the “rolling” and “sweeping” techniques of the *Pipa* player.¹²

Example 1-4: *Piano Sonata Number Three* by Jiang Wenye (mm.1-23)



¹¹ *Dictionary of Music*, 372-377 and Beijing Language and Culture University *Chinese Artists Dictionary* editorial committee, *Chinese Artists Dictionary* vol. IV (in Chinese) (Changshang: Hunan People press, 1984), 314-316.

¹² Liu Shao-Shan, “Chiang Wen-Yeh: An Overview with An In-Depth Analysis of His Masterwork Folk festival Poem,” (DMA diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 1998), 38.



The second kind of the Chinese second-generation composers typically was living in smaller cities and highly populated rural areas. This second group, significantly, also had experienced warfare, which was reflected in their Chinese operas and instrumental music compositions with revolutionary themes. These compositions usually were not written by a single composer, but by the team of several composers, similar to what happened in the Soviet Union. Because these works were in the Chinese style, they were easily understood and appreciated by the majority; they were considered inspiring in the difficult war times, and as a result, they experienced extremely high popularity.¹³ Xian Xinghai was one of the representatives. His *Yellow River Cantata* is one of the major compositions in Chinese musical history. Inspired by the Movement of Resistance against Japan and Save the Nation from Extinction, Xian Xinghai finished the forty-minute-long cantata with eight movements in only six days in March of 1939. The composition was revised collectively in the Soviet Union in 1941.

¹³ *Dictionary of Music*, 370-372.

Example 1-5: *Yellow River Cantata* by Xian Xinghai (mm. 61-64)

The musical score for Example 1-5, 'Yellow River Cantata' by Xian Xinghai, measures 61-64. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a vocal line with lyrics in Chinese, a piano accompaniment, and a string section. The tempo is marked 'Andantino' and the dynamics are 'mp' (mezzo-piano). The score includes markings for 'rit.' (ritardando) at the end of the piece.

Lyrics: 我们看见了河岸 我们登上了河岸 心哪安—安 气哪喘—喘

After the establishment of the Republic in 1949, the new ideology associated with Chinese socialism overwhelmed every field of the humanities. In music, the rapid development of military symphonic bands led to the increasing composition of symphonic band works in Beijing and Shanghai. The compositional method was inherited from the smaller city tradition that was teamwork writing. The music expressed not delicate personal feelings but popular themes of the new social and political atmosphere. The majority of composers, including some trained exclusively in the West, denied their personal interests to accommodate the demanding quantity of symphonic band works.¹⁴

Some important composers, who were among the minority, began experimenting with the initial fusion of multiple-dimension Western music language and the linear Chinese music, even though they had only minimal influences from popular band

¹⁴ Han Shan, "Leave Behind the Truth in the Sound," (in Chinese) *Beijing Daily*, 31 August 2009, 14.

music.¹⁵ This minority of composers of the 1950s constituted the third-generation of composers who contributed to the development of composition in China. The representatives included He Zhanhao, Chen Gang, Ding Shande, Luo Zhongrong, and Zhu Jian'er.

To summarize, though classical music in China received little attention during the early twentieth century, there were a few important (although not famous at the time) composers and well-versed professors in conservatories, who were making great strides in the popularization of classical music. These people laid the groundwork for the development of classical music in China. As a result, the first seventeen years after the founding of New China saw few successful compositions.

The violin concerto *Butterfly Lovers* (1958) by He Zhanhao and Chen Gang is a rare exception.¹⁶ Composed for a Western solo instrument and a symphonic orchestra, it was written in sonata form and based on Chinese *Yue* Opera musical elements. *Butterfly Lovers* presented the most significant step in adapting the language and instrumental sound of the Western music into the Chinese music of that time. The use of melodies extracted from the famous traditional *Yue* Opera of the same name enabled the concerto to be familiar to its Chinese audience and made it very well accepted. In fact, there is hardly anyone in China not aware of the work.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Dictionary of Music*, 375 & 388 and *Chinese Artists Dictionary*, 314-316.

¹⁶ Ming, 31.

¹⁷ Zheng Jing, "The Acceptance and Influences of the Violin Concerto *Butterfly Lovers* in China and Overseas," (in Chinese) *Forum of Arts* 10 (2008): 58.

Example 1-6: *Butterfly Lovers* by He Zhanhao and Chen Gang (mm. 38-41)

The musical score for Example 1-6, *Butterfly Lovers* by He Zhanhao and Chen Gang, covers measures 38 to 41. The tempo is marked "A tempo". The score is arranged for a full orchestra and includes the following parts:

- Fl. (Flute):** Starts at measure 38 with a dynamic of *p*, then *mf* at measure 40.
- Ob. (Oboe):** Starts at measure 38 with a dynamic of *p*, then *mf* at measure 40.
- Cl. (Clarinet):** Starts at measure 38 with a dynamic of *p*, then *mf* at measure 40.
- Fag. (Bassoon):** Starts at measure 38 with a dynamic of *p*, then *mf* at measure 40.
- Cor. (Cor Anglais):** Starts at measure 38 with a dynamic of *mp*.
- Timp. (Timpani):** Starts at measure 38 with a dynamic of *mp*.
- Arpa (Harp):** Features chords *Do^b Fa^b* and *gliss.* (glissando) at measures 38 and 40.
- V-no solo (Violino solo):** Starts at measure 38 with a dynamic of *f*.
- V-ni II (Violini II):** Starts at measure 38 with a dynamic of *p*, then *mf* at measure 40, marked *arco*.
- V-le (Violini I):** Starts at measure 38 with a dynamic of *p*, then *mf* at measure 40, marked *arco*.
- V-c. (Violoncello):** Starts at measure 38 with a dynamic of *p*, then *mf* at measure 40, marked *arco*.
- C.-b. (Contrabasso):** Starts at measure 38 with a dynamic of *p*, then *mf* at measure 40, marked *arco*.

During the ten years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Western music was forbidden in China, both in terms of performing and listening. A strict political system of censorship was established for music composition. To pass the censorship, the newly composed music was usually songs, and the lyrics of the songs were direct quotation from political reports. Only during the latter half of this period did instrumental works

emerge. But no new musical elements were introduced. The instrumental music was merely an adaption of political songs. Nevertheless, compositions of this period formed a major portion of today's standard instrumental repertoire in China.¹⁸ The *Fisherman's Song* by Li Zili, which will be discussed in the next chapter, is one example.

The 1979 Economic Reform in China opened the gate of communication to the world, which changed every aspect of people's lives and the entire society. In the 1980s and 1990s, the primary issue facing the musicians of China was dealing with the onslaught of Western classical music after decades of ignoring it. Personal expression in music was possible again, after being blunted for years by popular propagandistic music. Scores of Beethoven, Bach and Brahms were imported and reprinted, and world-class symphony orchestras were invited on tours around the country to give concerts and master classes. This new exposure to the authentic Western classical music had a profound effect – almost everyone, including professional musicians, found themselves confused by this strange but fresh style of music. Chinese people were engaged in questioning Western music. What is this music about? How does it work? Who wrote it? Meanwhile, since the gate was open, Chinese composers were no longer isolated. The world began to pay attention to them, with curiosity about the Chinese musical language as well as the impact on contemporary compositions from the Cultural Revolution.

The expectations were particularly high for the fourth-generation composers. This group included Wang Xilin, Jin Xiang, Wu Zuqiang, Li Zili, Gao Weijie, Yang Liqing, and Li Xi'an. The majority of them graduated from music conservatories in China during

¹⁸ Ming, 30-31.

the early 1960s. After graduation, a few of the fourth-generation composers furthered their studies in conservatories of the Soviet Union, where the music education was conservative in comparison to the Western world at that time. They became professional musicians, famous composers, or conservatory professors before the Cultural Revolution and wrote large quantities of music in all genres including symphonies, operas, cantatas, and concertos. At the peak of their careers, they experienced the Cultural Revolution as target groups, some even victims.¹⁹ Their music about the Cultural Revolution naturally carries an unusual authority.

It was the fifth-generation composers who accomplished what the fourth-generation set out to do. The representatives included Tan Dun, Chen Yi, Guo Jingwen, Chen Qigang, Ye Xiaogang, Qu Xiaosong, He Xuntian, and Xu Shuya. The most significant difference between the fourth- and fifth-generation composers was the modernized musical training of the fifth generation, along with their new sense of individualism inherited from the exposure to Western musical thoughts as well as the new Chinese social ideological environment. As the later generation, they all started professional musical training after the Economic Reform and musically grew up in the time when individuality could be enacted for the first time in the newly created People's Republic of China. Some went to big conservatories in China, the others studied in the United States or France.²⁰ At this time, the two big conservatories in Beijing and Shanghai welcomed musicians from all over the world coming in as visiting scholars. Students there had the

¹⁹ *Dictionary of Music*, 388 & 390 and Liu Bo, ed., *Dictionary of Chinese Contemporary Culture and Art Celebrities*, (in Chinese) (Beijing: International Culture Press Company, 1993), 11-12 & 72.

²⁰ *Dictionary of Music*, 411-413, and *Dictionary of Chinese Contemporary Culture and Art Celebrities*, 59.

opportunity of constant exposure to Western music, especially the contemporary avant-garde music, and musical thoughts. During the conservatory training with mixed influences, they developed their individualities and opened to radical Western musical trends. Their music became quite different from the fourth generation's. On one hand, with respect to the technical aspect, the fifth-generation composers started experimenting with the new twentieth-century sound, Western compositional techniques, and concepts that were favored by the Western avant-garde composers; on the other hand, with respect to compositional content, they explored the native cultural influence from their personal experience and wrote about China's traditional cultural aesthetics. For example, these composers incorporated Western formal design and twelve-tone technique with stories from Chinese literature, folk song traditions symbolized by unique melodies and rhythmic patterns, and the stylistic sound of Chinese instrument by including Chinese instruments in their compositions.²¹ With a Western approach and Chinese content, their works were well accepted by the West; the new Chinese flavor attracted attention while the standard compositional approach added familiarity. These compositions were also well accepted by the composers' own country – in China, people listened for the embedded familiar melodies and cultural symbols while enjoying the new musical elements surrounding them.

Although over-shadowed by the fifth generation, the fourth-generation composers were still the most authentic speakers for the musicians' impact from the Chinese Cultural Revolution, since they were the target groups and victims of the Cultural

²¹ Bi Minghui, "The Chinese Style, an Option in Dilemma: The Visage of the New Chinese Music Going to the West," (in Chinese) *People's Music* 10 (2007): 17-19.

Revolution. While the fifth-generation composers fused Western technique with traditional Chinese culture and gained international recognition, the fourth-generation composers used their works as vehicles for the expression of their personal thoughts and feelings throughout the Cultural Revolution; these compositions reflect their political and historical criticisms, or even accusations. International recognition was their least concern. To facilitate their expression, the majority of the fourth-generation composers relearned compositional techniques, especially modern techniques, in the 1990s, and some even finished PhD degrees in composition in Western countries. Most of them are now teaching in leading conservatories in China.²²

²² Liu Chunrong, "Li Zili and his music", (in Chinese) *Journal of Xinghai Conservatory of Music* 02 (2004): 46-47; Rui Xiao, "Interviewing Director of Shanghai Music Conservatory Yang Liqing," (in Chinese) *Northern Music* 03 (2004): 14; "Jin Xiang, the composer," (in Chinese) *People's Music* 07 (2006): 26 and Yi Tian and Ge De, ed., *A Celebrities List of Chinese Contemporary Art World*, (in Chinese) (Beijing: Social Sciences Literature Press, 1993), 490-491.

CHAPTER TWO: A Big Step Away from Chinese Traditional Composition:

Fisherman's Song, An Early Work by Chen Yi

As one of the representative composers of China's fifth generation, Chen Yi is a composer of orchestral, chamber, choral, and piano works that have been performed throughout the world. Because of the political decompression and relatively thriving imported twentieth-century music, she composed, from the start, in a much more opened environment than her predecessors, and thus was allowed to offer something different. The *Fisherman's Song* is only one of her early examples that show a significant way of combining Western compositional techniques with elements of Chinese musical tradition. To make her significance clearer, I will also discuss *Fisherman's Song* written by her fourth-generation counterpart Li Zi-li (b.1938). Notably, both of them grew up in southern China. In their 20s, both went to the northern capital city, Beijing for better musical training. And, both were professional violinists before they started composing. The commonalities of the composers' lives highlight the contrasts of the musical dissimilarities of the two *Fisherman's Songs*.

2.1. The Cultural Context of Li Zi-li's *Fisherman's Song*

Li Zili was born in 1938 during the battle years. His music education started with listening and singing revolutionary songs with his parents. He lived through the victory of World War II and the foundation of People's Republic of China. With all the passion that a young man could possibly have towards the army that helped rebuild people's lives, he joined the Chinese People's Liberation Army at the age of twelve and served in the propaganda force where he spread the revolutionary spirit with his singing. Seeing Li

Zili's musical talent, his squadron leader saved one year's salary and went to Guangzhou to buy Li Zili his first violin, a gift that later changed his life, and for which Li Zili was forever grateful. During his five years of military life, he learned violin, *erhu*, percussion, acting, and dancing using revolutionary musical materials.²³ He was accepted by Wuhan Conservatory of Music to enter their bachelor's program after leaving the army. At the conservatory, he worked on both violin performance and on composition of violin works. By the third year of his program, Li Zili had finished two violin solo pieces and a transcription of a revolutionary song for the violin ensemble. Upon graduation, he was sent by the government to the Central Orchestra in Beijing for one year to further his studies.²⁴ At that time, the training material was mostly Chinese. Neither the conservatory nor Central Orchestra was able to offer Li Zili enough Western influence to affect his composition. Since the Chinese musical tradition focused on the linear melodic part, Li Zili's work was usually limited to a melody part (the violin part). After graduation in 1963, he joined the Guangzhou Orchestra as their associate concertmaster, composer, and conductor.

Li Zili was not prolific during his ten years of service with the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra. The Chinese Cultural Revolution started not long after his appointment and as a composer of instrumental music, he was discouraged to write by the government's new policies. Under the surveillance of the "gang of four," the only music that was permitted had to follow the "three rules:" first, that it emphasizes the good

²³ Liu Chunrong, 46-47.

²⁴ Wu Bing, "Squadron Leader Saved One Year's Salary and Bought Li Zili a Violin. The Gift Later Changed His Life," (in Chinese) *People Daily*, 28 October 1998, 3.

characters of all characters; second, that it emphasizes the heroes of the good characters; and third, that it emphasizes the biggest hero of all heroes. Thus the explicit lyrics and titles that suited the revolutionary spirit were favored. All instrumental music was banned because of its implicit nature. The situation remained unchanged until after 1970, when Prime Minister Zhou Enlai came into power.

Although allowed, to ensure a safe political reaction and positive reception from the audience, the post-1970 Cultural Revolution period instrumental works were restrained by the following common characteristics: the themes were adapted from folk or revolutionary songs, the titles explicitly emphasized optimistic revolutionary spirits, and the plots were closely related to the people's daily activities and were presented by the instrumental works in the simple "narrative formal structure."²⁵

Despite all the severe political pressures, amazingly enough, the majority of classic Chinese violin music was written in this period partly due to the clear compositional goal of Li Zili and his colleagues, which was, as they mentioned publicly at the time, to "Chinese-ize" violin music.²⁶ That is to say, while using Western techniques, the composition would be based on the traditional Chinese culture, and presenting a contemporary Chinese spirit. The works were usually finished with a violin part only, and professional writers for accompaniment parts would add the various piano or orchestra components. These works proved to be a huge success among the Chinese. Academically, they are the major component of required repertoire by the national music examination systems and various competitions. As for the general Chinese audience, these works are

²⁵ Music develops according to a prearranged plot. There is no thematic connection between sections.

²⁶ Ming, 32.

known and loved by almost everyone. Li Zili's music formed a substantial part of these works.

2.2. Overview of the Cultural Context of Chen Yi's *Fisherman's Song*

Unlike Li Zili, Chen Yi was born in 1953, into the relatively open New China after all the fierce warfare for its founding. Her childhood music education was filled with Western music elements provided by the open port city, Guangzhou. The listening materials accessible to her included European folk music, Hollywood movie music, and classical orchestral music; almost all her performance repertoire was Western standard violin works of different levels.

The Cultural Revolution was a “nightmare”²⁷ for Chen Yi. She experienced nearly everything that the Cultural Revolution offered as a fearless and free-minded teenager. The hardships did not diminish her thoughts and sharpness, but pushed her to pursue a deeper understanding of life. She also took the opportunity to get in touch with the raw Chinese musical elements, such as work tunes and rhythms, at her labor work site, where these elements were created. Thanks to her advanced childhood music cultivation and personal excellence in violin performance, she was selected for a professional musical occupation and had open access for seven years to another traditional genre of Chinese music, the Chinese opera.

In comparison to the Chinese fourth-generation composers, Chen Yi was lucky to witness the end of the Cultural Revolution before her college education, while she was

²⁷ Frank J. Oteri and Lyn Liston, “He Said, She Said: Zhou Long and Chen Yi,” 01 August 2006. From <http://newmusicbox.org/article.nmbx?id=4741>, accessed 01 January 2010.

still young and brave. It did not confine her thoughts, kill her initiatives, or ruin her career as it did for many, if not all, of the previous generations' composers. The professional compositional training, the always-active Chinese style music composition from the conservatory faculty members, and the open music atmosphere in the 1980s (the access to all kinds of Western music, especially cotemporary twentieth-century music in concerts in Beijing given by symphonic orchestras from all over the world) gave Chen Yi the opportunity to evaluate different musical elements by her own standards (instead of through the imposed government standards of limited styles that some fourth-generation composers had to accommodate). She learned to incorporate the valuable musical elements throughout her five years of education.

2.2.1. Childhood Education and Cultural Revolution Period

Guangzhou, the city Chen Yi grew up in, is one of the biggest cities in China with a fair amount of Western residents. Both of Chen Yi's parents were famous doctors with a strong personal interest in Western classical music. This interest deeply affected their three children who are all top professional musicians. As recalled by Chen Yi:

Although my parents were medical doctors, my mother played the piano at a professional level, and my father played the violin with great passion and sensitivity, at an intermediate level, and sang many European folk songs and songs from Hollywood movies. They collected numerous records of classical music, ranging from solo instrumental and vocal pieces to orchestral works and operas, and the whole family listened to these records every evening.²⁸

²⁸ John de Clef Pineiro, "An Interview with Chen Yi," 26 July 2001. From www.newmusicon.org/v9n4/v94chen_yi.htm, accessed 01 January 2010.

With the strong support of her parents, Chen Yi started piano lessons at the age of three. The next year, violin lessons were added to her schedule. As a child, she loved violin, did very well at it, and aspired to become a professional violinist. Her path, however, was not without obstacles.

The Cultural Revolution in China started when Chen Yi was fifteen. As top professionals of their area, her parents were targeted and she was forced to do labor work in the suburb of Guangzhou. The labor work (so-called “re-education”) included transplanting rice seedlings, digging aqueducts, and doing block house and road construction. Chen Yi recalled: “We had to pull one hundred pounds with sand and stones and concrete up to the top of a mountain twenty-two times a day. Sometimes you got up at four am because you had to beat the sun, and you had to get things done in one day.”²⁹ Despite the difficulties, living with poor, simple, and honest peasants taught Yi how to overcome hardships and live optimistically.

Chen Yi managed to maintain some of her violin practice routine after work and played for rural people from time to time. Her repertoire was very limited because only revolutionary music was allowed at the time. In order to make her music more interesting and keep developing violin techniques, she started improvising by adding long interludes between periods with all kinds of fast running embellishments or variations with harmonics, thirds, sixths, octaves, *spiccato*, *sautille*, and three-octave *arpeggios* that she learned from Paganini’s *Caprices* – her first experience of Chinese-Western fusion. For

²⁹ Frank J. Oteri and Lyn Liston, “He Said, She Said: Zhou Long and Chen Yi,” 01 August 2006. From <http://newmusicbox.org/article.nmbx?id=4741>, accessed 01 January 2010.

the first time, she recognized the distinct characteristics of the two musical styles. She explained:

In the countryside, I found that when I translated my own as well as peasants' languages into music, it was not the same as what I was practicing everyday! For this reason, I believed that I really needed a deeper and more extensive study in order to find a way to express my feeling through a real fusion of Chinese and Western music. The resulting music should be a natural integration of both cultures, but not an artificial or superficial combination.³⁰

When revolutionary Modern Beijing Opera gained overwhelm popularity in China in 1970, the Beijing Opera troupes all over the country began to recruit extensively. Chen Yi recalled with a "typical optimistic laughter: ... I was a little bit fortunate. I only had to work in the countryside for two years. Then word came from Beijing that Madame Mao needed orchestra members for the Peking Opera."³¹

By playing Paganini *Caprices* and *Zigeunerweisen* Chen Yi won the concertmaster position of the Chinese-Western mixed orchestra in the troupe of Guangzhou at the age of seventeen. During the eight years of her service there, she played all kinds of Chinese opera music. Chen Yi recalled, "When I started playing the Chinese tunes, I loved it and felt that it is my own language! I could use my violin to speak out from my own heart!"³² Her duty there included composing for the mixed orchestra. Although she had no formal compositional training, she finished large sections of compositions by imitating her daily performance materials and experimenting with freestyle orchestration. The compositional

³⁰ Pineiro, "An Interview with Chen Yi."

³¹ Mike Field, "Composer Chen Yi Rises Above Gulag," *Gazette- The newspaper of The Johns Hopkins University*, 09 September 1996. From <http://www.jhu.edu/gazette/julsep96/sep0996/chenyi.html>, accessed 01 January 2010.

³² Hu Jingbo, "Chen Yi's Composition and Teaching," (in Chinese) *The New Voice of Yuefu-Journal of Shenyang Conservatory of Music* 03 (2007): 139.

fundamentals, such as her familiarity with different ranges, tone colors, performance techniques, and suitable melodic designs of instruments were developed by practice, and became important resources for her later compositions. And her biggest influence from this period, the Chinese operatic elements, later became a substantial part of her compositional language.

In her spare time, Chen Yi managed to maintain some access to Western musical elements by engaging in activities such as practicing standard violin repertoire, reading classical composers' biographies, listening to recordings of symphonic music, and playing string quartets with her colleagues. All of these kept the Western influences going to some extent in her music education.

2.2.2. College Education in Beijing

When Chen Yi was twenty-four years old, the Chinese Ministry of Education resumed their post-secondary education and entrance exam system after ten years of abolishment by the Chinese Cultural Revolution. She took the opportunity to find out more about Chinese and Western music by applying to the Central Conservatory of Music for their Bachelor of Music program. She was accepted by both the violin and composition programs, but had to choose between the two, as only one could be her major. Committed to composition from her “re-education” experiences during the Cultural Revolution, she chose composition over the violin and started her systematic training.

She studied with Wu Zuqiang, who was one of the most important Chinese fourth-generation composers. He was a graduate of the Central Conservatory and furthered his

study in the Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music after his graduation. His several successful concertos for solo traditional Chinese instruments (e.g. *pipa* and *erhu*) and Western symphonic orchestra are known by almost everyone in China. The special combination of Western orchestral sounds and Chinese modality / harmony was typical of the Chinese fourth-generation composers. Their idea of fusing East and West in music exhibited possibilities of interpreting the Chinese musical language through Western instrument(s), and their accumulated practical skills served as guidance to the fifth-generation composers. Wu Zuqiang was also the first mentor to introduce Bartok's music to Chen Yi. They worked through the analysis of all of Bartok's string quartets. Among all other Western influences, Bartok's music later became one of the most substantial influences on Chen Yi's style.

Under Wu's guidance, Chen Yi kept her interest in the most natural musical language for her – that of peasants, shepherds, village people and labor workers. She learned, analyzed, and memorized the typical folk tunes from Chinese ethnic groups all over the country, with their different styles and genres, on different topics and by different dialects. She took part in a large field studies, transcribing the local people's work tunes, which deepened her understanding of the key elements of folk music. The accumulation of these musical elements facilitated her accurate expression, gave her a strong and unique personality in composition, and eventually helped in forming her own musical language.

Chen Yi also had a close connection to original Western contemporary music – she had her first foreign teacher, the British visiting composer Alexander Goehr (b.1932) as

one of her principal teachers for a short term. Only six students were selected for these intensive classes with Professor Goehr. They had “twice a week composition one-on-one lessons with the whole classroom of teachers listening, who were invited from nine conservatories in all major cities of China.”³³ Twentieth-century compositional techniques were the class’s main focus, and this class initiated Chen Yi’s study of these techniques. Later, she taught herself by studying reserved materials from the library at the Central Conservatory. The integration of twentieth-century techniques became one of the main characteristics of the Chinese fifth-generation composers’ works from as early as their students’ times – techniques that brought to Chen Yi’s early Chinese thematic compositions a flavor of novelty.

The post-secondary training proved to have been a big success. Chen Yi composed *Fisherman’s Song* for Violin and Piano in 1980; she wrote *String Quartet*, a composition in 3 movements, in 1982, and for which she won a prize from the Quartet Composition Competition of the Central Conservatory of Music; and in 1983 she composed *Xian Shi*, Concerto for Viola and Orchestra, which was premiered that year by violist, Liu Lizhou with the Central Philharmonic Orchestra of China under the direction of En Shao. Chen Yi’s excellence was not limited to academics. Examples of her passions towards her classmates and beyond include voluntary positions as vice-monitor of her class and vice-president of the conservatory’s student association, as well as her leadership roles in many other activities. Furthermore, Chen Yi was elected in 1982 to be a deputy to

³³ Li, Songwen. “East meets West: Nationalistic Elements in Selected Piano Solo Works of Chen Yi” (D. M. A. doc., University of North Texas, 2001), 20.

China's National People's Congress – the centerpiece of the Chinese legislative system. This passion was shown vividly in her music, especially within the later compositions.

2.3. The Two *Fisherman's Songs*

The fisherman's song is a traditional Chinese musical form. It is originated from the work songs of the fishermen in the Guangdong province along the seashore, and the inland provinces along the shore of the Five Fresh Water Lakes.³⁴ The fisherman's song inherits some of the typical Chinese musical characteristics, which include starting with an introduction, using Chinese modes, and favoring a symmetrical structure, such as four-measure phrases or four-phrase periods. In addition to these inheritances, the fisherman's song has as its inherent qualities a lyrical theme and a rhythmic middle section. The theme is usually in slow duple meter, high register, and has a unique melodic line. Duple meter and slow tempo allow the song to be suited for accompanying long periods of sculling. The high register allows the song to project above the sound of the surf. The unique melodic line is curved, has bouncing intervals back and forth almost breaking up these lines, and some big leaps within slurs, which have influences from the shapes and sounds of waves and billows of the sea. Finally, the middle sections are more rhythmic and dance-like to express the joy of success.

2.3.1. Formal and Harmonic Analysis of Li Zili's *Fisherman's Song*

Li Zili's *Fisherman's Song* was written in 1973, the eighth year of the Cultural Revolution. In the original version, only the violin part was composed. The piano

³⁴ Qi Qingfu, He Changhua, Zhang Caibin and el., ed., *Dictionary of Chinese Culture and Conventions*, (in Chinese) (Beijing: China Radio International Publish, 1998), 399.

accompaniment was added later by Hong Bici. Like all the instrumental music written during the Cultural Revolution period, this piece is narrative and descriptive with a simple and clear structure. The thematic elements are adaption of Shanwei Sea (the north-east part of South China Sea) folk songs. The scene was set at the South China Sea, where fishermen fish laboriously and return with a happy harvest. The composer wrote four sections to narrate the whole course.

The first section is an introduction. It pictures the arduous fishing work on the surging South China Sea. The tempo marking, “*ad lib.*” is borrowed from Chinese opera. It is very traditional for a Chinese-style introduction, and usually conveys the underlying intensity of a leisurely and free melodic line. Starting from the bright E string with repeated E harmonics, the airiness and flow of the first two measures bring out the freedom and openness on the sea. It then develops into a virtuosic cadenza describing the fighting between surge and fishermen. The whole section is in strict A *gong* hexatonic mode with added altered *gong*. The fast repeated *arpeggio* effect is borrowed from a popular technique of the Chinese instrument, *zheng* to imitate the rolling waves. The *crescendos* and pedaled A imply victory.

Example 2-1: The first section (mm.1-8)

The musical score for the first section (mm. 1-8) is presented in three staves. The first staff starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and contains a melodic line with repeated notes and some grace notes. The second staff continues the melodic line with repeated notes and some grace notes. The third staff features a fast, repeated arpeggio effect, marked with *accel.* and *rit.* dynamics. The piece concludes with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic.

The second section depicts the harvest-laden return. The theme is well connected to the introduction and it develops over three periods. The first period is the first complete statement of the theme. It features the speed / mood of *Adagio* and a balanced structure of four-measure phrases in a four-phrase period, and it is presented around E string middle range register.

Example 2-2: Second Section Theme (mm. 10-13)



The second period is slightly faster with the expression marking, “*Animato.*” The melody line goes the opposite direction of the theme: the middle part sees the peak instead of the nadir of the melody. Furthermore, it stays on the upper range of G and D strings, providing a deep, dense, and heavy sound, all of which contrast the happiness of the bright and light E string statement, and also amplifies the exhilaration of the E string statement in the next period.

Example 2-3: Period II (mm. 20-23)



The third period is marked “*Appassionato.*” It goes back to E string but uses the higher range to achieve greater tension. The tempo goes even faster. Bearing a strong resemblance to the insurgent waves of South China Sea, the agitated mood is revealing

the ever-growing happiness in the fishing village as more and more villagers are back from the sea with full boats of fish.

Example 2-4: Period III (mm. 28-31)



The above agitation leads right into a celebrative dance section. With strong rhythmic drive, the *Allegretto* consists of several variations of the theme. To depict a vivid picture of the celebrative dances during the final stage of fishing, mixed meter of 2/4 and 3/4 is used in Variation I to realize the misplacement of rhythmic accent and achieve a desired bouncing effect. Double stops are used to obtain a more percussive effect, while increasing the volume and blurring the pitches.

Example 2-5: Variation I (mm. 45-48)



Variation II is a fast passage with sixteenth and thirty-second notes – a rhythmic diminution of the previous variation – which serves to increase the tension. *Ricochet* is used to end each phrase with lightness. Given the educational background of the composer and the political situation of the time, the *ricochet* here may be considered as a borrowing from *erhu*'s bowing.

Example 2-6: Variation II (mm. 81-85)



Variation III serves as preparation for the last section. The sixteenth notes start from the second lowest modal note on the violin to give enough space for the tension to grow. After repeating the *gong-jiao* major third for four times, the music shifts to the minor third between *yu* and *gong* in A *zhi* mode using direct modulation in the seventh measure of this variation. This is the only modulation of the *gong* position in the whole piece after being in A *gong* septatonic mode with altered *gong* and occasionally altered *zhi* for the previous three sections. From the second beat of the thirteenth measure of this variation, a complete scale of A *zhi* mode (D is the *gong*) starts. It is strikingly stated with a *ritenuto* to a twice-slower speed. It ends with the center note A in the first measure of the fourth section.

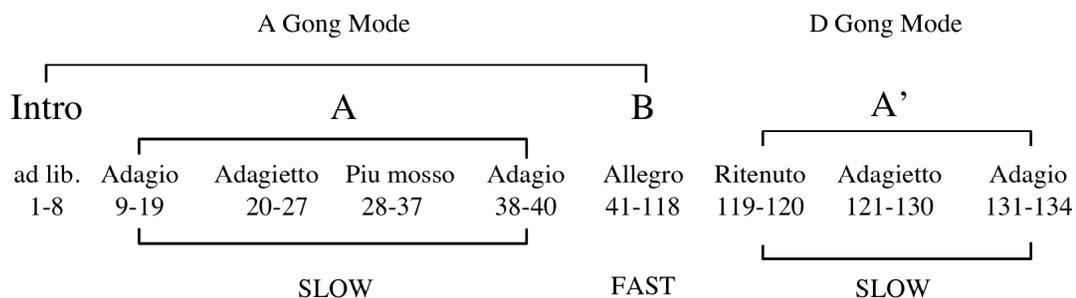
Example 2-7: Variation III (mm. 107-121)

The last section stays mainly in D *gong* mode and features prolonged melodic lines with big leaps to emphasize a rapturous mood. It recaps the second section theme. The center note of the last section shifts from A to #F (a third above the final center), to B (a third below the final center) and then reaches D (the final center). The register ranges through three octaves. Both the bright color intensity of E string's high register and the rich color intensity of G string's high register are used to emphasize the deep breath of the robust fishermen and allow for the realization of the performance marking "*cantabile* heartily and broadly." In the *coda*, fast ascending *arpeggios* are followed by trilled

quarter notes to imitate the sound effect of hearing the surf from a further and further distance revealing a quiet bay by night. The whole piece ends conventionally on *jiao* with the dynamic marking of *pianissimo*.

The piece is symmetrically designed tempo-wise with a slow-fast-slow structure and thematic-material-wise through ternary form.

Figure 1: Formal Organization of Li Zili's *Fisherman's Song*



2.3.2. Formal and Harmonic Analysis of Chen Yi's *Fisherman's Song*

Chen Yi's *Fisherman's Song* was written in 1979, during the second semester of her freshmen year at the Central Conservatory in Beijing.³⁵ Her composition included both violin and piano parts. Under the tempo marking $\text{♩} = 66$, the piano introduction alone depicts in A gong mode the glistening reflection of the sun on the ripples of the sea. In addition to *arpeggios*, which were employed frequently in Li Zili's composition, tremolos and trills are also used by Chen Yi to achieve a sparkling effect. The use of melodic intervals of the fifth brings out the brightness and transparency of seawater.

³⁵ Chen Yi, E-mail message to the author, February 10, 2010.

The theme makes its first appearance in the violin part after two measures of syncopated piano foreshadowing. In Cantonese folksong style, the bright harmonic color and swinging melodic lines resemble Li Zili's theme. And like Li Zili's theme, Chen Yi's also has two parts. But the relationship between the parts is different. The relationship is parallel in Li Zili's theme in that the starting phrases of each part are identical. Here in Chen Yi's theme, the second part is a development of the first part. It is one dynamic level higher – *forte* in comparison to *mezzo forte*, and in a higher register, that is, the upper range of E string, in comparison to the middle range. Furthermore, the *gong* shifts to E using shared notes in the first phrase (measure 19) of the second part, and the tradition of the four-measure phrase is broken at the middle of the second phrase (measure 25). Instead, two sub-phrases of three measures are presented.

In the piano part, the arpeggiated chords keep rolling at every first beat of each measure, which is a conventional Chinese style of accompaniment, simulating the sparkling water by emphasizing the color instead of the function of the chords. The pattern changes dramatically in the first phrase of the second part: the second half of the third measure is left blank to withhold the tension, and with a double thickened pattern of sixteenth notes, the theme reaches its climax in the next measure (measure 22). The tension is released at the beginning of the second phrase with a full measure length B seventh chord, with D substituted by E. The accompaniment pattern of the last phrase becomes a combination of the syncopated and the full-measure chords sustaining base note E, the new *gong* as the modal center.

Example 2-8: Period I (mm. 9-30)

The second period is similar to the first in its lyricism, but also including vibrance and uncertainty, which results from a slightly faster tempo (tempo marking $\text{♩} = 76$) and a less consonant mode (C *gong* septatonic *yan* mode). In addition, it has mixed meters of shifting back and forth between 2/4 and 3/4 regularly (one 3/4 measure appears after every two 2/4 measures) for an unbalanced bouncing effect. This usage was seen in the dancing section of Li Zili's composition, but there the two kinds of measure of different meters alternate with each other. The swing effect is reinforced by the three-measure phrases and the offbeat entrance of each phrase. Meanwhile, the tension has been building up unnoticeably when the ending notes of every phrase form an ascending line: D-E. At the end of the third phrase, the line leaps to A, foreshadowing a climax of the

period. The last phrase breaks the three-measure phrase pattern established by the first three phrases. A $\frac{3}{4}$ measure interrupts after one $\frac{2}{4}$ measure, forming a sub-phrase. It enters with a *crescendo* into the next $\frac{2}{4}$ measure. Furthermore, in the second measure of second sub-phrase, triplets – a rhythmic pattern that was rarely seen in the Chinese music form of fisherman’s song – makes its first appearance in the violin part, foreshadowing the peak of the period that follows.

The piano part has triplets as early as in the second measure of the period. For most of the time, it appears at the last beat of a measure. The first consecutive triplets come in the last measure of the third phrase to provide sufficient intensity responding to the leaping A in the violin part. The second measure of the last phrase is a full measure of triplets corresponding to the *crescendo* into the next sub-phrase. The last measure of this period is the climax, and at second beat of it, both violin and piano parts reach their highest notes of the whole period with the dynamic marking “mf” and “mp” respectively.

Example 2-9: Period II (mm. 31-42)

Più mosso (♩ = 76)

The musical score for Example 2-9: Period II (mm. 31-42) is presented in two systems. The tempo is marked "Più mosso" with a quarter note equal to 76 beats per minute. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The first system shows the violin part starting with a *mp* dynamic and the piano part starting with a *p* dynamic. Both parts feature triplets. The second system continues the development, with the violin part reaching a *mf* dynamic and the piano part reaching a *mp* dynamic. The piece concludes with a *rit.* marking.

The third period is a recapitulation of the first, yet with some alternations. It restates only the first phrase, the first half of the second phrase, the last measure of the first sub-phrase (of the last phrase), and second sub-phrase (of the last phrase) of the first period. The accompaniment introduces a pattern of sixteenth-note *arpeggio* with only one layer cooling down the audience and forming a dramatically contrasting background for the next period. Until here, the piano part has always been marked explicitly, one dynamic level under the violin part.

The fourth period is the dance section, tempo marking ♩ = 120. It starts with A *yu* mode (C is *gong*), modulates through a series of *gong* modes, and ends in D *gong* mode. The dynamic marking of both parts is *piano*. The motive is now an inversion of the first measure of the theme.

Example 2-10: Motive of Period IV (mm. 56-63)



After two parallel four-measure phrases, double stops are added on with every note. The four-measure-phrase pattern is broken into 3+2+2 with string skipping to achieve dramatic register contrast. From the next measure, a four-measure-phrase canon consisting of two-measure sixteenth-note and two-measure eighth double stops is initiated along with a repeated *crescendo*, from *piano* or *mezzo piano*, to *mezzo forte*. The canon gradually lifts up the register and the dynamics while shifting the center note from

B flat *gong* to D *gong*, and eventually reaches a peak in the violin part at its final entry.

The piano joins the forte dynamic in the last two measures of the violin's final entry.

Example 2-11: Canon of Period IV (mm. 73-87)

The register then falls in the violin part while the double stops are carried on and the piano dynamic goes back to *mezzo forte*. After five measures of falling, sixteenth double stops appear for the first time in large-scale from the lowest-possible modal notes on the violin. In 3+3+4 pattern, the register drops an octave at every first measure of the groups to allow sufficient space for the intensity to keep growing, while the *gong* modulates through \flat B – F – A – D. The ending in D *gong* mode serves as a dominant preparation of, and leads right into, the next section in A *gong* mode.

It is worth mentioning that the last group of four measures has “a measure of *ritenuto*” to a twice-slower tempo along with a *crescendo* leading into the first *fortissimo*

of the whole piece in the first measure of the next period, exactly the same technique Li Zili used at the end of his dance section. But here this “*ritenuto* measure” is notated as two measures (measure 98-99) with a double-lengthened-note duration and without any marking of tempo change.

Example 2-12: Ending of Period IV (mm. 89-99)

Under the tempo marking $\text{♩} = 80$, the next ten measures, in A *gong* mode, is the climax of the whole piece. Functionally, it serves as the transition to the recapitulation section. In the violin part of this climax section, the original rhythmic pattern of eighth triplets also appears in the transformation by double-stopping and augmenting of twice duration value, to add intensity to the melodic line. The piano *arpeggiates* upwards at the first beat of this climax section to reach a fifth below the violin’s line, and trembles afterwards until the end of the section, to achieve maximum exhilaration.

Example 2-13: Climax Section (mm. 100-109)

The recapitulation is designed thoughtfully. The recapped material includes the theme and the rhythmic pattern of eighth triplets from the second period. However, the restatement of the theme is in the sub-dominant key of the original, which is A *gong* for the first two phrases and D *gong* for the second two. Furthermore, this is the piano's initial statement of the theme, and the dynamics of the violin part, which is composed of the rhythmic pattern of eighth triplets, is marked down (*mezzo piano*). Under the tempo marking *poco piu mosso*, the meter shifts from 2/4 to 4/4. This restatement is complete but without dynamic changes.

Example 2-14: Recapitulation First Two Phrases (mm. 111-114)

The violin joins the restated theme in unison at the second half of the second to last measure and finishes the restatement while the piano is providing an echo-effect canon

that is composed of the one-beat motive right before the eighth rest at the statement's ending.

Example 2-15: The Echo Effect Ending (mm. 117-119)

In the next two measures, the piano repeats the first phrases of the theme while the violin displays polyphonic lines: the upper line is the third phrase of the theme, and the lower line gives melodic fill-in for the long holding notes of the upper line. When the piano proceeds to the second phrase, the violin carries on its polyphony, borrowing melodic fragments from the first phrase, but presents all in E *gong* mode. Since the E *gong* fragments share all their notes with A *gong*, the modulation is smoothly achieved.

Example 2-16: The Polyphonic Violin Statement (mm. 121-124)

With a *crescendo* to *mezzo forte* and modulation to the original key, the statement proceeds back to its last two phrases in the violin part in E *gong* mode under a *ritenuto* to

Generally, Chinese modes with only five major tones and mainly constant intervals are used in both *Fisherman's Songs*. The modes in both works are coordinated with fifth dominated chords presenting a consonant sound effect and a transparent and bright color. The traditional Chinese instrument *zheng's* pentatonic *arpeggio* technique are borrowed in both compositions to imitate the fluent and consonant sound of water flow through the slow form of the technique, or to push up the intensity through the fast form of it. Both *Fisherman's Songs* have a fast dance middle section, as standard traditional fisherman's song, and the overall tempo designs are slow-fast-slow. Last but most importantly, both compositions express a frame of mind as demanded by the Chinese musical aesthetics.

Thematically, the themes of both *Fisherman's Songs* are adapted from southern China folk song materials, as the folk songs are the origin of the traditional fisherman's song. Both themes are set at walking tempo and duple meter to be suited for accompanying sculling. Bright E string color is chosen for both themes, not only because the traditional fisherman's song has "high register" as one of its inherent qualities, but also because the E string color resembles the typical southern Chinese people's voice, and the Chinese musical aesthetics is oriented toward the human voice. The designs of the melodic lines of both themes are contoured with occasionally big leaps within a slur, which mirror both the shape / sound of the waves on the sea and the tones of the southern Chinese dialects. Both works present four-phrase thematic periods with mainly four-measure phrases, answering to the symmetric Chinese aesthetic view. Both themes appear after the introduction, responding to the superior music genre in China – vocal music – which always present its themes after an instrumental prelude.

Technically, it is worth mentioning that to build up the climax, both composers used *crescendo* markings, increased volume by double stops, rhythmically condensed eighth-note pattern to sixteenth-note pattern, developed the musical materials from lower to higher register, and added *ritenuto* to twice slower right before the peak note, all of which was designed to increase suspense.

2.3.4. The Western Influences Shown in Chen Yi's *Fisherman's Song*

Chen Yi's *Fisherman's Song* has many breakthroughs despite the above similarities. These breakthroughs can be divided into two kinds. First, there are technical breakthroughs. As mentioned in the first chapter, Chinese musical aesthetics did not encourage technical development. Observing the technical similarities presented in the above paragraph, one could safely come to the conclusion that the compositional devices are very limited. But in Chen Yi's work, she added many advanced techniques in addition to all those techniques that appeared in Li Zili's *Fisherman's Song*. For example, in the recapitulation, the technique that stand out is her polyphonic writing in the violin part, which was heavily influenced by the Western violin repertoire, namely the *Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin* by J. S. Bach, which she had learned growing up. In the dance section, she added harmonic complexity to rhythmic condensation. Accidentals appear consistently during the whole dance section. The modal center shifts around with a strong sense of uncertainty, which make this section resemble the developmental section of the Western sonata form. Furthermore, she designed a kind of *crescendo* different from Li Zili's. Instead of a *crescendo* all the way through, Chen Yi chose to *crescendo* to *mezzo forte* and then back off to start from *mezzo piano* again. This is a popular approach in

Western music to accumulate the intensity. Here, the approach is applied to the Chinese musical form, the fisherman's song. Other examples include triplets in the *fortissimo* climax section, which were rarely seen in Chinese music, and help to push the tension to the edge. The intense tremolo that is used in the piano part underneath the triplets is also a Western importation. Last, but most importantly, a canon is used effectively to create the impetus as well. By using the canon Chen Yi broke the soloistic Chinese music characteristic and included the collaborative Western music nature.

The breakthroughs in structure are also significant. The most noticeable is that the work is in Rondo form, a form that was too complicated from the Chinese musical aesthetic point of view. The complexity does not end here. The crafty design goes in the opposite direction to the simplicity and directness favored by the Chinese music aesthetics: the second half of the theme serves as a development of the first half with the four-measure phrase pattern broken into two three-measure sub phrases. The design of the second period is so skillful that it include in the violin part a melody closely and covertly related to the main theme, and introduce in the piano part the triplet material. The dance section develops the inversion of the main theme's first measure by sequencing, double stops, canonic writing, rhythmic condensing, and modulation. The recapitulation brings back the main theme in a different key and develops the triplet material. All these thematic connections reflect strong Western influences. As for the tonal design, the fundamental difference between the two *Fisherman's Songs* is that Li Zili's ending stays on the new key while Chen Yi's returns to the original key. The return

reconfirms the Western formal influence rather than the influence from the descriptive Chinese form of a relatively free tonal design.

Throughout the piece, the piano part is filled with chordal progressions as an integrated part of the music. The piano sets the mood and descriptive background at the start, provides harmonic and base support in the first period, introduces triplet material in the second period, fully develops various thematic materials throughout the middle section, serves as a highly agitated base for the climax, and restates the theme in the recapitulation. Therefore, the composition, by no means, is a one-dimensional work. It is also worth mentioning that all the dynamic and tempo markings are explicit and accurate – another step towards the collaborative music's notation system.

To conclude, as a composition finished in Chen Yi's first year of college study, *Fisherman's Song* on one hand shows a clear Chinese style in its modality, thematic material, and harmonic color. On the other hand, it displays a clear Western influence through its motivic development, formal structure, and the variety of compositional techniques. It is one of Chen Yi's early attempts to musically fuse Chinese and Western elements.

CHAPTER THREE: The Advanced Compositional Devices and Aesthetic Ideas in *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in*.

If *Fisherman's Song* (1979) is considered one of Chen Yi's early attempts at Chinese-Western fusion as a college student, *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in* (1999) should be regarded as a masterpiece of the fusion. The work is not only technically successful, but also most accessible to the wider public.

3.1. Overview of Chen Yi's Compositional Experience after College

Right after finishing her Bachelor's degree in composition in 1983, Chen Yi started graduate study. She was the first woman to receive a master's degree in composition in China. In 1980s, graduate studies in Beijing were rare opportunities for students, because China had only recently resumed its higher educational system. After graduation, Chen Yi went to Columbia University to further her study, and graduated with distinction in 1993 from the Doctor of Musical Arts program in composition. She enjoyed great fame in the United States after her graduation, receiving numerous awards, prizes, and commissions.

3.1.1. Chen Yi's Graduate Training in Beijing

As a top student of the first class of China's best conservatory's compositional program after the Cultural Revolution, Chen Yi entered the Central Conservatory's graduate program in 1983. The years as a graduate student were a crucial period during which she "made up her mind firmly that she would use her most natural language, presenting by music, to build a bridge between Eastern and Western peoples, so that the

communication of information, thoughts, concepts and emotions would be possible and the society would be better developed.”³⁵ She spent three very productive years in the conservatory. *Duo Ye* was composed for piano solo in 1984 and it won the first prize in the Fourth Chinese National Composition Competition in 1985. It was one of Chen Yi’s representative works, which “has won a place as a model piece balancing tradition and innovation in the battle between the New Wave composers and the conservatives.”³⁶

Other works included *Yu Diao*, which was composed as a piano solo for children in 1985. It won the first prize in the composition competition of Chinese national children’s piano competition in 1985. *Three Poems from the Song Dynasty* was composed for mixed chorus in 1985. It was premiered by China Central Chorus under the conducting of Yan Liangkun and broadcast nation-wide by China National Radio in 1985. *Sprout* was composed for string orchestra in 1982 and was revised in 1986. It was premiered by Central Philharmonic Orchestra of China under the conducting of Lan Shui in 1986. *Symphony No.1* was composed in 1986 and was premiered by Central Philharmonic Orchestra of China under the conducting of Lan Shui in 1986. At Chen Yi’s graduation, the Chinese Musicians Association, the Central Conservatory of Music, Radio Beijing, CCTV, and the Central Philharmonic of China joined to present a full evening concert of her orchestral works in Beijing.

³⁵ Zhu Chunfeng, “[Chinese World] Music and Dream – Special Interview and Report on the Chinese Composer Chen Yi,” (in Chinese) 13 Feb 2007. From <http://news.cctv.com/world/20070213/105904.shtml>, accessed 01 January 2010.

³⁶ Li Xiaole, “Chen Yi’s piano music: Chinese aesthetics and Western models,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 2003), 216.

3.1.2. Chen Yi's Life in the United States

Long-term professional training in Western countries and immersion in Western culture for decades were common for the Chinese fifth-generation composers. Immersion entailed that they spoke the Western language, communicated with Western people of different life philosophies, conducted Westernized daily activities, observed all aspects of Western culture, and especially, experienced the authentic Western music. They had constantly around them all types of musical performances by artists ranging from subway musicians to Broadway stars who demonstrated the authentic musical interpretation of different emotions; this immersion experience made the fifth-generation composers better perceivers of Western music and led to the Western style that is infused into their Chinese blood.

Chen Yi came to the United States in 1986 on a Columbia University scholarship. During the seven years of her study she learned to pay attention to cultural background analysis as well as technical analysis in studying the music compositions of different composers. Thus she became even more sensitive to the differences between Eastern and Western cultural history, especially the meaning of the Western classical music development and its superficial influences on the East. She said: “although I started my professional musical career (in China) as a violinist playing classical music, I did not really understand Western music or feel the true beauty of it until I lived in the United States and saw / felt deeply its historical background.”³⁷ It was very meaningful to Chen Yi that the years in New York gave her the opportunity to appreciate Western music like

³⁷ Sun Qi, “the Forming of Chen Yi’s Compositional Aesthetics,” (in Chinese) *Music and Performance-Journal of Nanjing Arts Institute* 01 (2009): 74.

a westerner in Western culture. Needless to say the experience helped her to see more clearly the different rational pursuits and aesthetical qualities of the two kinds of music.

Chen Yi's study with Chou Wen-chung in Columbia University gave her another perspective. Chou Wen-chung discussed Chinese aesthetics in his articles:

...a pervasive Chinese concept: that each single tone is a musical entity in itself...This concept, often shrouded in poetic and mystic metaphors, is fundamental to many Asian musical cultures. It is manifest in the great emphasis placed on the production and control of tones, often involving an elaborate vocabulary of articulations, modifications in timbre, inflections in pitch, fluctuations in intensity, vibratos, and tremolos...³⁸

Chou Wen-chung and his student-colleagues shared this aesthetic, which treats timbre as a musical element equal to melody, harmony, rhythm, and form. Chen Yi said:

My professor Chou Wen-chung at Columbia University used lecture on new music as well as ethnomusicology research and would speak about combining Eastern and Western culture ... It was like standing at a higher point and gave me the ability to consider not new music versus historical music, not east versus west, but to consider human thought. I began to see similarities in musical styles, aesthetics, customs, feelings and principles.³⁹

Chen Yi's study at the university also focused on aspects of compositional technique. Her professors helped her to work on Western contemporary compositional devices, especially atonalism and twelve-tone techniques. Mario Davidovsky encouraged her to compose music in a logical form based on compatible concepts between cultures. Another professor and composer, Jacob Druckman, inspired her to adapt the technique of interweaving tonal quotations in an atonal context.⁴⁰ This study enriched Chen Yi's

³⁸ Chou Wenchung, "Asian Composers and Twentieth-Century Western Composers," *Music Quarterly*, (April 1971): 214-16.

³⁹ Irene Borger, "Chen Yi Interview," in *The Force of Curiosity*, (Saint Monica CA: CalArts/Alpert Award in the Arts, 1999), 278.

⁴⁰ Li Xiaole, 274.

ability to handle dissonant notes and developed her creativity in melody writing as well as sound effect designing. Bearing in mind these newly refined techniques, Chen Yi always tried to avoid sounding like meaningless compositional technical exercises and always composed primarily from the aesthetic angle, so that the techniques served the music. Under the influence of her professors, Chen Yi began to see a commonality between Chinese and Western music and made great strides towards integrating the Chinese and the Western musical elements. She utilized more and more Western contemporary skills, such as serial methods and polymodality, although most of the time the culture background of her subjects remained Chinese.

Chen Yi's clear view on Chinese and Western music and the enhancement of her Western modern compositional techniques led to notable changes in her musical style. Her style shifted from composing works from adapted Chinese folksong melodic materials and Chinese musical aesthetics perspectives to composing works from limited extractive Chinese musical elements and a synthesized perspective of Chinese and Western aesthetics, and with an increasing influence of Western techniques. To be specific, as a component of American avant-garde works with sound images "typical of New York avant-garde style,"⁴¹ Chen Yi's compositions featured blending Chinese folk music and Beijing Opera elements with twelve-tone themes in atonal contexts. Usually with Chinese spirits symbolizing the aesthetics, foci on the linear motion of melodic lines, rhythms of Chinese calligraphy, and colors of Chinese instruments, the music was

⁴¹ Li Xiaole, 26.

organized by Western contemporary techniques and eventually woven into a Westernized contemporary sound.⁴²

The “sound” was very well accepted and as a result, Chen Yi had been “successful in gaining ground in the American contemporary music circle.”⁴³ The representative works in this period included *As in a Dream* (1988), which she composed on the basis of a poem under the same title written by the famous Song Dynasty female poet, Li Qingzhao. For this reason, Chen Yi employed a soprano to symbolize the poet. The voice part combined the Beijing Opera element of “spoken and sung” and the twelve-tone technique. She added violin and cello parts to imitate the sound of Chinese string instruments, and borrowed the Chinese instruments’ performance techniques. In *Guessing* for solo piano (1989), the title is the same as a famous Chinese folk song about guessing, so, she used the multi-tonal counterpoint technique to combine the folk song’s antiphonal lines, resulting in a large amount of added thirds and fourths. The added notes sound out of the harmonic texture and “wrong” to the audience. The “wrong notes” reflect the title by perfectly representing the problems with guessing.

The focus on Chinese subjects while using Western contemporary techniques is the characteristic of Chen Yi’s compositions during her doctoral study period. Her sensibilities towards Chinese elements kept coming through her rational compositions, showing her will to achieve a Chinese-Western fusion. Until the end of her study, Chen Yi developed her own musical language – a way to express her cultural identity.

⁴² Li Xiaole, 25-28.

⁴³ Su de San Zheng, “Immigrant Music and Transitional Discourse: Chinese American Music Culture in New York City,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Wesleyan University, 1993), 142.

In 1993, Chen Yi received her Doctor of Musical Arts degree with distinction from Columbia University. She felt lost while job-hunting in the competitive compositional job market. After countless interviews with no results, she was finally offered a three-year contract and became the composer-in-residence for the Women's Philharmonic Orchestra, Chanticleer choral ensemble, and the Aptos Creative Arts program in San Francisco. After her first two-year teaching position at the Peabody Conservatory from 1996 to 1998, she left to be a teacher at the University of Missouri-Kansas City as the Cravens/Millsap/Missouri Distinguished Professor in Composition.

After 1993, the Chinese-Western fusion approach Chen Yi presented in her works became more personalized with the on-going focus on Chinese spirit. She kept exploring new sonorities for her music by using the Western instruments, or combining Chinese and Western instruments to imitate Chinese instrumental sounds. Furthermore, she started to write for Chinese instrumental ensembles as the ensembles were developing their collaborative suitability through various mechanical adaptations, and she arranged several sets of Asian folk songs for chorus. Her major works during this period include the *Chinese Myths Cantata* (1996), *Qi* for chamber ensemble (1997), *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in* (1999) for violin and piano, *Ba Ban* for piano solo (2000), *Ning* for violin, cello, and pipa (2001), *Tu* for orchestra (2002), *Ballad, Dance and Fantasy* for Cello and Orchestra (2003), *Si Ji* for Orchestra (2005), *Suite from China West* for wind symphony (2007) and *From the Path of Beauty* for mixed choir and string quartet (2008).

3.2. *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in*

Composed in 1999 when Chen Yi had just begun to teach at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, this work deals with the interpretation of two different types of Chinese instruments – the *hsiao* (to be imitated by the violin) and the *ch'in* (to be imitated by the piano). The *hsiao* is a vertical notched bamboo flute, which possesses a pure and “natural” tone quality and embodies important associations with cosmology and Confucian ethos. The range of the *Hsiao* is usually about two octaves, suitable for the performance of lyrical melodies with frequent grace notes. The *ch'in* is a seven-string zither without bridges and played by both hands with no plectrums. The execution of slides, harmonics, and special strokes produces rich and varied timbres. The *ch'in* has long been associated with Confucianism and Chinese scholarship, and traditionally was the symbol of “correct” music, a means of purification and education, and an essential feature in ceremonies and rites.⁴⁴ The *hsiao* and the *ch'in* are often played together, creating a good balance in sonority and timbre.⁴⁵ The lyrical quality of these two melodic instruments and their concordance in performance are presented in this composition through continuously stretched melodic lines that are associated with polyphonic textures.

The music of *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in* starts with no introduction. The violin comes in directly with the Beijing operatic melody. As the focus of the structural techniques of this composition, a single melody is stretched into a length of thirteen

⁴⁴ Wang Hong, Tian Jun and Ma Luan, ed., *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Ancient Poetry*, (in Chinese) (Beijing: Guangming Daily Press, 1991), 696-697.

⁴⁵ Chen Yi, e-mail message to the author, February 10, 2010.

measures. The main techniques for extending this melody include: repeating a short melodic fragment from the end of previous sub-phrases to avoid the sense of ending, and wavering between modes.⁴⁶

Example 3-1: The Violin's Statement of the Theme (mm. 1-14)

It is notable that this melody is developed around A, thus the first period can be defined as A *gong* septatonic mode. Two melodic fragments, both of which appear initially in the second measure, play important roles in extending the melody. The first

fragment, , is made up by a minor third followed by a major second in a descending motion. The note value and the order of intervals may be changed in the extending process while the downward motion always remains. The second fragment,

, is a three-note mordent, grouped as two thirty-seconds succeeded by a longer note value. This rhythmic figure never changes except for the varied extensions of the last note value.

⁴⁶ Guo, 185.

Example 3-2: The Two Fragments and the First Phrase (mm. 1-4)

The musical notation for Example 3-2 shows a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It begins with a 7-measure rest. The melody starts on a half note G#4. The first fragment, labeled 'The 1st Fragment', consists of a half note G#4 followed by a quarter note A4. The second fragment, labeled 'The 2nd Fragment', consists of a quarter note B4, a quarter note C#5, and a quarter note B4. The dynamics are marked as *mp dolce*.

The first phrase extends from measure 1 to 4, which is recognizable through a common four-measure length and a sustained ending note C sharp. The first melodic fragment is presented twice in measures 2 and 3 with different transpositions. The next phrase executes the extending process in several steps. First, from measures 5 to 6, the second melodic fragment recurs three times (including in the form of combined grace notes) in its transposed inversion: B-C#-B instead of the original C#-B-C#. Second, a seventh upward leap is applied to reach two-line A and dropped back down to one-line A in measure 6. This two-measure melody reaches an ending point at the middle of measure 6, but the phrase is carried on. After the arrival of one-line A on the second beat in measure 6, the phrase is extended two more measures by repeating through an anacrusis the ascending gesture that is made of the first melodic fragment.

Example 3-3: The First Two Sub-phrases of Second Phrase (mm. 5-8)

The musical notation for Example 3-3 shows a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It begins with a half note G#4. The first sub-phrase, labeled 'The Leap', consists of a half note G#4 followed by a quarter note A4. The second sub-phrase, labeled 'The 1st Fragment', consists of a quarter note B4, a quarter note C#5, and a quarter note B4. The dynamics are marked as *p*, *mf 3*, and *mp*. There is also a label 'Inversion of the 2nd Fragment' pointing to a grace note B4 over a quarter note C#5.

The next step starts at the end of measure 8: the melody blurs its keynote through the borrowing note G, which is a half step lower than the appeared seventh scale degree G#. The same anacrusis recurs at the end of measure 8 to bring out another two-measure

extension. In measure 10, the first melodic fragment is displayed twice in a perfect fifth lower than the initial statement. From measures 8 to 11, the frequent appearance of the fourth scale degree D implies the keynote is shifted from A to D, while the mode is wavering between D *gong* septatonic mode and A *gong* septatonic mode. Finally, the fourth scale degree D is sustained after an over-octave leap in measure 11, and then leads the melody back to the original mode through the first melodic fragment ending on the keynote A in measure 13.

Example 3-4: The Third Sub-phrase of Second Phrase (mm. 9-13)

The image shows a musical score for a single melodic line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score spans five measures, labeled 9 through 13. Measure 9 begins with a triplet of eighth notes, with a bracket above it labeled '3' and a text label below: 'The 1st Fragment anacrusis'. Measure 10 contains a triplet of eighth notes, with a bracket above it labeled '3' and a text label below: 'The 1st Fragment: Twice; 5th below.'. Measure 11 features a sustained note, with a bracket above it labeled 'The 1st Fragment'. Measure 12 contains another triplet of eighth notes, with a bracket above it labeled '3' and a text label below: 'The 1st Fragment'. Measure 13 concludes with a fermata over the final note and a dynamic marking 'p' (piano).

This melody as the main idea of the whole piece is usually accompanied with its counterpart, which is built up either by imitating or doubling the fragments taken from this melody. The melodic counterpart functions as the musical complement of the main melody, and is always presented in different registers in order to distinguish it from the main melodic statements. The imitation of the melodic fragments is commonly employed when the main melody has a tendency toward repose, which is often presented through a sustained note, such as in measure 4, while the doubling of melodic fragments is usually used to address the ending point, such as in measure 6. This lengthy melody contains rich developmental elements and is also complemented by its counterpart musically, so that it forms a rather independent formal section.

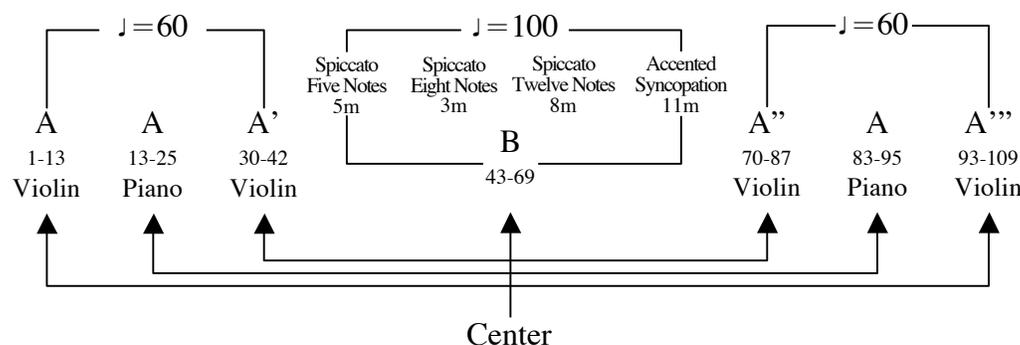
Example 3-5: The Melodic Counterpart (mm. 1-13)

The musical score for Example 3-5 consists of three systems of music. The first system (measures 1-5) features a Violin part with a melodic line starting on a half note, marked *mp dolce*, and a Piano part with a tremolo accompaniment in the right hand (*p legato*) and a bass line in the left hand (*mp*). The second system (measures 6-10) continues the Violin melody with trills (*tr*) and includes a triplet of eighth notes in both hands. The third system (measures 11-13) concludes the piece with a final melodic phrase in the Violin part (*p*) and a corresponding piano accompaniment (*mp legato*).

The overall formal design of this composition can be viewed in two ways: The first way is to divide sections according to the completion of the melodic statements. In this way, several recurrences of the main melody are organized into an A-B-A' ternary form plus a coda. Sections A and A' comprise, respectively, three and two complete statements of this melody. Section B introduces a developmental passage, which presents the imitation of the *hsiao* sound through tremolo on the violin and the imitation of the string-plucking techniques of the *ch'in* on the piano. The imitations lead the music to the

climax. The second way is to divide sections according to the instrumentation. In this way, the seven parts (six statements of the main melody plus the development passage) are arranged symmetrically. The formal design bears a strong resemblance to an arch form, in which the developmental passage at the center serves as both the climax of the entire piece and the axis of the overall formal organization.

Figure 3: Formal Organization of *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in*



As shown in the illustration above, the violin plays the main melody a total of four times and the piano twice. The piano's statements and the violin's second statement present the main melody exactly one octave higher. The violin's third statement stays in the same octave as the initial statement. However, it is a prolonged statement with an additional five measures leading out by the first melodic fragment with the minor third and major second in the fragment presented in reversed order. The violin's fourth statement is a more abstract statement, and serves as coda with no recurrence of the second melodic fragment.

Although the violin's second statement is complete and accurate, the contrast is obviously shown in two aspects: First, as mentioned, the register of the statement is one

octave higher than the original. Second, the playing method of the melodic counterpart changes from *legato* to *spiccato*. The *legato* playing of lyric melodic fragments is discontinued and then replaced by *spiccato* playing of ascending *arpeggios* to imitate the sound effect of the *ch'in*.

Example 3-6: The Violin's Second Statement (mm. 30-42)

The musical score for Example 3-6, titled 'The Violin's Second Statement (mm. 30-42)', is presented in three systems. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system (measures 30-34) features a violin part with a dynamic marking of *mp* and a piano accompaniment with a dynamic marking of *mp* and the instruction *legato*. The second system (measures 35-39) shows the violin part with a dynamic marking of *pp* and the piano accompaniment with a dynamic marking of *pp*. The third system (measures 40-42) continues the *pp* dynamic for both parts. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, trills, and arpeggios.

The style of playing gradually switches back to the *legato* playing in the developmental section, in order to create an impetus toward the climax. The density of

notes in the piano part increases from five notes per measure (one note for the first beat and four for the second beat) for five measures to eight notes per measure (one eighth note and three sixteenth triplets per beat) for three measures, and then to twelve notes (sixteenth triplets) per measure for eight measures. In the intense tremolo of the violin part, the frequency of changing notes accelerates from one measure per change to one beat per change, and then to a half beat per change – forming an eighth-note sequence. The eighth-note sequence then transforms to a sequence of syncopated rhythmic pattern (♩ ♩ ♩), with an upward leap of over an octave per measure, creating a strong rhythmic drive.

Example 3-7: Increasing Rhythmic Intensity (mm. 45, mm. 49, mm. 51, mm. 57, and mm. 60-61)

The image displays a sequence of musical notation illustrating increasing rhythmic intensity. It consists of five measures of music, arranged in two rows. The top row contains three measures, and the bottom row contains two measures. Arrows indicate the progression from left to right and then down to the next row.

- Measure 1 (top left):** Piano part has five notes per measure. Violin part has a single note.
- Measure 2 (top middle):** Piano part has eight notes per measure (one eighth note and three sixteenth triplets per beat). Violin part has a single note.
- Measure 3 (top right):** Piano part has twelve notes per measure (sixteenth triplets). Violin part has a single note.
- Measure 4 (bottom right):** Piano part has twelve notes per measure (sixteenth triplets). Violin part has a single note.
- Measure 5 (bottom left):** Piano part has twelve notes per measure (sixteenth triplets). Violin part has a single note.

The notation includes dynamic markings such as *p* and *pp*, and articulation marks like accents and slurs. The key signature is one sharp (F#).

The syncopation develops into six measures of consecutive syncopated with accents quarter notes, on top of the sixteenth notes in the piano part. In the following five measures, the violin joins the piano in ascending sixteenth-note patterns and pushes the music to its climax.

Example 3-8: The Climax (mm. 65-69)

The Chinese aesthetics takes control in the coda. The violin states the theme one octave above the original. The fifth note leaps up a fifth instead of descending, stretching the whole register up to the upper part of the violin's E string. The dynamic is contrary to the register. The restatement with the highest notes of the piece was presented under the dynamic marking of *piano*. And just like the two previously discussed *Fisherman's Songs*, the music ends *diminuendo* to *pianissimo* in the violin's harmonics. Meanwhile, the piano plays *arpeggio* to imitate the *ch'in* sound in *pianississimo*. The above musical facts in the coda portrays a Chinese "frame of mind," in which the sound of the *hsiao* and the *ch'in* fades away into the distance as the performers come to their senses from the deep inner musical world.

3.3. How Chen Yi's *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in* Compares to Her *Fisherman's Song*

In *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in*, Chen Yi did not only retain but also develop both technical and ideological aspects of compositional approaches that she utilized in *Fisherman's Song*.

1. The relationship between the violin and the piano parts in *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in* reveals a deeper and more thorough Chinese-Western fusion. The piano part serves as an integrated accompanimental part in *Fisherman's Song*, while in *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in*, the piano is an equal collaborative partner. In *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in*, the piano does not provide an introduction for the violin's entrance. It complements the violin's melody by providing counterparts, which is composed from the fragments of the melody. The two instruments take turns in playing the thematic melody and the counterparts. No chordal accompaniment can be found throughout the piece. The equality between the parts reflects a deep Western influence. However, according to the main idea of the piece, the piano is imitating the *ch'in* in the Chinese traditional duet performance and utters it constantly with the Chinese soloistic characteristic. Thus, the influential source of the collaboration is blurred because a real fusion was achieved. This collaboration may be understood as an effective employment of the commonality of Chinese and Western musical elements.
2. The combination of Chinese and Western musical elements in *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in* is more spiritualized and intrinsic, thus the music conforms to the composer's own color as much as possible.

- a. Generally, in *Fisherman's Song*, Chen Yi used Western instruments and compositional techniques to present a Chinese plot with a folk song theme. The sound of the work is a clear combination of Chinese modality and Western techniques. In *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in*, the different musical elements are extractive (musical fragments of the Beijing Opera and selected Western contemporary compositional techniques) and more conceptually (Western instruments are played as the Chinese ones to present the traditional Chinese duet performance), which allows the blending to be spontaneous. The work sounds natural and personal.
- b. Harmonically, in *Fisherman's Song*, Chinese modes incorporate with Western chordal progressions and modulations, favoring bright and consonant Chinese color. In *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in*, Chen Yi stepped from chordal progressions to pure Chinese septatonic mode with very few accidentals, let alone modulation. But she explored fully the similarity between the instability of Chinese mode and the tonal ambiguity of Western contemporary music, and achieved wavering of modal center with one key signature. This achievement is another example of utilizing the commonality of Chinese and Western music for a real fusion.
- c. Structurally, in *Fisherman's Song*, Chen Yi juxtaposed the Chinese rhythmic looseness with Westernized developmental structure and the rondo form. In *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in*, both the Chinese and Western influences were closer to the essence of the music: The original Beijing operatic melodic

fragments were developed by Western techniques and spread throughout the entire theme, and then to the whole piece with Western rhythmic strictness and continuity. Furthermore, the overall formal organization of *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in* may be explained as a ternary form, while closely resembling an arch form. This design comprises a perfect combination of Chinese descriptive characteristic, presented by a ternary form, and Western modernization characteristic, presented by an arch form. The formal ambiguity serves as a formal fusion of Chinese and Western music, and allows both Chinese and Western audience to find familiarity in the work.

In summary, both the Chinese and Western influences permeate every drop of *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in* and became part of the composer's voice.

3. The compositional techniques in *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in* show the growing influence of the Western techniques from Chen Yi's Western immersion. The strictness of rhythm throughout the piece and the absence of an obvious pause between sections in *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in* are among the biggest steps away from Chinese music to Western music. The use of same melodic fragments as motivic materials in both violin and piano parts interlock the rhythm and determine the achievement of rhythmic strictness and steadiness. The longest rest between sections is a sixteenth rest. The rhythmic strictness and the continuity set up the basic style as Western. Furthermore, the entire work is based on the contemporary compositional technique of motivic material prolongation. Through this technique, Chen Yi stretched the original four-measure phrase into the thirteen-measure theme, and then

developed the theme into the whole piece. In addition, arch form is favored by contemporary Western composers; the formal similarity of *Romance of Hsiao and Ch'in* to an arch form demonstrates both Chen Yi's strong influence from contemporary Western composers, and her own advanced compositional skill.

CONCLUSION

J. Peter Burkholder, professor of musicology at Indiana University and the author of many journal articles, once noted that music analysis should rightly entail not only discovering the harmonic, melodic, thematic, rhythmic, metric, and phrase structure, but also recognizing and understanding their historical context, because the emotional, national and cultural associations, allusions and meanings, and sound effects should be considered as “inseparable pans of the musical web.”⁴⁷ By examining the culture and historical background as an important element in the process of Chen Yi's development of compositional style, it is clear that the Western influences affected directly her stylistic changes throughout her musical education. In the early stage, the influences from the Western-related social ideological change during the Chinese 1979 Economic Reform, and the exposure to Western twentieth century music in the Central Conservatory, allowed her to take off from the traditional Chinese spirit of self-denial and one-dimensional musical thoughts, to a broad utilization of Western harmonic and formal design, and a successful combination of these Western techniques with Chinese folksong

⁴⁷ J. Peter Burkholder, “Music Theory and Musicology,” *Journal of Musicology* 11/1 (Winter 1993): 13.

melodic material and aesthetic perspective. Later, in her American period, Chen Yi's study in Columbia University helped her to develop a clearer view of both Chinese and Western music, and her style changed to composing works from extractive Chinese musical elements and a synthesized perspective of Chinese and Western aesthetics, with a growing influence of Western techniques. The on-going Western cultural immersion after her doctoral study allowed Yi to explore more deeply her individuality; subsequently her music became more personal. Marilyn Bliss has observed, "If we know one thing about Chen Yi from listening to her music, it is that she must be a dynamo. Energy pulses through her music like a direct current of electricity."⁴⁸

The wide acceptance and the ideological as well as technical achievements of Chen Yi's compositions of Chinese-Western fusion did not develop in isolation, and cannot be attributed exclusively to her genius as an individual. Consider the long process of Chinese-Western fusion executed by composers of all five generations, from the early art songs to the *pipa* concerto by her college teacher Wu Zuqiang, Chen Yi's approach is a breakthrough on both the understanding of a general aesthetic viewpoint and the technical accomplishment of Chinese and twentieth-century tonal / structural interweaving. Furthermore, for its accessibility to both Chinese and Western audiences, the music of Chen Yi stands for a new era of the Chinese-Western fusion.

The musical fusion is not limited to Chinese and Western music. It has been adopted by an increasing number of composers throughout the world. Merging musical elements from different cultures as a compositional approach has widened the scope of source

⁴⁸ Marilyn Bliss, Program notes to *Chen Yi/Karen Tanaka: Invisible Curve*. (New World Records, NWR 80683, 2008).

materials and techniques. As stated by Guo Xin, “The development of mixed or hybrid styles is a prominent feature of twentieth-century world music.”⁴⁹ The developmental course of Chen Yi’s personal style stands as one of the ways in which cross-cultural elements can be integrated while the cultural traditions remain.⁵⁰ It facilitates the inter-cultural communication and enriches the world musical cultures.

The *Fisherman’s Song* and the *Romance of Hsiao and Ch’in* reveal only a limited portion of Chen Yi’s compositional approaches of the Chinese-Western fusion. As a versatile composer, she has been writing in a wide range of genres and her works present assorted ideas of realizing the fusion. For example, *Ba Ban* (2000) enlivens the ancient *Ching* concepts of change in a tonal calligraphy, merging with the Fibonacci series and polymodality the various musical elements of the Chinese folk ensemble “Ba Ban.”⁵¹ The second movement of her *Chinese Folk Dance Suite* (2001) featured all members in the orchestra singing the non-pitch syllables instead of playing their instruments, to imitate the percussive sound of the Chinese drums. In *Spring in Dresden* (2005), the rests between phrases are designed to symbolize the space in Chinese paintings. The listing of various examples can go on and on. As Chen Yi continues to weave idioms from both Chinese and Western music in her individual way, her innovative ideas of realizing Chinese-Western musical fusion will continue to be seen in performances all over the world. Both her works and their influences deserve further scholarly study.

⁴⁹ Guo, 20.

⁵⁰ Guo, 276.

⁵¹ Li Xiaole, 319.

APPENDIX: Basic Concepts and Theory of Chinese Music (Modes and Scales)

Since the Chinese scalar system has already been discussed in several theoretical treatises and dissertations, only the key concepts that are related to my musical analysis of the selected works will be addressed in the following passages.

The five tones that constitute the Chinese pentatonic modes are called *gong*, *shang*, *jiao*, *zhi* and *yu*. *Shang* is a whole tone above *gong* and *jiao* is a whole tone above *shang*. The major third between *gong* and *jiao* is the only major third in the pentatonic modes and thus is the key of analysis. *Zhi* is a minor third above *jiao* and *yu* is a whole tone above *zhi*. Each of the five notes could be the center of a mode and *gong* could be on any pitch. When *gong* is C and *jiao* is the center, it is called E *jiao* mode.⁵²

Four altered tones are added in to the basic pentatonic modes to form hexatonic modes and septatonic modes respectively. Altered *gong* is a semitone below *gong*; altered *jiao* is a semitone above *jiao*; altered *zhi* is a semitone below *zhi*; and *run* is a semitone above *yu*. In septatonic modes, there are three popular ones: *ya* mode with altered *zhi* and altered *gong*, *yan* mode with *run* and altered *jiao*, and *qing* mode with altered *jiao* and altered *gong*. As described in the Tang Dynasty (D.C.618 -- 907) treatise, *Concise Extracts from Books on Music*, the change of keys is called *xuan gong*; for example, *gong* shifts from C to E. The change of mode in the same keys is called *fan diao*; for example, the center note shifts from C *gong* to G *zhi*.⁵³

⁵² Niu Piao and others, ed., *China Youth Arts Encyclopedia*, (in Chinese) (Taiyuan: Prospect Press, 2002), 15-17.

⁵³ Chen Yingshi, "Fundamental Theories of Chinese Traditional Music in Ancient Writings," *Journal of Music in China* 1 (Fall 1999): 66-67.

Since the five major tones of the Chinese modes have the same interval relationship as C-D-E-G-A in C major, the lack of dissonant intervals such as minor second, augmented fourth, and diminished fifth gives pass to all kinds of non-chord tones. Furthermore, the development of the music does not follow functional harmonic logic; on the contrary, the linear melodies alone rule the development of it. Thus, the piano accompaniment for the melodies usually follows the following rules: it employs progressions of thirds instead of fourths and fifths to maintain consonant effect; it uses center notes frequently as non-chord tones while avoiding dissonant minor second, diminished fourth and augmented fifth; it favors secondary triads and avoids primary triads; and it replaces the thirds of the chords with suspended notes or other added notes such as a second above or below the thirds.⁵⁴

The following examples show the commonly used chords in a C *gong* mode:

The image displays five rows of musical notation, each representing a different chord family in a C *gong* mode. Each row contains six chord examples with their names written above them. The chords are:

- Row 1: C(add 9), C⁶, C⁶(add 9), Csus², Csus⁴, Csus⁴(add 9)
- Row 2: Dm(sus⁴), Dm⁷, Dm⁷(sus⁴), Dsus², Dsus⁴, Dsus⁴(add 9)
- Row 3: Em(sus⁴), Em⁷, Em⁷(sus⁴), Esus², Esus⁴, Esus⁴(add 9)
- Row 4: C(add 9), G⁶, G⁶(add 9), Gsus², Gsus⁴, Gsus⁴(add 9)
- Row 5: Am(sus⁴), Am⁷, Am⁷(sus⁴), Asus², Asus⁴, Asus⁴(add 9)

⁵⁴ Fan Zuyin, "The Harmonic method of the fourth/fifth and the second structure," (in Chinese) *Huangzhong-Journal of Wuhan Music Conservatory* 02 (2002): 3-14.

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