

RHAPSODY IN RED
-MUSIC CRITICISM IN CHINA

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-MUSIC CRITICISM IN CHINA**

**By
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A Thesis

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Abstract

Compared to the Western world, music critique in China is virgin soil that has been untouched by the rest of world for a long time. People in North America don't know how the Chinese think about or define "music"; what a Chinese musician's critical judgment is and moreover how the Chinese critique music. As in Europe, China does have its own music-critical culture and just needs time to review the past, examine it and then report to the world. This thesis introduces essential aspects of Chinese musical culture and philosophy and provides observations by Chinese contemporary music critics on western classical music.

The thesis begins with a brief retrospective of the history of music critique in China, and then discusses the Chinese philosophical ideas as exposed by some prominent music critics throughout a special cultural development period—the Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976. The final part of this thesis analyzes the articles by contemporary music critics in two major Chinese cities, Beijing and Shanghai during the period 2003 to 2005.

In summary, this thesis will present critical and in-depth research revealing the mysteries of music critique in China. If, as a Chinese proverb says: "a journey of a

thousand miles starts with a single step”, then I hope this thesis represents the first single step towards a better understanding of Chinese music in the west.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, with love.

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Part 1

Chapter 1

A lack of Critique at the Beginning

--A historical perspective

Chapter 1 discusses Chinese culture in general and aspects of music in particular while emphasizing that Chinese philosophy and culture are at the roots of Chinese music. Understanding Chinese culture, the historical aspect of music and its ancient philosophy are necessary tools in the understanding of the psychological origin of Chinese contemporary music critiques.

About Culture and Life

In Chinese, two characters make up the word for culture; these are “文” (Wén) and “化” (Huà). Wén means civilization, and Huà means change or transformation. From the Chinese cultural point of view, “change” is the only constant; while transformation of culture may involve barely noticeable departures or, at the opposite extreme,

revolutionary changes¹. Keeping such a perspective in mind, culture from a Chinese perspective is divided into three levels:

1. The first level of culture: the aspect pertaining to material goods, or people in relation to things.
2. The second level of culture: the aspect pertaining to society or people in relation to people.
3. The third level of culture: the aspect pertaining to spirit, or people's hearts in relation to people's hearts.²

These three levels of culture which include attitudes, ideas, values, knowledge, skills and material objects have colored all Chinese thinking and are embodied within the daily Chinese life.

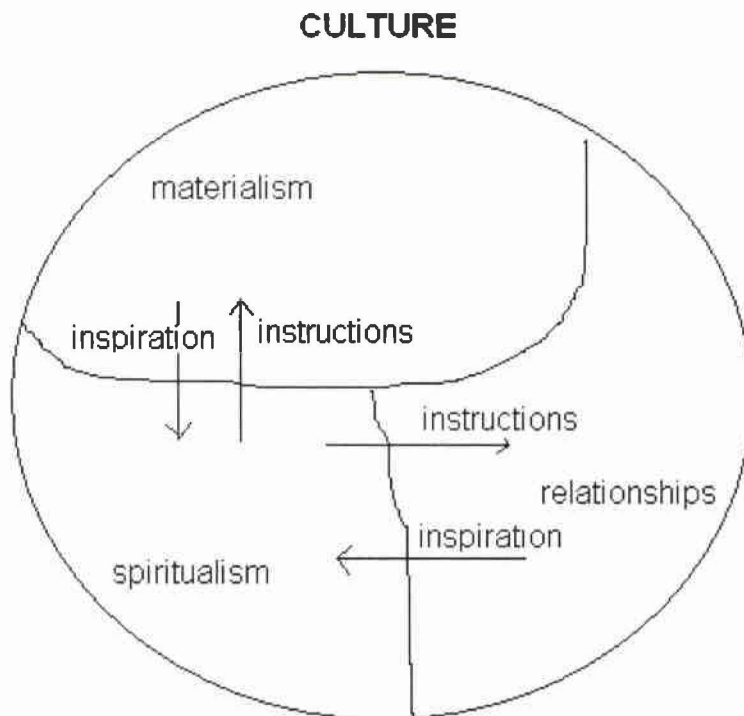
The first level deals with the basic necessities for survival, such as food, clothing and housing. The second level of culture deals with the dynamic states of social interactions. And the third level of culture deals with the human mind, including providing and developing political stability to better inspire exchange of thoughts and feelings. It is the mind that inspires, reaches out, accumulates knowledge, changes, and makes us enjoy life. Thus in Chinese culture, joy, anger, grief and pleasure are feelings that are all driven by the mind. However, these three levels are not subordinate to each other, but are interrelated within the definition of culture. Furthermore the Chinese also believe that the third level instructs the former two levels regarding behavior, and that the

¹ Lifu Chen. *An Introduction to Chinese Culture*. Taipei, Taiwan: The Council of the Chinese Cultural Renaissance, 1977, p.5.

² Mu Qian. *Essays on Chinese Culture. Book I*, Taipei, Taiwan: Sanming Books, Co., 1973, p.2.

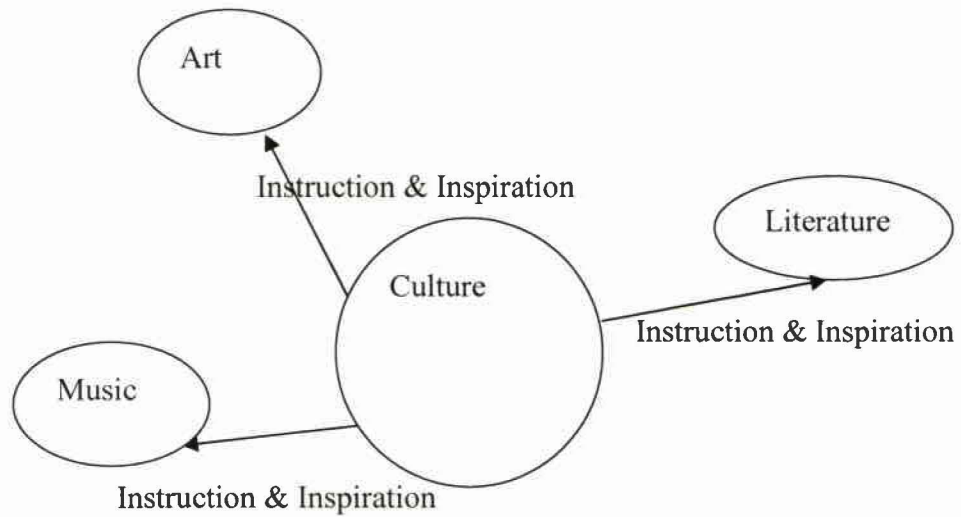
former two levels inspire the third level. Therefore, these balanced, although dialectical, aspects are at the core of Chinese culture.

Table 1.1. The relationship between three levels



By using these three levels' culture, Chinese favor balanced ideas over individual ideas and believe that such a balance can better support their minds and actions to form a harmonious whole. This thought drives the whole Chinese culture, including literature, arts as well as music and all the relevant thoughts and philosophy. (See Table 1.2. below)

Table 1.2. The relationship between culture, literature, arts and music



Music in ancient China

The word for “music” in Chinese is represented by the ideogram “乐”, which is pronounced “yuè”. This same ideograph, however, can also be pronounced as “lè”, meaning happiness and enjoyment. Therefore, this single word in Chinese symbolizes the relationship between music and human emotions.

Music is seen as the result of changing sounds with the root of music resting in the changing states of mind driven by external influences. When the heart is sad, the

sounds are harsh and unsupported, they die away. When the heart is pleased, the sounds are supported and tender; when it is joyful, the sounds are loud and disperse; when it is angry, the sounds are rough and violent; when it loves, the sounds are mild and gentle.

These six moods do not occur spontaneously but are caused by external influences.

Therefore the rulers of the past were cautious about things that influenced the minds of the people.³ For example, during a ceremony, the rulers will only use happy music to help create a happy, peaceful atmosphere.

The archaic form of the ideogram yuè/lè has both extrinsic and intrinsic meanings. The extrinsic meaning pertains to sensuality while intrinsic meaning embodies all the arts: music, dance, literature, the fine arts, architecture and even the art of cooking. It is this comprehensive meaning of yuè/ lè that characterizes the entire artistic evolution and manifestation of Chinese music, and thereby underlines Chinese musical culture as well. Music in Chinese culture is never an isolated phenomenon, but rather a contextual gestation broadly related to all aspects of life. The earliest known written critique of Chinese music is a book called 'Yuè' (Book of Music), written or rewritten by Ma Yang who lived during the first century A.D. In this book, music is mentioned together with ceremonies and (music) is viewed as being influential in shaping human minds toward

³ Walter Kaufmann. *Musical References in the Chinese Classics*. Detroit: Information Coordinators, Inc., 1976., P.32

gentle and correct attitudes by removing from the mind of people brutal and vicious tendencies. It says (translation):

The combination of (several of) these tones for the purpose of providing enjoyment, and applied to the use of shields, axes, feathers, and tassels (in ceremonial dances) are called music.⁴

In this critique of Chinese music, one quickly becomes aware of the close affinity between philosophical and psycho-acoustical references. *Yuè, the first book of music critique*, contains mostly philosophical statements about music. In the “seventh statement of Reference 37 I”, it says:

All sounds originate from within. Music has close relations with the ethos of the time. Therefore, those who are aware of sound, but do not know the tones are animals. Those who know the tones, but not the (actual) music are ignorant. Only noble and distinguished persons comprehend music. 5

And again in the “nineteenth statement”:

The harmony between heaven and earth is reflected in the harmony of the best in music. The same order that exists between heaven and earth is reflected in the best of ceremony. Harmony is the reason why things do not lose their meaning and effect...⁶

⁴ Walter Kaufmann. *Musical References in the Chinese Classics*. Detroit: Information Coordinators, Inc. 1976., p.32

⁵ Ibid. p.33.

⁶ Ibid. ,p.42

The domination and limitation of music in China

The teachings of Confucius have had an unparalleled influence on Chinese culture through both his system of education and the book *Lunyu* which is a collection of his sayings. Confucius maintained that music has positive and negative power to influence people's behavior and desire. Positive music, or *shiyin* (proper sound), which he believed to have the attributes of harmony, peace, and appropriateness, was to Confucius an important educational tool capable of inspiring virtue and appropriate attitudes; whereas negative music, or *chiyue* (extravagant music), which had the inappropriate attributes of loudness and wanton noisiness, stimulated excessive and licentious behavior. This is the first example of works and rules being placed on the evaluation of Chinese musical expression.

The second limitation on Chinese music is the limitation Chinese music places upon itself, that is, self-inflicted. Chinese musical language is very weak, that is, although it has form, structure and harmony, it has a few melodies. Duets, trios, quartets or symphonies have never been present in Chinese music history. Its operas, Chinese music has more than 300 operatic forms, emphasize the libretto more than the music. Kun Opera, which is one of Chinese opera genres, also called "Kunshanqiang" or "Kunqu", originated in the Kunshan region of Jiangsu. (See the introduction of Kun Opera below)

It has a history of more than 500 years; it is the oldest opera in China and in 2001 was dubbed the representative of “Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Human Heritage” by UNESCO.

Figure 1.1 Actor and Actress in Kun Opera “*Peony Pavilion*”



Figure 1.2. Actresses in Kun Opera “*Peony Pavilion*”



Figure 1.3. Leading roles in Kun Opera are normally female heroines. Here is the heroine, Du Liniang, in Kun Opera “*Peony Pavilion*”



Kun opera is regarded by many as the most venerable and influential form of Chinese opera, dating back at least to the 1500s. Kun Opera originated during the reign of Emperor Jiajing (1521-1567) of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). It has its roots in the music of the Kunshan district, near Suzhou. In the early 1500s, the musician Wei Liangfu blended popular Kushan tunes with other musical styles to create kunqu, meaning "the music of Kunshan." In 1560, Liang Chenyu used kunqu to accompany his opera 'Laundering the Silken Yarn', producing the first true Kun Opera. Thus began the era of Chinese Opera, which in its many forms evolved largely from kunqu.

By the end of the century, kunqu had become China's most popular dramatic form. A number of Kun Operas became classics of Chinese literature, including Tang Xianzu's *The Peony Pavilion* and Kong Shangren's *The Peach Blossom Fan*.

But the years have not all been kind to the "elegant drama" (yabu). Kun Opera's highly refined, literary sensibilities gradually made it less appealing to the masses, which began to favor kunqu's brash younger sister, Peking Opera (jingju). By 1900, kunqu had nearly died out. Revived in part by the popularity of the opera 'Fifteen Strings of Copper', Kun Opera regained its footing in time to be all but wiped out by the "Cultural Revolution" (1966-1976). Only persisting interest in the art form in Taiwan and Hong Kong prevented its extinction.

It has long existed in the shadow of its more showy descendent, Beijing opera, but is now making something of a comeback. In 2001, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) named kunqu to the number one spot on its list of "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity." This milestone event helped halt the decline of Kun Opera and bring new energy to the art form. New performances, such as Bai Xianyong's production of 'The Peony Pavilion', have attracted increasing attention. Still, kunqu remains largely overshadowed by the noisier spectacle of jingju and faces a time when Chinese Opera on the whole is losing ground to cinema, television and other elements of pop culture.⁷

This long historical operatic form has only five basic melodies with thousands of different texts. This happens in Beijing Opera (see the definition of Beijing Opera below) too, which is probably the best-known Chinese national opera by the West.

In ancient times, Beijing Opera was performed mostly on open-air stages in markets, streets, teahouses or temple courtyards. The orchestra had to play loudly and the performers had to develop a piercing style of singing, in order to be heard over the crowds. The costumes were a garish collection of sharply contrasting colors because the stages were dim and lit only by oil lamps. It is a

⁷ China-window.com. *Kun Opera*. 19 Apr 2006,

< www.china-window.com/china_culture/performing_arts/kun-opera.shtml >

harmonious combination of Grand Opera, Ballet and acrobatic display, consisting of dancing, dialogue, monologue, acrobatic combat and mime. The Beijing opera band consists mainly of an orchestra band and a percussion band. The former frequently accompanies peaceful scenes while the later often follows scenes of war and fighting. The commonly used percussion instruments include castanets, drums, bells and cymbals. One person, usually playing the castanets and the drum simultaneously, is the conductor of the whole band. The orchestral instruments mainly consist of the Erhu, the Huqin, the Yueqin, the Sheng (reed pipe), the Pipa (lute) and other instruments. The band usually sits on the left side of the stage.

Figure 1.4. Beijing Opera Band on the right side of the stage



There are four main roles in Beijing Opera: Sheng, Dan, Jing and Chou. "Sheng" are the leading male actors and are divided into "Laosheng," who wear beards and represent old men, "Xiaosheng," who represent young men, "Wusheng," who are acrobats who play military men and fighters, and "Wawasheng" who play kids. These roles usually wear no facial paintings. "Hongsheng, another category of "Sheng" whose face is painted red, mainly

plays "Guanyu" (Chinese Ares) and "Zhao Kuangyin" (the founder of the Song Dynasty).

Figure 1.5. "Sheng" in Beijing Opera: Wawasheng, Wusheng, Hongsheng, and Xiaosheng (from the left to the right)



"Dan" is the female roles. Formerly, the term meant female impersonator. It is divided into many categories. "Laodan" are the old ladies while "Caidan" the female comedians. "Wudan" usually play military or non-military women capable of martial arts. The most important category, "Qingyi" usually play respectable and decent ladies in elegant costumes. "Huadan" represent lively and clever young girls, usually in short costumes.

Figure 1.6. "Dan" in Beijing Opera: Huadan and Caidan (from the left to the right)



"Jing," mostly male, are the face-painted roles who represent warriors, heroes, statesmen, adventurers and demons. "Jing" is generally categorized into "Zhengjing," "Fujing" and "Wujing."

Figure 1.7. "Jing" and "Chou" (from the left to the right)



"Chou" refers to clowns who are characterized by a white patch on the nose. Usually white patches of different shape and size mean roles of different character. They are not definitely rascals, while most of the time they play roles of wit, alert and humor. It is these characters who keep the audience laughing and improvise quips at the right moments to ease tension in some serious plays.⁸

Since its inception in the nineteenth century, the present Beijing Opera (It is called *jingju* in China – “jing” meaning “capital” (Beijing) and “ju” meaning “opera”) has created more than two hundred traditional plays. The sources of the plots of the Beijing Opera come mainly from popular legends, historical events, folk novels, and other narratives. However, all these plots use less than ten categories of melodies, of which “xipi” and “erhuang” are the two most important ones, generally used to conclude tragic or lyrical scenes. The Chinese form of interpreting music not only dealt with dynamics, tempo, climaxes and various forms of ornamentation, but also with the addition and deletion of portions of moral thematic material. The ultimate judgment on the accomplishment of a performer was primarily based on his thematic re-compositional ability, as well as the new level of musical achievement which depended upon the favorable comparison of the newly recomposed version with the previous older version and any other contemporaneous versions. The big difference between Western music and Chinese music is that Chinese music didn’t have a printed score until the late 1960s. Thus the same operatic piece exists in many versions, bearing the same title and sharing

⁸Travelchinaguide.com. *Beijing Opera*. 19 Apr 2006, <http://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/arts/beijing_opera/index.htm>.

thematic similarities presenting however, differences in melodic, rhythmical, and dynamic interpretations. In this restricted sense of composing, ancient Chinese music and its interpretations were transferred mostly orally from one generation to another. The oral teaching process not only transmitted basic musical parameters, but bodily gestures, performance, mannerisms, the transmitter's personal interpretation and even some of his personal philosophy on music as well as his psycho-spiritual outlook. This process also included playing instruction, verbal explanation and dissemination of oral literature about music for pupils to memorize and imitate.

This type of learning is called "knowing without a teacher" and it effects the idea of music critique as well. Li Yu, a Qing dynasty scholar, wrote in his book *Xianqing ouji* (ca. 1680): "It (music) can be sensed in silent intuition, but can't be verbalized' it can be transmitted by mouth, but not in writing".⁹ Thus for ancient music critics, the value of musical interpretation is impressed on the attentive imagination which only can be understood by educated minds but cannot be interpreted with words. That is, ancient Chinese musicians didn't think that anyone could understand music because music is such an imaginative high-end art, which cannot be interpreted by words and can only be understood by educated people. There is also an ancient tale in China named "*Boya broke his instrument*" Boya was a famous Qin (Chinese instrument) performer of his time.

⁹ Li Yu, *Xianqing ouji* [*Meeting without a plan*]. Beijing: People's Music Publication., 1983., p. 345

Although people liked his performance, he didn't really think that they could understand his music until one day he met a person by the name of Ziqi. When Boya played the Qin to express his respect to a saintly object such as a high mountain, Ziqi would say: "Amazing! It seems I have seen Mount Tai in your music!". And when Boya played bucolic images such as flowing streams, Ziqi would say: "Really cool! I think I saw flowing rivers and streams!" Whatever Boya played, Ziqi never failed to understand. Thus, Boya and Ziqi become very taciturn and quiet when playing music. When Ziqi died, Boya was very upset and he broke his Qin into pieces because he knew nobody else could understand his music any more.

The third music limitation arises from the fact that musical culture has rarely been recognized in China and therefore the critique of music has not been of major concern to musicians and audiences. Of all the arts in China, music is the most neglected art. "It has been on the decline since the T'ang dynasty about a thousand years ago when music in China reached its apex and boasted ten different styles of orchestras."¹⁰

There is no general or complete history of the 5,000 years of Chinese musical culture, and also critique documents of Chinese music are difficult to find. Among the available limited writings, music analysis is mingled with other art forms, such as poetry, painting etc. In *Yue*, there are many sentences to describe this:

¹⁰ Fu Lei. *Talking music with Fu cong*. Beijing: China People's Publication, 1987, p. 79

The nature of music is based upon the combination of melody and poem (contents) without causing any incorrect effects. Joy, pleasure, cheerfulness, and change are the basis of ceremony; sobriety, courtesy, and modest regard are the methods of its performances.¹¹

Finally, limitations in Chinese music arose because of its use as a propaganda tool for political purposes. Since ancient times the autocratic rulers of Chinese dynasties noticed that music was a powerful propaganda tool to help them consolidate their regimes. Because of this recognition, as early as the first millennium B.C. during the Zhou dynasty, every dynasty throughout Chinese history did establish an official music organization to set the standards for music interpretation and music education regarding performance and composition. Moreover, these official organizations had to collect folk songs from the far reaches of the kingdom, the lyrics of which revealed the popular public mood. Examples of such organizations are, *Dashiyue* (the Office of the Grand Music Master) during the Zhou dynasty, *Yuefu* (Music Bureau) during the Han dynasty, *Liyuan* (Music Education Department) during the T'ang dynasty, and presently the Ministry of Culture.

The traditional establishment of governmental music organizations is unique to China and indicates the importance of music within the society. On one hand, these official music organizations helped keep a systematic record of Chinese music; on the other hand, these organizations used music as a tool to drive a given political ideology.

¹¹Walter Kaufmann. *Musical References in the Chinese Classics*. Detroit: Information Coordinators, Inc. 1976., p.36

Music critique was used in the same fashion. For example, In *Yue*, “the third short musical reference” says that:

They (the ancient rulers) had ceremonies with the purpose of turning the minds of men in the right direction’ (their) music was used to make the sounds harmonious; their laws of conduct (were meant) to create order and their punishments to prevent evil.

The purpose of music, ceremony, punishment, and laws of conduct is one and the same: all (these elements) are used to unify the minds of the people and to create proper order in the land... Thus the music of orderly times is peaceful and joyful because their laws are mild (harmonious). The music of tumultuous times reflects discontent and frenzy because the laws are oppressive...¹²

This political function of music was not only utilized in ancient times, but is also found in modern Chinese music. For example, between 1930’s and 1940’s most of the folk songs texts from northwestern China were changed to express communistic ideology. The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) probably represents the most excessive period during which music was used almost exclusively as a propaganda tool.

¹² Walter Kaufmann. *Musical References in the Chinese Classics*. Detroit: Information Coordinators, Inc. 1976., p.32

Chapter 2

Chinese Cultural Revolution

Introduction

On May 12th 1963, a Chinese ultra leftist, Yao Wenyuan, who may be unknown in the West, but who later played a major role during the Culture Revolution and was a member of the Gang of Four, wrote a critique on Debussy's music. The article was originally published in *Wen Hui Bao*, which was a newspaper aimed at more open-minded or musically educated readers and was primarily read by intellectuals. In his article, Yao's critique on Debussy was not based on the composer's music; instead, he openly acknowledged that he knew nothing about Debussy or his music. However, armed with a translation of Debussy's music critiques by the fictional character Monsieur Croche in the article *the Dilettante Hater* he raised several questions: "Why were the publishers introducing and promoting the works of this musician from a bourgeois country? Why did they expect to introduce Western bourgeois music theory into China (since China is a proletarian society, we don't need to know about western bourgeois theory)?" The article received a huge response. Among them, He Luting, a representative

of music intellectuals who was the Director of the Shanghai Conservatory at that time, published the first, and the most critical response to Yao:

[He thanked] Comrade Yao for taking the time to read about Debussy but added that it was unfortunate he had so badly misunderstood Monsieur Croche. Unfortunately, Comrade Yao was clearly unfamiliar with the arts activities at the turn of the century and European bourgeois society and did not understand impressionist painting or music.

When one is unfamiliar with a subject”, Mr. He noted, “One should be very cautious and study harder to get the truth.¹³

About one week later, *Wen Hui Bao* ran another response to Mr. He’s article on Debussy, and then another and another. Among them were only a few defenders of the composer and his music; on the contrary, most of them just simply branded Debussy a bourgeois impressionist. Yao Wenyuan even wrote that Debussy did not truly understand the French peasants—Debussy thought their lives were idyllic, when in reality their lives were a constant struggle of blood, sweat and tears, like the lives that Chinese peasants used to suffer from. The landlords were constantly cheating them, therefore how could they possibly feel peaceful? Finally, Yao concluded that those who supported Debussy were bourgeois as well, because they had not experienced peasants’ lives and thus would never understand the peasants. However, after all of this, we make ask, is Debussy bourgeois?

This is not a difficult question to answer today and everyone knows that there is no need to clarify Debussy’s class. However at that time in China, the response gradually

¹³ He Lu-ting. *A few requests for art critic*. *Wen Hui Bao*, Aug., 1963.

transmuted into a debate between the intellectuals and the proletarian classes. The debate lasted more than one year and the core of this debate shifted from its original theme discussion of “what is music”, to “a culture and class struggle”. At the peak of the dispute, the government entered into the discussions and eventually Chairman Mao Zedong started the Cultural Revolution.

This was a disaster for Chinese intellectuals and especially for cultural critics. The worst part is that due to political reasons this event has not been revealed to the public. Another possible reason for this lack of knowledge was that normally when a topic was propelled onto the political arena, Chinese scholars had no interest in it because their concentration was focused on non-political ideas, they had no other choice. This type of reasoning is still present in the Chinese political arena. However, this chapter is not trying to record the facts or blame the politicians, but rather to explain the relationship between music and the power of the politics.

“The East Is Red”

The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was a struggle between the classes and culture, or in other words, a struggle between politics and culture, between the new politics and the old culture. As stated by Chairman Mao:

In the world today, all literature and art belong to the classes and must be geared to describe political lines. There is in fact no such a thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from the classes or art that is independent of politics. In other words, for the proletarian, true literature and art should always be subordinate to politics.¹⁴

Like literature and art, music was subordinated to politics so that music was defined as “Red”. One early revolutionary song, "The East Is Red," may best illustrate what “Red” music was. The song survived throughout the entire Cultural Revolution period. Indeed, it became the movement's anthem when the National Anthem of the People's Republic of China (PRC) was condemned because its lyrics had been written by Tian Han, who had been branded a counter-revolutionary by that stage. "The East Is Red", written in the winter of 1943 by a poor peasant named Li Youyuan (1903-1955), was based on a Shanxi folk song *Riding a White Horse* set in northwest China, near the Communist base area of Yan'an where Mao resided at the time.¹⁵ It was first published in

¹⁴ Zedong Mao. *Writings on Literature and Arts*. GuangZhou: P.R.China Army's Publishing House, 1967, P258

¹⁵Fanghao Xia. *Cannons of Red Music: The East Is Red*. XinHua Daily , Jan 16, 2005, <http://www.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/200501/16/cpmtent_2467899.htm>

JieFang Daily (a Communist daily newspaper published in Yan'an during the Chinese Liberation War) in 1944 and began with the following lyrics:

The East is red, the sun has risen.
China has produced a Mao Zedong.
He works for the people's happiness;
He is the people's savior.

The song was popular in Yan'an after it was published in the newspaper, but was not far less popular in other areas. It was sung though less frequently after the Liberation. However, in 1964, this song hit the peak of its popularity after it was used as the title piece in a musical *The East Is Red: a Song and Dance Epic*. The musical was performed in Beijing by 3,000 workers, peasants, students, and soldiers to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the PRC; it was later also released as a film.

The reasons for using this song as the representative musical expression of the Cultural Revolution are multi faceted: firstly, the song was written by a poor peasant, who represented the nadir of the proletariat. Therefore his music could certainly represent the proletarians. Secondly, the melody of this song is easy, simple and repetitive. Thus the song is easy to learn, even at a first listening. Thirdly and possibly the most importantly, the ardent lyrics of this song are perfectly dedicated to the Mao cult of the Cultural Revolution. In this song, Mao is called "the people's savior," which can be equated to Christ in Christianity. The function of this song is similar to that of a hymn sung in a Christian church. It is the perfect musical accompaniment to the new Chinese

Communist belief/religion and it is appreciation that believers sing out to their omnipotent “God”--Chairman Mao. It uses “red sun in the east” as a metaphor for Mao to enforce Mao’s image as a savior, that Mao is the one who gives a new and better life to the Chinese people. In fact, this type of song never fell into disfavor; instead it generated many best known “hymns” during later periods of Chinese history.

Spring Stories, written in 1994 by Wang Yougui, is a hymn to Chairman Deng Xiaoping. The lyrics of this song use “spring” as a metaphor for Deng to enforce Deng’s reformation image that by recordary how Deng opened economic ports to the West to reform the economy that had suffered from the ten-year Cultural Revolution.

Figure 2.1. Music Sample of *Spring Stories*

1=G 4/4 2/4 ♩=60 **春天的故事** 蒋升儒、叶旭全词
王佑贵曲

The musical score is presented in a system of staves. The piano accompaniment is written in treble and bass clefs with G-clef and F-clef. The vocal lines are in treble clef. The lyrics are in Chinese characters. Fingerings and breath marks are indicated throughout the score.

过门 (567) $\dot{1} \cdot \dot{1} \underline{76} \underline{35} \underline{53} 5 \cdot$ $\dot{1} \cdot \dot{1} \underline{76} \underline{35} \underline{53} 5 \cdot$ $\underline{6353} 2 \underline{1} \underline{37276} \underline{6}$

5 55 5323 70 6 75 0 1 7 6 7 7 57 5 — 5 2 2 67 6 · 3 3 — 5 —

(合唱)

5 55 6565 5 — 5 — 2 33 3761 5 — 5 —

春 天 的 故 事 春 天 的 故 事,

0 0 5 556 565 5 — 0 0 2 333761 5 —

春 天 的 故 事 春 天 的 故 事,

5 3 5 6 1. 2 3 5 2 2 — 0 0 0 0

难 忘 的 春 天

0 0 0 0 0 0 6 565 4 3 2 3

啊 啊

5 55 5323 7 0 6 7 5 5 — 5 —

春 天 的 故 事。

3 — 0 0 0 7 6 7 3 5 —

啊

(独唱)

5 5 5 3 2 3 1[·] 6 1 2 0 2 3 7 6 1 5 — 6 1 2 3 5 0 5
 一九七九年那是一个春天，有一位老人在
 一九九二年又是一个春天，有一位老人在

6 6 6 6 6 3 2 6 1 2 3 2 2 — 2 0 5 5 7 6 7 6 5 3 5 6 7 3 5
 中国的南海边画了一个圈，神话般地崛起座座
 中国的南海边表名，天大地回地崛起滚滚春

2 0 3 5 5 7 6 7 6 5 3 7 7 6 7 5 5 — 5 6 6 5 6 1 7
 城，奇迹般地聚起座座金山。春风啊唤醒了
 潮，征途上扬起浩浩风帆。春风啊吹绿了

6 4 5 6 2 2 — 5 6 6 5 6 1 7 6 6 6 5 6 5
 长城内外，春晖啊暖透了大
 东方神州，春雨啊滋润了华夏两

5 — 5 5 6 6 5 6 1 6 1 6 1 2 3 7 2 6
 岸，啊中国，中
 国，你迈开了气壮山河的新步伐，

5 7 6 1 5 6 3 5 5) 3 5 6 6 1 2 3 1 6 5 3 2 3 5 7 1 3
 你迈开了气壮山河的新步伐，

2 1 2 3 5 5 6 7 3 5 2 7 6 7 5 5 6 5 —
 伐，走向万象更新的春天。

5 5 5 6 5 6 5 5 — 5 — 5 5 5 6 5 2 3 7 0 6 7 5

春 天 的 故 事， 春 天 的 故

0 0 5 5 5 6 5 6 5 5 — 0 0 0 0

春 天 的 故 事，

5 — 5 — 7 6 7 3 5 5 5 5 6 5 6 5 5 — 5 —

事， 啊 春 天 的 故 事。

0 7 6 3 5 — 0 0 0 0 0 0 5 5 5 6 5 6 5 5 —

啊 春 天 的 故 事。

Entering the New Epoch, written in 1997 by Yin Qing, is a hymn to Chairman Jiang Zemin. The lyrics of this song describe how Jiang led Chinese people into a new epoch, how China has grown into one of the biggest, strongest countries in the world.

All these songs are composed with Chinese folk tune as their essence. The songs are so popular throughout China that almost everyone knows how to sing them.

Figure 2.2 Music Sample for *Entering the New Epoch*

走进新时代

蒋开儒词
印青曲

$J = 112$

1=C (1̣ — — 1̣ 1̣ 1̣ 6̣ 5̣ · 3̣ 3̣ — — — 3̣ — — — 1̣ — — 1̣ 1̣

1̣ 6̣ 5̣ · 2̣ 2̣ — — — 2̣ — — — 1̣ — — — 2̣ — 1̣ — 5̣ — — —

6̣ — — — 1̣ — — — 1̣ — — —) 5̣ 1̣ 2̣ 3̣ 3̣ 2̣ 1̣ 5̣ 5̣ 1̣ 2̣ 3̣ 3̣ 2̣ 1̣ 5̣

1̣ · 6̣ 5̣ 3̣ 2̣ 3̣ 2̣ 1̣ — — — 3̣ 5̣ 1̣ 1̣ 1̣ 2̣ 3̣ 2̣ 6̣ 5̣ — — —

定 想 告 诉 世 界； 我 中 国 的 命 运 是 自 己 主 导。

1̣ · 2̣ 2̣ 1̣ 6̣ 5̣ 6̣ — — — 5̣ 6̣ 1̣ 3̣ 5̣ 2̣ 3̣ 2̣ 1̣ 2̣ — — —

总 让 我 告 诉 未 来； 我 对 生 活 是 多 么 热 爱。

3̣ · 5̣ 6̣ 5̣ 6̣ 5̣ 3̣ 2̣ 3̣ 2̣ 1̣ 3̣ 5̣ 1̣ 1̣ 1̣ 1̣ 2̣ 3̣ 2̣ 1̣ 1̣ 6̣ — — —

勤 劳 勇 敢 的 中 国 人； 气 风 发 展 走 进 新 时 代。

6̣ 2̣ 3̣ 1̣ 1̣ 6̣ 5̣ 6̣ 5̣ 3̣ — — — 2̣ 2̣ 6̣ 5̣ 3̣ 2̣ 3̣ 2̣ 1̣ — — —

啊； 我 们 意 气 风 发； 走 进 那 新 时 代。

5̣ 6̣ 1̣ 6̣ 1̣ 2̣ 3̣ 3̣ — — — 2̣ 3̣ 2̣ · 5̣ 6̣ 1̣ 3̣ 2̣ — — —

我 们 唱 着 东 方 红， 当 家 做 主 站 起 来，

5̣ 6̣ 1̣ 6̣ 1̣ 2̣ 3̣ 2̣ · 1̣ 1̣ 6̣ 1̣ 2̣ 3̣ 2̣ 6̣ 5̣ — — — 5̣ 6̣

我 们 讲 着 春 天 的 故 事， 改 革 开 放 富 起 来。 继 往

1̣ 1̣ 6̣ 1̣ 2̣ 3̣ 3̣ — — — 2̣ 3̣ 5̣ · 3̣ 2̣ 3̣ 3̣ 2̣ 3̣ 2̣ 1̣ 6̣ —

开 来 的 领 路 人， 带 领 我 们 走 进 那 新 时 代。

5̣ · 3̣ 5̣ 6̣ 2̣ · 3̣ 2̣ — 1̣ 6̣ 1̣ — — — 1̣ — — —

高 举 旗 帜 开 创 未 来。

1. 间奏略

1̣ — — — *D.S.* 1̣ — — — 1̣ — — — 1̣ 0 0 0 *Fine*

来 来。

On the one hand, on the surface, this is just the result of national promotion of these stately melodies. For instance, these songs are often broadcast on all radio channels and are sung by famous Chinese singers and made into a video for MTV. On the other hand, the popularity clearly reveals that this music is used as a tool to help construe political thoughts, using what Foucault calls the “hidden power” in his influential book *Discipline and Punish*.

The loss of music critique under the Power of Politics

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault uses an allegory to tell the reader:

how social surveillance, which used to be exercised directly and brutally, had not really been moderated since the eighteenth century; in fact, it had become more pervasive and insidious through indirect, mainly psychological, means of discipline in schools, prisons, and hospitals. This new surveillance is worse than the old, not because it perpetuates power (power is everywhere), nor because it is held by one group rather than another (this is inevitable), but because it works in the hidden reaches of the soul rather than leaving its mark on the body for all to see.¹⁶

The ‘hymns’ for Chinese Communist Party leaders are such types of psychological means used to perpetuate power. In these ‘hymns’, politics is treated as a philosophy, a religion. Music is seen as the best ‘server’ to help enforce power in a practical way. This is not the first time that music has been used as a tool to oversee the

¹⁶ Lilla Mark. *The Reckless Mind-Intellectuals in Politics*. New York: NYREV, Inc. 2001, p.152

development of Chinese culture. However, this function of music reached its zenith during the Cultural Revolution.

Although after about fifteen years of post-war (World War II) redevelopment the Chinese Communist Party had finally gained its ruling position, Mao did not think that this leading position was stable enough. External affairs deepened Mao's anxiousness in the early 1960s such as the sharp deterioration in China's relationship with its "big brother", the USSR. Mao and other senior Chinese leaders had been upset ever since Khrushchev made his "secret" criticisms of Stalin at the Soviet Communist Party's 20th Congress in 1956. Their anxiety was further compounded when the Soviet leader visited the United States in 1959.¹⁷ The Soviets, on the other hand, regarded China as their "little brother," which did not follow the teachings of "big brother," and was developing too fast and should instead have been taking a more cautious and guarded approach to such progress. It was several months after China's 10th anniversary celebrations that Mao and Khrushchev began to criticize each other publicly, such as China denouncing Yugoslavia and supporting Albania while the USSR was doing the opposite¹⁸.

In the summer of 1960, the USSR took the drastic action of breaking diplomatic relations with China and calling back all of its 1,390 foreign experts and advisers, who

¹⁷ Hu Sheng. *Seventy years of the Chinese Communist Party*. Chinese Communist Party Historical Documentary Study, 1998, p.377-410

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 417

were helping in the Chinese economic redevelopment. The loss of the Soviet advisers was a major setback for China, which had counted on their help in many important areas of industry, science, agriculture, construction...etc.¹⁹

The split with the Soviet Union had several implications for classical music in China. The first and most obvious was that China's conservatories, orchestras and music schools were now on their own. For the very first time, they would be without any long-term teachers or advisers from Eastern Europe. The second and less immediately obvious result was that symphonic music in China had lost its silent protector. Since the founding of the New China, Chinese who supported the development of orchestras, conservatories, operas and ballets could always point to the example of their "big brother" when they wished to explain why such developments were desirable and necessary, even if these were not accepted or understood by the masses.

Critics of symphonic music had not been silent, but since the introduction of the 'Soviet model', they had little chance of being heard. But with the break in brotherly relations, the balance between opponents and supporters of symphony orchestras and music slowly tipped in the favor of the critics. In this changing atmosphere, the criticism grew louder. These critics were convinced by the idea that the Party needed them even though in 1961 and in the first half of 1962 the government made efforts to revive the

¹⁹Hu Sheng. *Seventy years of the Chinese Communist Party*. Chinese Communist Party Historical Documentary Study, 1998, p. 488-493

“Hundred Flowers”²⁰ beliefs. However, after only a few months from its announcement, in September of 1962, the intellectuals became chilled by Mao’s complaints about the arts. Mao complained that the New Chinese music, arts and literature were only representing the thousands of years of China’s old feudal past or the thousands of years of Western bourgeoisie culture; but were never involved in the lives of the New China, of the People’s Republic. He commented that “music, arts and literature were the forgotten corner that had escaped the class struggle”.²¹ “Class struggle” was a dreaded phrase for intellectuals. It signaled clearly that Mao was rejecting open critical policies, but preferred a confrontational and divisive approach to governance. Mao’s intent was for the arts and literature to serve class struggle, not stay aloof from it.

Further to these internal issues, Mao also noticed many problems of transition from the old society to the new one as well as problems relating to the establishment of a socialist state. The morals or the philosophy of this new socialist state was still old or borrowed from the outside world, Marxism or Leninism for instance.²² Mao also feared

²⁰ “Hundred Flowers” was a speech that Chairman Mao presented before a closed session of Party leaders on May 2, 1956. The phrase “Hundred Flowers” is a metaphor of a new era of creative freedom and diversity in which a hundred flowers would bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend. Mao used this phrase to especially encourage artists to be free to create, scientists to investigate, intellectuals to critique and therefore everyone would benefit from the openness.—Extracted from *Chinese Literature Dictionary*, p. 347-357, 2002 edition.

²¹ Zedong Mao. *Writings on Literature and Arts*. GuangZhou: P.R.China Army’s Publishing House, 1967, p. 133.

²² Zedong Mao. *Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art*. Beijing: Beijing Documentary Press, 1977

that, without a stable culture to organize the masses during the transition, a period when society is unstable, capitalism could make a comeback in China, since the “bourgeois” culture had dominated the ideological world for hundreds of years. Therefore the essential reason for Mao starting the Cultural Revolution was that he decided to undertake an ideological revolution so that the ideologies belonging to the old capitalist world could be thoroughly removed and replaced by new proletarian ones including the idea that all the arts, including that of literary criticism should have an ultimately political motive. For Mao, the struggle to foster that which is proletarian and to liquidate that which is bourgeois on the cultural front is a very important aspect of the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, between the socialist and the capitalist road and between proletarian and bourgeois ideology. Everything people experience in their everyday lives is seen as subject to a political interpretation. Thus Mao enforced his belief that the proletariat should seek to change the world according to its own world outlook since the bourgeoisie was trying to accomplish the same. He realized that merely gaining political power was not enough. To forever secure the politics of power, he had to change the way people thought. Socialism should have its own culture that served the workers, peasants and soldiers, proletarian politics, the consolidation and development of the socialist system and its gradual transition to communism²³

²³ Hu Sheng. *Seventy years of the Chinese Communist Party*. Chinese Communist Party Historical Documentary Study, 1998, p.422-437

As part of this ideology, Mao started a 10-year cultural revolutionary war. What Mao did for literature, he also did for music. He firstly closed the open atmosphere in music critique and banned western music developments.

Interpreter, art and music critic Fu Lei's last words might give us a glimpse of this new atmosphere:

Life is full of difficulties. We (Fu's wife and Fu) have to continuously 'reconstruct' ourselves, to overcome any traditional, or capitalistic, or non-Marxian thoughts, feelings or 'inveterate habits', as they have called it. We have to purge all moral or social values that we have gotten used to... However, to a person who had lived in the old society for more than forty years and was later trained overseas, educated by 'anti-communist' western capitalist democracy, it is very hard for him to deconstruct or reconstruct himself. Experiencing the endless laborious, painful work of reconstruction and deconstruction, we had tried our best and were beaten out by this long and difficult journey...there seems no end and we don't know if you can get this letter since most of the time we have to attend critical committee and accept the criticism on us from the people of the masses.²⁴

During the Cultural Revolution, Mao explained "deconstructing culture" as "destroying the old²⁵"; that is, destroying the old thoughts, old cultures, old customs and old habits. However, Mao did not explain what exactly "the old" was and how to

²⁴ Fu Lei (1908-1966), translator and critic, committed suicide with his wife at home on Sep.3rd, 1966. He was a connoisseur of fine arts and music, whose son gradually grew up to become a world-fame piano soloist—Fu Cong. His book '*Letters to his son and friends*' (published in 1981 after his death, authorized by his son—Fu Cong, has been reprinted five times, and has sold over one hundred and sixty millions' copies, without counting the Hong Kong versions) has become the predominant guideline for the younger generation studying western classical music in contemporary China. These words are elicited from Hong Kong version, from a letter Fu Lei wrote to his son, Fu Cong's wife—Zmaira Menuhin in August 1966, just before Fu and his wife's suicide. Moreover, this letter is not included in the mainland China's version. The above words are my translation.

deconstruct it. Thus, workers, peasants and the laboring people who live at the bottom of the social ladder, but who were the core of the Cultural Revolution, quickly interpreted the concept as destroying antiques and historic artifacts and sites, which they could not own before. Conceived of as a "revolution to touch people's souls," the aim of the Cultural Revolution was to destroy the Four Olds -- old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits -- in order to bring the fields of education, art and literature in line with Communist ideology.

Anything that was suspected of being feudal or bourgeois was to be destroyed.

That meant:

- burning the Chinese classics, western books and the music and art works which they could not understand (See figure 2.3. below);
- grabbing, hitting, imprisoning or even killing the so-called "privileged classes" (See figure 2.4. below); and finally
- rescinding all belief except Chinese Communism (See figure 2.5. below), which meant the communism of Chairman Mao communism. (See figure 2.6. below)

Figure 2.3. Burning the Chinese classics, western books and the music and art works

which they could not understand



Figure 2.4. Grabbing, hitting, imprisoning or even killing the so-called “privileged classes”

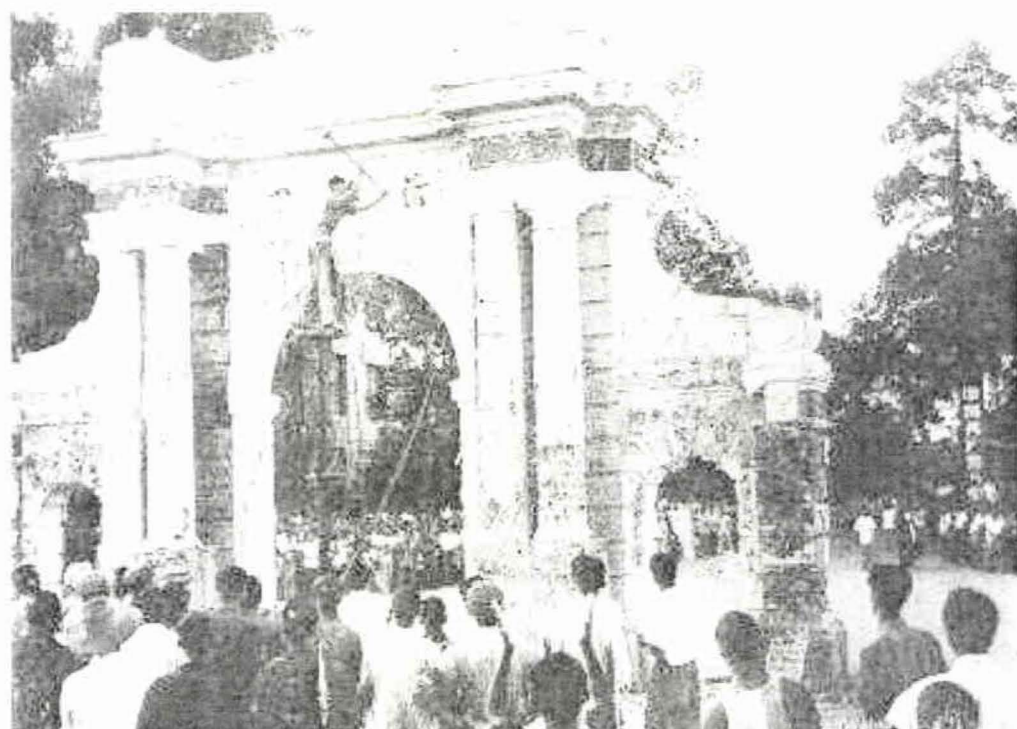


Figure 2.5. Rescinding all belief except Chinese Communism





Figure 2.6. Students at a high school dancing a “red dance” to show their worship to Chairman Mao



To Mao the revolution had to be a permanent process, constantly kept alive through an unending class struggle. “Hidden enemies in the party and intellectual circles had to be identified and removed.”²⁶ No other leader in history held as much power over so many people for so long as Mao Zedong. He very successfully transferred this message to the laboring classes that by deconstructing (destroying) “the old”, they could earn the power which they never had before. Being attracted by this point, people were frenetic about the “power” image that Mao conveyed to them and could not wait to own such power. Therefore, there was no surprise in seeing the “deconstruction” process sweep through the whole country like a firestorm. Then Mao quickly imposed strict moral codes and set up new ones, which were introduced on a grand scale and became the norm everywhere during the Cultural Revolution. Ironically when the labor group had finished breaking up the classes, they announced with big fanfare that now everyone was equal. “Everyone is equal” meant for example, that intellectuals who had been denounced were no more intellectuals because they now were farming, and did not read books any longer or critique thoughts anymore. On the other hand, they pronounced themselves proletariats, the only class that could escape the Revolution, which made them feel superior to all other classes and after they took social control of the country, they put

²⁶ Zedong Mao. *Mao Zedong's Writings on Literature and Arts*. Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Press, , 1975, p.67

back in place what they rejected, that is, they created a new hierarchical social structure using culture as a tool to spread their ideology.

They initiated social and educational reforms and required the masses to dress in unisex fashion (which meant everyone should dress in blue, green or gray), and gave collective-farm leaders the power to deny marriages, if the couple did not belong to the same class. Extending far beyond the posters, the messages of the Cultural Revolution saturated every type of medium available. The reproduction of words and symbols--through radio and television, theatre and art, books and pamphlets, postcards and collectors' cards, ornaments and badges--intensified the Cultural Revolution's impact and reverberations. At assemblies in Tiananmen Square, people held up their Quotations of Chairman Mao, the same "red books" portrayed on posters, postage stamps, and alarm clocks. Citizens of the People's Republic of China (PRC) recited together from their books at study meetings, and they covered their physical surroundings with the quotations so that buildings, walls, and hills all proclaimed the thought of Mao Zedong. Ceramic factories turned their energies into making statuettes of characters from revolutionary musicals (the so-called model operas), and posters of the times also portrayed the same characters.²⁷ Art and literature workers "transplanted" entire musical texts from one genre to the next and they detached individual pieces from song and dance

²⁷ Xudong Huang. *Lishi bu hui wangji tamen*[History will not forget them]. Beijing: Zhonggong Zhongyang Dangxiao Chubanshe, p122

dramas to be sung in rallies and chimed on clock towers. This monumental inter-textual web of texts, images, sounds, and movements surrounded and entrapped Cultural Revolution participants and bystanders alike. Such practices contributed to making the Cultural Revolution a multimedia event that was a sustained and pervasive part of daily life for people throughout the PRC.

The Communist Party under Mao Zedong banned anything Western -- including classical music -- and exiled China's musicians and teachers to work on farms. During the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and '70s, millions of educated youths were sent to rural areas to work in the countryside and learn from the peasantry. Mao believed that this would ultimately create a new society where there would be no gap between urban and rural people, laborers and intellectuals. When my violin teacher recalled his experience, he looked at it in a different way. He thought Mao was a very smart leader, because he sent intellectuals to rural places to do the heavy, rough work everyday and stopped them from thinking. Intellectuals did not have time to think, as they were too preoccupied with the physical work. At the end of the day, they only wanted to go to bed, but they still were forced to recite Mao's words. He recalled that having been identified as an intellectual; he was sent to a farm for re-education. Every morning, he was woken up at 6:00am, and forced to read Mao's selected works or important newspaper editorials. From 8:00 am until noon, he had to clean the toilets, move piles of rocks, or

chop firewood, and in the afternoon compose self-criticisms. In *Li Delun Zhuan* [A Biography of Li Delun], Li Delun recalled that every morning and evening, he and his 'fallen' colleagues were required to sing 'The Howling Song':

I am an ox-ghost and snake demon.
 I am an ox-ghost and snake demon.
 I am guilty, I am guilty.
 I committed crimes against the people,
 So the people take me as the object of dictatorship.
 I have to lower my head and admit to my guilt.
 I must be obedient.
 I am not allowed speaking or acting without permission.
 If I speak or act without permission,
 May you beat me and smash me.
 Beat me and smash me.²⁸

In this book, Li also states:

"The rest of each day brought different tortures. Sometimes my colleagues and I were forced on our hands and knees and had to crawl on the floor like animals, sometimes we were ordered to stand facing a wall for hours on end, and sometimes a Red Guard would come in and mess up everything in our rooms."²⁹

Under such heavy physical forces, the intellectuals had no extra strength to produce any academic research. Thus Mao successfully found a way which prevented intellectuals from delivering opinions of the regime.

Just as government and cultural leaders moved in and out of favor, so often did the music. When composers were branded "counter-revolutionaries," their compositions often suffered the same fate. Musical fashion and criticism tended to follow the shift in

²⁸ Delun, Li. *Li Delun Zhuan* [A Biography of Li Delun]. Beijing: Zuoqia Chubanshe, 2001, p.379.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p.383.

power and ideology and, therefore, even model works were subject to constant revisions. Music that revolutionary songbooks once heralded as embodying the "indomitable spirit of the Chinese people struggling against oppression to create a New China,"³⁰ later could be denounced as "bourgeois"³¹ and "over-romanticized"³² And music once denounced as "bourgeois" later could be "re-evaluated" as capable of expressing the revolutionary thought of the masses. One never could be sure. A song sung one day might be condemned the next as "incorrect" and, thereby, an indication that the singer harbored hidden anti-revolutionary thoughts.

During the 1930s through the 1950s, art and literature workers devoted much of their creative energies to producing compositions based on Chinese folk music. But by the late 1960s, the direction of their work shifted because Jiang Qing--the wife of Mao Zedong and one of the leaders of cultural affairs throughout most of the period--did not like "vulgar" folksongs. Being labeled "incorrect" was not necessarily the end of the line for a musical composition, however, since some pieces could be "revised," just as some people of suspect political character could be "re-educated."

³⁰Zedong Mao. *Mao Zedong's Writings on Literature and Arts.*, Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Press, 1975, p.87

³¹ Ibid. p.134

³² Ibid. p.137

Collectives of art and literature workers, "with assistance from the masses,"³³ revised and adapted existing works and composed new ones. By the clever act of hauling his piano into the fields and playing revolutionary songs for the masses, ie revising the piano, Yin Chengzong for example established the "bourgeois" piano as an instrument acceptable--within the musical pantheon of the Cultural Revolution--to establish himself as a revolutionary musician.³⁴

The *Yellow River Piano Concerto*, an adaptation of Xian Xinghai's famed *Yellow River Cantata*, was created by Yin Chengzong and several other musicians under Jiang Qing's guidance. At her suggestion, Yin and three fellow members of the Yellow River composition team traveled to the banks of the Yellow River to prepare for the task of writing the concerto. They lived in caves, rowed with the boatmen and interviewed peasants about the war against Japan. Then according to Yin Chengzong's own account, they went back to Beijing to compose China's first revolutionary piano concerto with the idea that it should express:

Chairman Mao's concept of people's war. To echo his directive we broke with the old western conventions that a concerto must consist of highly formalistic movements and decided to write four organically linked sections... We made full use of the richly expressive concerto form with the piano accompanied by other instruments. Guided by Chairman Mao's directives that we should make the past serve the present, make things foreign serve China, and evolve the new from the old, in the boatmen's song we adapted the western cadenza

³³ Yiman, Liu. *Rethinking Cultural Revolution Culture*. University of Heidelberg, Dec 30, 2000
<<http://www.sino.uni-heidelberg.de/conf/propaganda/musik.html>>

³⁴ Chengzhong Yin. *Piano tells my story*. Guangzhou Daily, Sep 14, 2002, pp.24-29

technique to depict the tumultuous river and the boatmen's victory over the rapids... We also made use of traditional techniques of such Chinese instruments as the zheng and the yangqin to enliven the melodies and bring out the youthful exuberance of the liberated area... Finally, at the suggestion of a soldier, we added the melodies of *The East is Red* and *The Internationale* to evoke the splendid image of China's working class and broad masses fighting for the liberation of all mankind on the side of all oppressed nations and peoples of the world.³⁵

The concerto soon took its place among the model works and finally premiered in 1970 and was an instant success. It is the only one of the model symphonic works created under Jiang Qing's guidance that still remains in the regular repertoire of Chinese orchestras. It is even performed on occasion by orchestras outside China. In 1973, Harold Schonberg reviewed it in *The New York Times*. He panned it as "movie music... It is a rehash of Rachmaninoff, Khachaturian, late romanticism, bastardized Chinese music and Warner Brother climaxex."³⁶ Ten years later, Schonberg re-reviewed this work and commented:

Remember the "Yellow River" Concerto? It did have a brief vogue ten years ago. It was one of those awful ideologically-approved pieces of Socialist-realism propaganda, but it was so bad it actually had kitsch value, and it did have a glittering and rather difficult piano part. Mr. Yin was the pianist selected by Mr. Ormandy to play it. That was only right, for Mr. Yin was one of the committee of composers who had written it. Another musician took

³⁵ Chengzhong Yin. *How the piano concerto 'Yellow River' was composed*. Chinese Literature II, Beijing pp. 101-103

³⁶ Harold c. Schonberg. *A Chinese pianist resumes an interrupted career*. New York Times, September 25, 1983

care of the orchestration, a third of the ideological content, and there was a fourth mysterious presence who contributed something or other.³⁷

Schonberg's comments notwithstanding, the Yellow River Concerto helped introduce Western style orchestral music to millions of Chinese who heard it live or watched it on film. Like the musical works, it ultimately proved more important in promoting Western style music than revolution. And, as Jiang Qing said of all the model operas, "Although they still have shortcomings and areas which need further adjustment, at least they have caused a sensation and shocked the world!"³⁸

A set of strict, albeit changing, principles guided their production. Quotes from Mao and Jiang Qing were printed as introductions to published versions of model works and ballets. These functioned as imprimaturs and served to push forward the canonization of particular pieces.³⁹

Figure 2.7. Music Sample of Yellow River Piano Concerto

³⁷ Harold c. Schonberg. *A Chinese pianist resumes an interrupted career*. New York Times, September 25, 1983 (see the article in Appendix III)

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Xudong, Huang. *Lishi bu hui wangji tamen [History will not forget them]*. Beijing: Zhonggong Zhongyang Dangxiao Chubanshe, p.59

1st Movement: Protect the Yellow River

保卫黄河

殷承宗 储望华
盛礼洪 刘庄

Allegro
♩ = 138

ff

ritenuto e accel.

ff

cresc.

Op. 108

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a series of chords and melodic lines with various accidentals. The lower staff is in bass clef and features a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes. There are dynamic markings such as *mf* and *f* throughout the system.

The second system is a grand staff with three staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom two staves are in bass clef. The music is highly rhythmic and complex, with many accidentals and dynamic markings. A separate bass clef staff is located at the bottom of the system, containing a few notes. The system concludes with a double bar line and a key signature change to two sharps.

Presto

$\text{♩} = 176$

The third system is a grand staff with three staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom two staves are in bass clef. The music is in 2/4 time and features a variety of dynamic markings including *sf*, *f*, *mf*, and *f*. The tempo is marked as Presto with a quarter note equal to 176 beats per minute. The system concludes with a double bar line and a key signature change to two sharps.

The fourth system is a grand staff with two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with eighth notes. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth notes. The dynamic marking *mp* is present. The system concludes with a double bar line and a key signature change to two sharps.

Animoso

The image displays a musical score for piano, consisting of five systems of staves. Each system includes a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate staff for the right hand. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'Animoso'. The score begins with a forte dynamic (*f*) in the first system. The second system includes the instruction 'sempre' in the right-hand staff. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The notation is clear and professional, typical of a published musical score.

This musical score is for a piano piece, consisting of six systems of staves. Each system contains two grand staves (treble and bass clef). The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 2/4. The score is written in a style typical of a piano accompaniment, with chords and melodic lines in both hands. The first system shows a steady accompaniment in the bass and chords in the treble. The second system introduces a more active treble line with eighth-note patterns. The third system features a more complex treble line with some rests. The fourth system continues with a similar treble line. The fifth system introduces a change in dynamics to *mf* (mezzo-forte) and includes some slurs. The sixth system concludes with a final *mf* dynamic and includes some slurs and accents.

2nd Movement: Angers of the Yellow River

黄河愤

殷承宗 储望华
盛礼洪 刘庄

Andantino grazioso

The musical score is written for piano and consists of four systems. The first system begins with a double bar line and the tempo marking 'Andantino grazioso'. The right hand starts with a melody in the treble clef, marked 'mf', while the left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment in the bass clef. The second system continues the piece, featuring a dynamic marking 'p' in the bass clef. The third and fourth systems show further development of the melodic and harmonic material, with various articulations and dynamics throughout. The score concludes with a double bar line and a fermata over the final notes.

The musical score is written for piano and voice. It begins with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 80$ and a dynamic of *mf*. The piano part features complex textures with triplets and sixteenth-note runs. The voice part includes melodic lines with slurs and dynamic markings such as *rit.* (ritardando) and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The score is divided into systems, with the final system showing a piano accompaniment of chords and a voice line. Performance instructions include *rit.*, $\text{♩} = 80$, *mf*, *mp*, and *p*. There are also markings for slurs and accents, such as *acc.* and *acc.* with a vertical line.

The image displays a page of musical notation for piano, consisting of three systems of music. Each system includes a grand staff with a treble and bass clef, and a separate staff for the right hand.

System 1: The first system begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The right hand part features a melodic line with a long slur over the first four measures, marked *mf*. The left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system of this block shows a continuation of the accompaniment with a *mf* dynamic.

System 2: The second system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The right hand part has a melodic line with a slur and a *mf* dynamic. A *rit.* (ritardando) marking is placed above the music. The left hand part has a steady accompaniment. The second system of this block shows the accompaniment with a *p* (piano) dynamic.

System 3: The third system begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The right hand part has a melodic line with a slur and a *mf* dynamic. The tempo marking *a tempo* is placed above the first measure. The left hand part has a steady accompaniment. The second system of this block shows the right hand part with a *mp* (mezzo-piano) dynamic.

3rd Movement: Song of the boatmen

黄河船夫曲

1

Allegro molto agitato = 168

The musical score is written for piano and consists of five systems of music. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic in the left hand and a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic in the right hand. The second system features a fortissimo piano (*ffp*) dynamic. The third system includes a crescendo (*cresc.*) and fortissimo (*ff*) dynamics. The fourth system is marked fortissimo (*ff*). The fifth system also features fortissimo (*ff*) dynamics. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

2

♩[♩] -----

The first system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves contain a continuous, rapid sixteenth-note pattern. The music is in a key with two sharps (F# and C#) and a 2/4 time signature. The pattern is consistent across both staves, with some dynamic markings like accents and slurs.

♩[♩] -----

rit.

The second system continues the sixteenth-note pattern from the first system. It features a 'rit.' (ritardando) marking above the staff, indicating a gradual deceleration of the tempo. The notation includes various articulations such as slurs and accents. The system concludes with a fermata over the final notes.

1 ♩ = 66

f

The third system is marked with a box containing the number '1' and the tempo indication '♩ = 66'. It begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The upper staff features a melodic line with slurs and accents, while the lower staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving bass lines. The music is in a key with two sharps and a 2/4 time signature.

The fourth system continues the piece with similar melodic and harmonic textures. It features slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. The upper staff has a more active melodic line, while the lower staff maintains a steady accompaniment. The system concludes with a fermata over the final notes.

2 ♩ = 152 3

The musical score consists of three systems of piano music. The first system (measures 1-3) features a complex piano part with sixteenth-note runs in both hands, marked *mp*. The second system (measures 4-6) shows a change in the piano part, with the right hand playing a steady eighth-note pattern and the left hand playing a similar pattern, marked *mp*. The third system (measures 7-12) continues the eighth-note accompaniment, with the piano part marked *p* and *sub.* in the right hand, and *p* in the left hand. The final system (measures 13-16) features a dynamic shift to *sf* and includes a *cresc.* marking, with the piano part marked *sf* in both hands.

4th Movement: Yellow River Eulogy

黄河颂

殷承宗 储望华
盛礼洪 刘庄

Adagio maestoso ♩ = 50

The musical score is written for piano and consists of five systems of music. The first system is marked *mp* and *m.f.*. The second system is marked *p*. The third system is marked *p* and *mp*. The fourth system is marked *mp* and *mf*. The fifth system is marked *mf* and *mf*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

2

First system of musical notation, measures 1-4. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a 3/4 time signature. It features a melodic line with a *p* dynamic marking and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 4. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a 3/4 time signature, containing a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The second system shows empty staves.

Second system of musical notation, measures 5-8. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a 3/4 time signature. It features a melodic line with a *f* dynamic marking, a 7th fret marking, and a *mp* dynamic marking. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a 3/4 time signature, containing a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The second system shows empty staves.

Third system of musical notation, measures 9-12. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a 3/4 time signature. It features a melodic line with a *mp* dynamic marking. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a 3/4 time signature, containing a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The second system shows empty staves.

3

The first system of music consists of four measures. The upper staff (treble clef) features a melodic line with a slur over the first two measures and a fermata over the last two. The lower staff (bass clef) has a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents. The dynamic marking *mp* is present in the second measure of the lower staff.

2

piu mosso

The second system of music consists of four measures. A box containing the number '2' is positioned above the first measure. The tempo marking *piu mosso* is placed above the first measure. The upper staff has a melodic line with a slur and a fermata. The lower staff has a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents. The dynamic marking *f* is placed above the first measure of the lower staff, and *mp* is placed below the second measure of the lower staff.

The third system of music consists of four measures. The upper staff has a melodic line with a slur and a fermata. The lower staff has a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents. The dynamic marking *mf* is placed below the third measure of the lower staff.

Standing at the top of the musical canon were the eight so-called model works, which could be presented to the public in variety of incarnations, such as Beijing Operas, local opera adaptations, ballets, symphonies, concertos, chamber music, and choral arrangements. These constituted the staple of the Cultural Revolution musical diet. We often hear that the music of the Cultural Revolution was monolithic--that people were allowed to perform only the same "eight model operas" throughout the period. Apart from the models, a great number of other compositions based on Mao's words were produced and reproduced. The music from these model works encompassed a variety of styles, including those from Chinese traditional music (a term that usually refers to styles of music developed in China prior to the twentieth century).⁴⁰ This traditional music also incorporated instruments and harmonies historically associated with "Europe" and the "West," even though these already had been used in China for nearly one hundred years by the time of the Cultural Revolution. Finally, the critics of that time took the viewpoint that only the music which carried proletarian thoughts was the good music.

⁴⁰ Yuhe, Wang. *Zhongguo Jinxindai yinyuejia Pingzhuan [Biography and analysis of contemporary Chinese musicians]*. Beijing: Wenhua Yishu Chubanshe

The Eight Model operas

The eight model operas (also called “model operas”, meaning operas composed by putting new, model librettos into the traditional Beijing Operas’ tunes) were originally created by different groups, however, when these model operas were anointed by the *People’s Daily*, they quickly filled Chinese stages as well as radios and television channels. These were not only performed by the group who created them, but also were played by local operas, ballet dancers, orchestral symphonies and were transplanted into many other art forms. From rural places to modernized cities, the model operas were heard everywhere, from the loudspeakers in peasants’ fields, to restaurants, stores and even public transportation. Some of the operas were even translated into dialect languages, such as Tibetan, so that these could be performed by non-Mandarin speakers.

Figure 2.8. The Eight Model operas

Figure 2.8.1. Model operas “Raid the White Tiger Regiment”



Figure 2.8.2. Model opera: “Capturing the Tiger Mountain Successfully and

Strategically”



Figure 2.8.3. The Eight Model operas “The Cuckoo Mountain”



Figure 2.8.4. The Eight Model operas “Sha Jia Creek”



Figure 2.8.5. The Eight Model operas “Harbor”



Figure 2.8.6. Model operas “White Hair Lady”

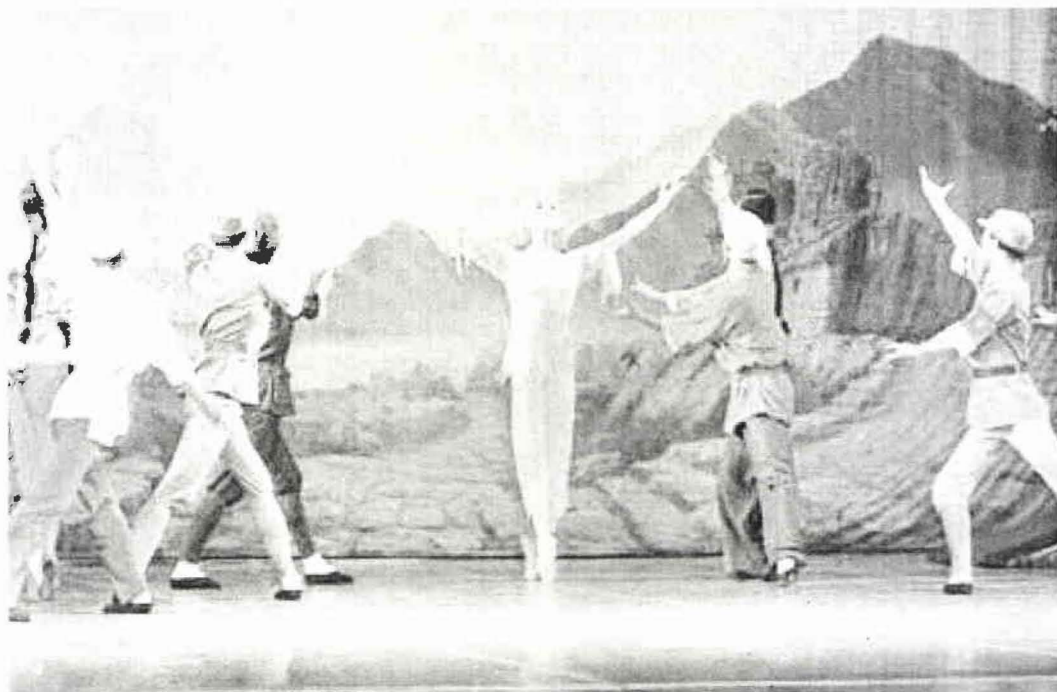


Figure 2.8.7. Model operas “The Red Lantern”



Figure 2.8.8. Model operas “Dragon River Ode”



Virtually everyone could sing the main arias of these operas or hum the main themes. Some could sing every song, recite every word in the lyrics, and mimic every gesture in the plays. Many of them still can do it to this day. In general, the popularity of these eight model operas was due to the political coercion exercised at the time, which is the ban on other forms of entertainments except for these eight model operas. Although the educational aim and the political color were very obvious, people who lived through the Cultural Revolution will declare that these eight model operas developed into the classical masterpieces of the times. However, from a critical point of view, it is worth while examining the musical qualities of these eight works.

Every model opera was composed by a committee with involvement by many artists such as Wang Zengqi and A Jia. This is a unique feature which had not been seen in the West. The other unique aspect is that these model operas were supported by the national top leaders. Each revolutionary model opera was therefore a tremendous systematic project during the Cultural Revolution. People clearly understood its educational and political function. Even some of today's viewers and audiences are willing to accept that model operas were masterpieces of music for that period of time, compared with some of the coarse music of today. Therefore, people may be against model opera from a political point of view, never from an artistic point of view. With modern media abhorring romance, model operas are fading into oblivion. But if we don't

carefully analyze them and evaluate them in a practical sense, we would be derelict in our duty towards future generations by not explaining to them the significance of such operas.

The creative visible tenet of model opera was, on the surface, to serve the people by providing entertainment, but the real purpose was political. During the Cultural Revolution, the logic was that working for the people meant teaching them political rules. The opera's libretto was based on the political doctrine of that moment in time, not on the taste of the people. The characteristic of model opera was the art of political instruction, sometimes it was politics itself. Any changes to a model opera were not driven by changes in people's taste but by the political needs at that specific moment in time without any regard to melody, artistic expression or the like.

Being a local opera, Beijing Opera has lots of regular patrons. It was, nevertheless, a regional opera and limited to the north of China. Selecting Beijing opera as the form of model opera and making it popular throughout China was an affront to Chinese people. Because of the prominence aspect to it, Beijing Opera had a close connection with the Chinese Communist Party. In the early 1930s, the Yan'an period, there were some other art forms, such as New opera, New Qin Opera, New Yange Opera, drama etc. A new opera called 'White-hair lady' was commissioned by the communist party during those hard Yan'an days and this new opera used the Beijing opera style because this style could effectively connect the ballad rhythm with the opera style. The opera proved very

successful and formed the basis of an alliance between the Beijing Opera and the Communist Party which proved very fruitful for years to come. Beijing Opera had many important admirers among the leaders and intellectuals of the times.

The most important ballad “Forced to Mount Liang”, had been successfully changed into a typical Beijing opera and received many words of admiration and appreciation from Chairman Mao. The relationship between Beijing opera and the Chinese Communist Party is very important, as the party decided that Beijing opera would be the prototype for the model opera.

Chairman Mao’s theory of “making the past serve the present, making foreign things serve China”⁴¹ played an important role in setting Beijing opera as the form of model opera. It is perhaps difficult for people today to understand why on one side the “Man of the Time” spared no effort to make the above form of opera more ethical and civilized and on the other hand chose ballet, a foreign art form - or more precisely only the tiptoe component of the ballet -, which is not related to Chinese traditional dance. This is not the only instance of such dichotomy, there are even more such inexplicable contradictions. Model opera asked all the dancers to rush to the platform on tiptoe clumsily, wearing local ethnic style clothes in neat fashion. The original tutu that stands out of the body or the charm of graceful figures had disappeared. This implies that the

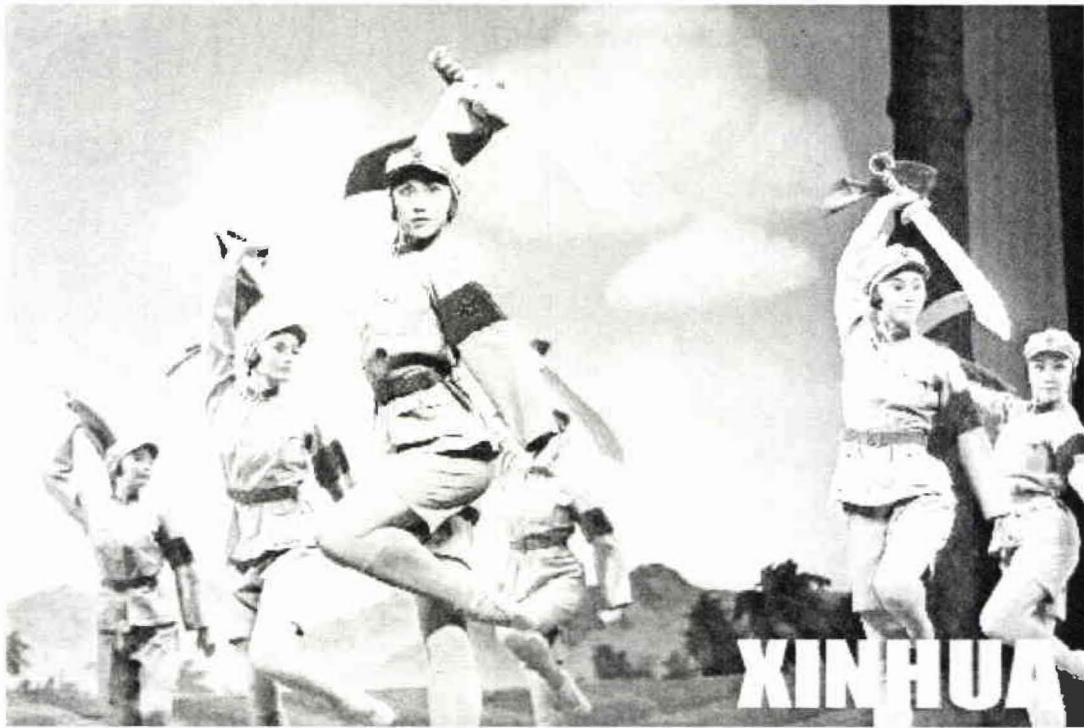
⁴¹ Zedong, Mao. *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*. Beijing: Beijing Documentary Press, 1977, p. 567

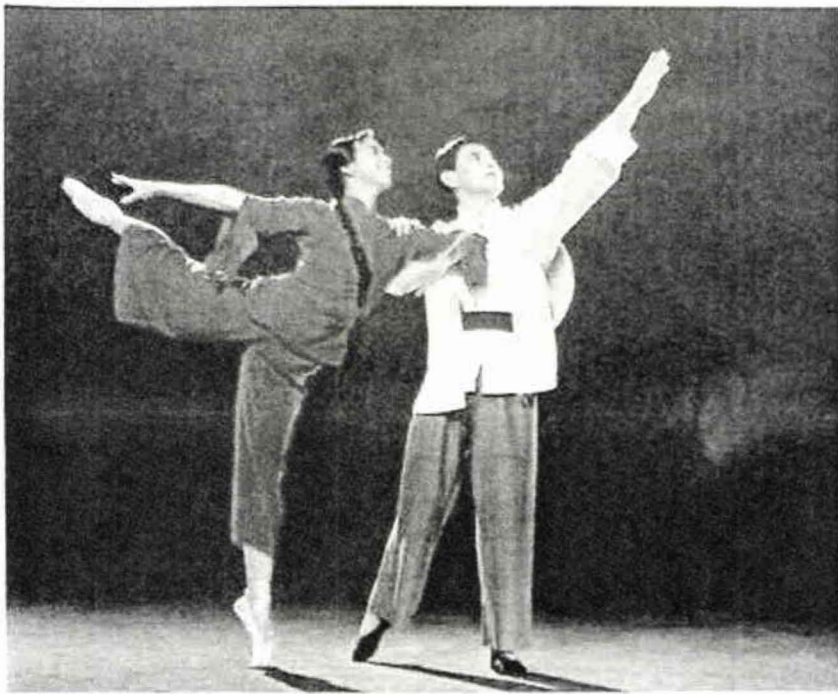
only reason for the ballet to be incorporated in a model opera was to fulfill Chairman Mao's idea of "making foreign things serve China".

Figure 2.9. Ballet Dancing Acts in the Eight Model operas

(Noting that shoes are western style, but the costume is in a Chinese style)







W. J. BERT
DANCE ON
MAY 15, 1931
W. J. BERT
DANCE ON
MAY 15, 1931

The planners and designers of model opera wanted to use the real “foreign” ballet to serve China, using ballet to manifest the story of Chinese farmers’ revolution and class revolution. That is the reason why “White-hair Lady” and “Red Woman Army” could incorporate this form of ballet. Model opera under the name of serving the people never, or at least seldom thought of what people might prefer.

The ideology behind the Cultural Revolution was both “political” and “cultural”. Its main purpose was to craft a complete ideological revolution adapted to the changed social economy of the world. Being a “cultural” revolution, it would also sweep away capitalist and feudalistic ideas and proclaim Mao Zedong thoughts as the key to this new ‘brave world’. Mao Zedong view of art was political and class related. He made this point of view quite clear in his “Speech in Yan’an Art Conference”⁴² when he stated that art was a political tool that influenced art but at the same time was influenced by it; art was part of any revolutionary course.

Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser, two political theorists explain this ideology, of change and the art revolution as follows.

Antonio Gramsci states that leadership encompasses two shapes: a “controlling” shape and “ideological” shape. Effective state control is the ability to balance state

⁴² Zedong, Mao. *Speech on Yan’an Art Conference*. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1991. pp. 23-34

apparatus and ideological control. State ideology can lead and control the idea of the whole state.⁴³

Louis Althusser divides state apparatuses into two parts: repressive state apparatuses and ideological state apparatuses.⁴⁴ The former part includes government, administrative departments, army etc. The latter part includes religious ideological state apparatuses, educational ideological state apparatuses, family ideological state apparatuses, law ideological state apparatuses, political ideological state apparatuses, trade union ideological state apparatuses, information ideological state apparatuses and culture ideological state apparatuses.⁴⁵ The Eight Model operas represent this balance between the controlling and the ideological shape, the repressive and ideological state apparatus.

In order to carry out Mao Zedong ideology, Jiang Qing drastically reformed the arts. When under her guidance, the opera “Shajia Creek” was finished in the December of 1963, and represents the beginning of “Revolutionary Opera”.⁴⁶ She also directed the ballet “Red Women Army”, which was held in Beijing in June of 1964.⁴⁷ Mao Zedong

⁴³ Antonio Gramsci. *Notes On Politics--Prison Notebooks*. ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. 1st ed. 1971. New York: International Publisher, 1999. pp. 123-205.

⁴⁴ Louis Althusser. *Ideology and Ideological Apparatuses*. Lenin and Philosophy and Other writings, trans. Ben Brewster, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971. pp. 121-173

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 198-223

⁴⁶ Molin, Wang. *Digging out the Eight Model operas*. Hong Kong: People’s Publishing House, 1976. p.45

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.46

watched “Capturing the Tiger Mountain Successfully and Strategically”, “Red Light Record” etc, and showed his appreciation and support to Jiang Qing. He showed further support in October when he watched “Red Women Army”. In May of 1965, the eight model operas were performed to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the publishing of the “Speech in Yan’an Art Conference”.

Let us examine these operas and their messages in more detail.

In “Capturing Tiger Mountain Successfully and Strategically” both dancing and music were used to create the hero’s image of Yang Zirong. Dancing was to be used to reveal his inner thoughts through image, action and expression. The choreographers had been instructed, by their political masters, to highlight in each scene three main points the so called “three spotlights”. This meant

- highlighting the fact that the hero possessed the best personality of all the characters in the play;
- highlighting the hero in all the correct limelight and
- highlighting the main hero out of all the heroes⁴⁸

For example, at the ending of “Capturing Tiger Mountain Successfully and Strategically”, Yang Zirong is in the center of the stage and the other heroes are behind him and by his sides. (See previous figure)

⁴⁸ Molin, Wang. *Digging out the Eight Model opera*. Hong Kong: People’s Publishing House, 1976. p.98

The villain instead must be portrayed as the fool when compared to the hero. The relationship between heroes and villains on stage must mirror the real life relationship between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces.⁴⁹ Take Act VI as an example, Yang Zirong, the hero, is at center of the stage, with keyed-up music; whereas, Zuo Sandiao, the villain, is on the side of the stage and down on his knees in order to walk. Just as Chairman Mao said, Yang Zirong is resolute, honest and brave, while the villain is always portrayed as playing tricks and failing to achieve.⁵⁰ The other heroes are also not portrayed as 'perfect' as Yang Zirong. All the comparison portayed on stage must highlight only the most important hero of the opera.

In order to better understand the function of music vividly and how it is used to describe the hero one needs to introduce some basic concepts of narration. The world created by an opera or a film is a story. Greeks called this world diegetic. The plot in the story is referred to as 'diegetic narration' or 'intradiegetic narration'. One can also refer to it as 'nondiegetic narration' or 'extradiegetic narration'.⁵¹ The music used in the eight model operas can be analyzed in the same way as narration. Background music, whose function is to create the atmosphere, is not really part of the opera, and the opera characters took no notice of it. On the other hand, the song and music made by the

⁴⁹ Molin, Wang. *Digging out the Eight Model operas*. Hong Kong: People's Publishing House, 1976. p.102

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 233

⁵¹ Robert Stam et al. *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics*. New York: Roulledge, 1992. p.38

character is ‘intradiegetic music’, which is part of the character and plot. More importantly, being a part of the narration, its function is not limited only to create the atmosphere or emphasize the narration but the music or the song can also express the character’s emotion.

The music in “Capturing the Tiger Mountain Successfully and Strategically” is intradiegetic music, including vocal music and instrumental music. Vocal music is an aria, which refers to the songs with words sung by actors. Instrumental music is seen instead as incidental music, which can assist and support the aria. In other words, an aria can express the emotion of the characters while the instrumental music can only strengthen it.

Referring to Act IV again, we find that arias express the strong willingness and brightness of Yang Zirong:

The communist party member is ready to do all hard job and serve the people.
 No matter how hard it is, the revolution can be successful.
 Strong motivation can conquer all problems.

In Act VIII, the arias express the loyalty to Mao by Yang Zirong.

Zedong’s idea, which is the source for strength.
 To fight with the enemy no matter how hard it is!
 Missing my comrades in army makes me braver! Comrades support me a lot.
 The teachings of the party are the key to success.⁵²

Instrumental music helps create the atmosphere and describe the inner world of the character, however, the latter is the more important component. For example, in Act

⁵² Molin, Wang. *Digging out the Eight Model operas*. Hong Kong: People’s Publishing House, 1976. p.233

V, the music purposely portrays the wind, snow, horse, etc., but it also expresses Yang Zirong feelings as well. The relationship between vocal music and instrumental music is that between subject and object. The aria provides the plot, instrumental music supports it. Dancing is also used to express emotion, and is seen as providing a more direct message to the audience than instrumental music. In other words, dancing should cooperate with the aria while instrumental music should support the dancing in the drama. The songs must be interpreted as part of narration while instrumental music must be seen as strengthening the narration and the emotions. Therefore, the drama music appearing in the “story” must help the listeners understand the idea of the drama.

Act IV tells the story of Yang Zirong. His aria expressed his strong willingness to go to the war zone, the instrumental music strengthened his willingness. The music not only strengthens the revolutionary spirit but leads the listeners to also become eager members of the revolutionary team. The main function of the intradiegetic music is to “get to” the recognition of listeners. Thus the aria not only gets the listener’s attention regarding the plot but provides the audience with the hero’s beliefs. Listeners were influenced by the idea of the aria. According to Louis Althusser, getting the attention of the listeners meant they would pay attention to the ideology being forced upon them.⁵³ During this process, individuals are transfixed by the direction of narration, language and

⁵³ Louis Althusser. *Ideology and Ideological Apparatuses*. Lenin and Philosophy and Other writings, trans. Ben Brewster, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971. p.157

its symbols. In another words model opera was being used as the launching platform for the political ideology to build the proletarian world.

Proletarian artistic revolution as represented by model opera is a strong weapon to support of Mao Zedong's idea. Hegemony, as pointed out by Gramsci, means that the people can follow the authority idea willingly and do something voluntarily, which can benefit the leading class or power bloc. The hegemony of Culture Revolution is the control of ideology. Model opera tried to change the world and people's ideas into accordance with he world view of proletarian class. It fulfilled the strong political influence and got the recognition of proletarian myth.

In model opera whenever a political truth needed to be expressed, the actor would start an aria immediately, which was meaningless and with little or no relationship to the plot. Topic arias were used repeatedly throughout a performance to inculcate the audience with political messages and bore no relationship whatsoever to concerns people might have had in their daily lives. Almost each model opera had a topical aria which was filled with political innuendos. Examples are "The Ambition flies To The Sky" in the drama of "The Red Light Record"; "Chairman Mao's Idea Gone Everywhere" in the drama of "Harbor"; "Chairman Mao and Central Government Gave Us Direction" in "Sha Jia Creek"; "Let the Red Flag of the Revolution Put Everywhere" in "Dragon River Ode"; "Disorderly Cloud Fly" in "The Cuckoo Mountain" etc. They were all sung on

stage by the main heroic character to show his or her “perfect” political stance .The incisive and vivid political instruction prevented people from enjoying and appreciating the basic qualities of dramas and operas.

Because the audience’s appreciation, needs and tastes were forgotten, the Model opera architects created a stereotypical political sermon which was imposed on dramatic characters and audience alike. Act IV in “The Red Light Record” the aria "Say Red Light” demonstrates this point of view very clearly. Grandmother Li instructs her 17-year-old granddaughter, Li Tie Mei, by sitting her down and telling the young girl patiently: “This red light kept on enlightening our poor people during the last years, it enlightened our workers! In the past, it was your grandpa who held it up. Now it is your daddy .We can not be without it during a time of crisis. Remember: Red light is our heirloom!” Li Tie Mei in the play fully understood her grandmother’s words. In fact, the audience at that time who were receiving similar instructions could comprehend the symbolic meaning of these words, but how can the young generation of today understand it? What Grandmother Li said seemed very simple, but it had deep political meaning. It is a poem and a story composed by the self-glorifying creators of the play, which bore no relationship to the spoken parts in the opera. When the designers planned such a part, they just sank into political frenzy, and forgot completely the audience and the plot. The

designers themselves realized such foolishness and didn't use this same strategy of class instructions in the later operas.

Many other operas also copied "The Red Light Record ". Although in some way, they had avoided leaving the audiences feeling empty, class instructions were still expressed very clumsily. Let's consider the operas "Capturing Tiger Mountain Successfully and Strategically" and "Sha Jia Creek". The plots were arranged thoughtlessly, as illustrated in Act III, "Asking the Painful Things in the Deep Mountain" in the opera of "Capturing Tiger Mountain Successfully and Strategically" .From the title, we have an idea about the plot already. In this scene Yang Zirong went to visit Hunter Chang whom he already met on a previous occasion -- disguised as a psychologist and guiding him through a catharsis -- while in reality Yang was investigating Chang. Being such type of psychologist he encouraged the poor man to speak about his own distress: "Old Chang, please say!" It was not honest and considerate in the least asking someone to speak about painful things just to satisfy a political idea having disregard to that person's pain and sufferings.

A similar plot is used in "Telling Bitterness", in the opera "Sha Jia Creek". The characters in this plot are Xiao Wang, a patient; Xiao Liu, a nurse and Grandma Sha. Grandma was in pain and common sense would have intimated that they should comfort her. But just like in "Capturing Tiger Mountain Successfully and Strategically" the

designers of this opera used a weak individual, Grandma Sha in this case, to outline a political issue by forcing her to speak about the painful past.

"Telling Bitterness" became an essential scenario in model operas. It was a necessary occurrence driven by political motives. Therefore, when the authors of the model opera designed such events, they could ignore the reality of life and create people like Yang Zirong in "Capturing Tiger Mountain Successfully and Strategically" and the warriors in "Sha Jia Creek" who liked to listen to other people recount bitter times, just as if they liked to play some cruel mental games. It clearly shows that in order to stir up political enthusiasm and idea, model opera usually neglected what the people wanted and liked, going as far as hurting people's emotion just to stir up political enthusiasm.

Essentially, the model opera was a political drama. Although it did not neglect art completely, its strong political influence killed the freedom of music. This influences the creation of the drama, but also destroyed its integrity.

During this period, the Chinese leaders were workers, peasants and warriors who had created a model-fashion society based on a person's occupation. For examples workers were identified by the color red, however, different kind of workers wore different hues of red. With industrial workers having the "brightest red" as these workers were identified as the most loyal to 'the cause'. Industrial workers and their participation rate in a movement was seen as the basis of its success, e.g. the "May 4th Movement".

This thick and stark political ideology suffocated the composers' creativity so much so that it made them therefore deal with a plot and character poorly. For example the main heroes in model operas are generally industrial workers, but there are exceptions such as "Sha Jia Creek" which is set on a farm and where the main heroes are peasants; and "Red Light Record", where the main hero Li Yuhe, is a railroad worker. A hero could never belong to a 'white collar' working class. A hero's identity was the symbol of revolution, the same as the red light in their hands.

The villain of each opera is always involved in some "grey" jobs⁵⁴. Yi Ping in "Capturing Tiger Mountain Successfully and strategically" is an artisan. Huang Guozhong in "Dragon River Ode" was a kiln man. Qian Shouren in "Harbor" was a dispatcher and betrayed the working class. Wang Lianju in "Red Light Record" was not as credible as Li Yuhe, because Wang was a cop. When the heroes need to camouflage themselves, they usually disguised themselves as "grey" workers as well. For example, the link man in "Red Light Record" was a knife grinder. In the same opera, the courier disguised himself as a man who "sells combs". Secretary Cheng, in "Sha Jia Creek", disguised himself as a doctor. Sister A Qing and her husband disguised themselves by running a tea house, and being a salesman respectively.

⁵⁴ "Grey" jobs means jobs which are not taken by workers, farmers, and warriors.

The previous examples highlighted the political pressure exerted by the communist party on librettist thus restraining their potential creativity. The examples that follow instead highlight their lack of common sense.

Some characters relationships in model opera lacked common sense. There are such problems for example in the relationship between Li Yuhe and Wang Lianju, Li Yuhe in “Red Light Record”. Li recommended that Wang Lianju become a member of the communist party which meant that Wang would be under Li’s guidance. In Chinese culture such an offer, to join the party, implies a close relationship must exist between these two characters. Li trusted Wang so much before he discovered Wang’s betrayal that he asked Wang to meet the courier who was used to pass secret messages between him (Li) and other party leaders. .But in the drama, Wang only knew he should protect the courier, without knowing his identity or duty. Such a request didn’t make sense. In the drama, even the 17-year-old Li Tiemei knew that the courier, “an uncle”, would arrive, why wouldn’t Wang then also know? Furthermore after Wang became a spy for the opposition and an accessory to the Japanese invaders, why would he only tell them one secret signal when he knew all of them?

Does this make sense? I do not think so. There are many similar issues throughout the opera. After Li Yuhe and Grandma Li were killed, Li Tiemei became the communist party representative. When meeting the courier on top of Bai Mountain she took out the

red light to demonstrate to him the secret signal. She did not check though the truthful identity of the courier using the secret password. Again, does this make sense?

Similar problems in plot and details could be found in “Dragon River Ode”. In Act VI, the river had broken the dams and flowing into 500-acre farms. It was very urgent that a labor force be organized to raise the height of the river’s dam. But we are told “we have one hundred households with a thousand hands” only, implying that the labor force was not sufficient. But even during this critical situation, one of the team leaders, Jiang Shuiying, another team leader, still dispatched some young people including himself to help with the “Hu Tou Rock Project”. Is it reasonable to expect that Jiang Shuiying wouldn’t protect the farms and instead provide help to the “Hu Tou Rock Project”? How much support could the “youth team” provide? There are many similar questions, and it is difficult to find answers. Maybe this is due to carelessness on the part of the composers working on these operas.

Each model opera represented a different class-structure struggle, such as intellectuals and peasants, workers and their bosses...etc. This became the core and soul of the drama. If the theme was set during in a war period, it was easy to arrange a plot incorporating struggle. But orchestrating such a theme during peacetime was another issue. Chairman Mao had stated that although they were no longer fighting enemies with guns they were still fighting enemies, and such fights were more insidious as the enemy

no longer carried a gun. It was challenging to the librettists to develop such clashes in an opera. They developed such struggles by combering conflicts among the people with those of confronting the enemy. Let us take “Harbor” for example. Here the story revolves around a docker by the name Han Xiaoqiang. His dislike of the job, actually caused by his own laziness, was seen by one of his co-workers opposed to communism, as an opportunity to further undermine the communist party. Having won Xiaoqiang over, they decided to blow up the dock but were discovered before such action could be undertaken. Although co-workers and Xiaoqiang’s boss tried to educate Xiaoqiang and show him the ‘correct path’ to follow, his inability to accept his own weaknesses caused him to falter. The party should therefore always be on the look out for such people who try to undermine Communism.

In “Dragon River Ode” Li Zhitian, a prominent communist team leader in charge of a team responsible for the cultivation of a 500 acre farm was won over by the ‘dark side’ because he felt that his team had been let down when informed that the water, used for the irrigation of his farm, would be diverted to a much larger farm capable of yielding much more produce. He could not appreciate that at times one must make personal sacrifices for the good of the many. Such a story demonstrated again that no one was immune from the tentacles of the enemy. Attempting to win over the young people, such as Han Xiaoqiang, or deluding members of a cadre, such as Li Zhitian, are consistent

tricks of the enemy rather than their purpose. Their purpose was to destroy the socialistic policies and the support for the international revolution. It was the task of a model opera to teach people to “Beware of the Enemy”.

Without doubt, the creators of model opera did a good job. Otherwise, the model opera would not have become a “model”. But is there any music, any art in it? When the librettists depicted the motivation and activity of the villain in drama, the logic was nonsense. For example, in “Harbor”, Qian Shouren, used to be an accountant in the “Old Society” and ss Ma Hongliang said, he had “helped the enemy extract from the workers’ blood and sweat’. After Liberation, though he was appointed as a yardman in a dock, whose social status was the same as that of an accountant. He had no reason to hate the Communist Party who trusted and put him in a very important position. He had no reason to overthrow the government either. Moreover, even if he hated the government, he could destroy a lot of things, as there were many materials stored in the dock. Why would he take a risk just to put some glass fiber into wheat to be exported to Africa? As he said: “I wanted the Communist Party to lose face in the world?” Was the risk worthwhile? Huang Guozhong, an enemy in “Dragon River Ode” was as foolish and unintelligible as Qian Shouren. Being a fugitive landlord, he would have avoided stirring up trouble instead he appeared out of nowhere and tried his best to cause havoc. He also persuaded Li Zhitian, the team leader, to dismiss the watchman of the warehouse, A Geng, so that he could

detonate the bomb needed to destroy the dam. His actions only made the discovery of his plot easier to trace and in order to have him discovered earlier; the librettist had to plan for the dam to collapse prematurely.

Among all the model operas, the story of the personal struggle in Dragon River Ode was the most weak and farfetched one. In order to have Huang Guozhong discovered, the librettists had to construct a fanciful plan of having a subordinate fired after a boss has words with a stranger, arranging the destruction of the dam, being held by a security officer who just so happened to be scouting the area. And the final discovery of the identity of Huang Guozhong is a further indication of the nonsense of this story. His identity was discovered through private investigations which at the time were taboo. For political purposes, model operas often ignored the truth and reality of life of the times.

There are further severe problems regarding the structure of operas. The ending of Act XI in "Red Light Record" is redundant. The ending of "Capturing Tiger Mountain Successfully and Strategically" is long and drawn out but the worst ending is that of "Harbor" where the librettist in order to create a climax announced to the audience via a telegram that the ship going to Africa had set sail on time, unheard of in those days. There are further problems, such as loose character relationships and dull language. This analysis of the model operas doesn't intend to provide any advice on how to improve

them but to demonstrate that the model operas were just political tools and did not provide any real musical extensions or improvements.

Since the purpose of these eight model operas was not music, but political / educational music did not play a major role during the composition of the opera, but in fact was as an ignored component which would be considered last and least. Any one who experienced this specific ten years period (1967-1977) would know without question how much a person would have suffered if s/he critiqued the eight model operas. Thus under such state of affairs the music composer did not need to worry about whether the audience would or wouldn't accept the music, because the critical standard was not based on how good or bad the music was , but instead on how much political education was entrusted onto the masses.

Listening to the music of the eight model operas, it is hard to say if these operas inspire a person or not as the music of Boya inspired Ziqi. As previously stated, the music of the eight model operas was based mainly on Beijing opera tunes and some Chinese folk tunes. Although these tunes already had a large audience, these tunes were only local folk tunes of the north part China and were only popular and familiar to the audiences in this area. People who lived in the south knew almost nothing about this genre of music. Thus it is hard to say if the introduction of the operas on a national scale considered the audience's approval and not because of the implied political power

associated with the opera. In fact, this decision itself was a provocation to the audience's listening thoughts and was a political tool under the power of the ruling class. Using Beijing opera tunes was not something the audience particularly favored but importantly this kind of composition method was highly recommended by Chairman Mao.

Since the eight model operas are essentially political operas, and although they are not totally without some musical pleasantness, the thick political messages they carried was enough to remove any likelihood of musical inspiration or creativity. This does not only affect the musical quality of the operas, but also affects the coherence and the unity of the whole opera. Absolute or pure music faded away during the Cultural Revolution, which marked the death of western music in China. Music gave up its position to the lyrics, how music sounded was not important anymore, to understand the meaning of the words was the real purpose of any song.

It is to be regretted that at the time, Chinese music critics were musically effectively "dead", and that all the above obvious biases of the eight model operas were never expressed in any published source of the times. The Cultural Revolution finally, successfully killed the "hundreds flowers" and this disaster in the Chinese critique world affects critics' ideas even to this today. Under the power of politics, critics left the stage quietly or those who remained in front of the curtain never critiqued music anymore. This resulted in the darkest period of music in Chinese history.

Part Two

Chapter 3

Modern music in China after 1978

In the early twentieth century, Western music began to enter China and has had a decisive impact on Chinese music. It reached a large percent of the population and over time created generations with new musical taste. In the 1980s the Chinese government has adopted some measures of economic reform and an open-door foreign policy. Since then, Western art and music have had a sizeable audience in most of the big cities in China. Many modern conservatories are established with the aim of giving equal importance to Chinese and Western music education. Concerts of Western classical music performed by native Chinese musicians take place in these conservatories regularly, usually to a smaller and more knowledgeable and select audience. In recent years, with the Chinese economic boom, it has become rather common to have performances by visiting Western orchestras and virtuosi in big cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. Western classical music performances are growing in popularity amongst the following audiences: the upper classes, the middle classes, the educated classes and influential government officials (called cadres in China) and their families. Tickets are quite expensive, yet they are always in great demand. While the Western world is

viewing a decline of classical music, China has become its biggest market in the world.

There are also many Chinese virtuosi: Changyong Liao, a baritone who was the first prize winner at the '97 Placido Domingo Operalia; Tan Dun, the world famous, multi-faceted composer and conductor; Lang Lang, the first Chinese pianist engaged by the Berlin Philharmonic, the Vienna Philharmonic, and many of the leading orchestras; Yundi Li, a young Chinese virtuoso, who at the age of eighteen won the grand prize at the Frederic Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw in 2000; the Chinese Canadian cellist Yo-Yo Ma, diva Huangyin and so on. However, all these talented Chinese musicians will only gain the recognition they deserve if they are given the opportunity to perform on a world stage.

This undermines Chinese music critics because it reveals that the Chinese music critics do not have the ability to identify them, even though Western classical music has been available in China for almost one century. Taking a further look at the current Western classical music development in China, one notices that the power of interpretation of Western classical music by a composer, performer or listener, beyond the technical level, is still very weak. One reason is the historical psycho-aesthetic approach to the interpretation of Chinese music as previously mentioned. Without such concepts, when interpreting Western classical music, which is totally different from Chinese music, Chinese music critics are immediately lost and haven't been aware of this until now. A more important reason is, from my point of view, the result in the continuing neglect of

analysis and evaluation of the music per se. In the following part of this thesis, I will illustrate this opinion first by analyzing the narrow understandings of Western classical music in Chinese modern society and then by critiquing Western classical music reviews in two major daily newspapers.

When Deng Xiaoping came to power in 1978, the drive towards modernization became a powerful force in China. He said that: “The basic standard for judging all our work depends on whether it helps or hinders our efforts to modernize.”⁵⁵ He also identified the “four modernizations” areas—industry, science, technology and culture. Under this perceived connection between modernization and culture, it is unsurprising that Western music has been accepted as modern. By the 1990s, local governments had begun to build opera houses as a visible proof of their advanced cultural level as a modern and progressive modern city image. In 1998, the Grand Theater was completed in Shanghai at a cost of \$157 million dollars (US). In 2003, Beijing’s National Grand Theater announced a restoration plan with a budget of \$400 million dollars (US). This fondness for music spread to other cities quickly. Local governments wanted to demonstrate that their cities are modern and advanced, and are investing huge sums of money in building or renewing their concert halls and opera houses. The construction of so many new venues has also physically helped to enrich the city’s daily musical life.

⁵⁵ Xiaoping, Deng. *Speech Greeting the Fourth Congress of Chinese Writers and Artists*. Beijing: People’s publishing house, October 30, 1979, <<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/dengxp>>

Consequently, the orchestras and opera companies, and the conservatories finished their fast modernization progressions quickly. The result is that Western classical music holds a special status in contemporary Chinese society. The Chinese people now consider Western classical music in some ways superior to China's own music because it is more scientific, or heroic, or international, which was historically enjoyed by emperors and intellectuals. Parents push their children to learn Western instruments against their children's own will. "At present, some parents are hoping beyond all hope that their children will change their lives through studying the piano, an expert said."⁵⁶ In 2004, the Shenzhen Daily reported that there are 38 million children studying piano in China. In South China, there is an island, Gulangyu, an island with more than 20,000 residents, usually being called "Piano Island" because every resident on this island has a piano and knows how to play it.

The present situation of music development in China

In 1998, a British grade test-system was introduced to better measure students' progress. Although critics claim that this creates too much pressure on children and leads them to study only one or two pieces as requested by the test so that they can advance to

⁵⁶ Yin, Liu. *Piano in China*. China Daily, April 6, 2004, p.10

the next level, the system is still popular in China with parents eager to quantify their children's accomplishments. No doubt the millions of young instrumentalists cannot all be as successful as 21-year-old Lang Lang, who became the best-selling classical pianist of 2003; or Li Yundi, who was the first-prize winner of the 2000 Chopin Competition. But the children and their parents have big hopes. There is a movie called "*Together*", which was released in 2002 and produced by Chen Kaige that portrays this phenomenon. The story line is that of a young boy who came to Beijing from a small city to study violin. When the father noticed the boy's talent he gave up his own life and became his servant and handled all the mundane things of daily life so that his son could devote himself entirely to practicing the violin. The movie became a big success. It moved audiences because as parents they could relate to the father in the movie. Lang Lang's parents spent half of their annual income to buy him a piano before he turned two. His father, an *erhu* player, quit his own job when Lang Lang was eight years old so that he could spend a year and a half coaching him for the entrance exams to the Central Conservatory's elementary school. After Lang Lang was accepted, he moved with him from Shenyang to Beijing to look after him so that Lang Lang would have more spare time to practice the piano. His mother lived and worked in Shenyang to earn money to support the family. Li Yundi's parents, too, sacrificed heavily for their son's piano playing, spending their life's savings to buy him a piano when he was seven. They also

moved across China from Chongqing to Shenzhen so Li could study with his piano teacher, Dan Zhaoyi.

“The purpose of music education here is for everyone to become a soloist; there’s no interest in ensemble or even orchestra”, is a complaint uttered by the famous composer and Shanghai Conservatory professor, Qu Xiaosong. “There is a narrow understanding of music in China”. In fact, this “narrow understanding” of Western classical music causes students to just focus on learning the technical aspect of the music without really understanding the meaning of the music per se.

This narrow understanding of music also leads to the lack of orchestra and chamber music performances because the largest portion of concertgoers and the parents of music students only attend soloist concerts. Another reason is the limited income, which cannot support the cost of a ticket. A further reason is that most parents know nothing about Western classical music and therefore don’t consider attending a chamber or orchestra concert as a necessary activity. Some people stay away because they fear that they will embarrass themselves by revealing their unfamiliarity with the music or with concert etiquette. Others, who have no interest in music, attend concerts simply because they regard this act as one of advanced cultural identification, which can help them increase their social status.

Consequently, the narrow understanding of music by the audience, which continues to prefer works from the standard romantic repertoire, such as Beethoven and Tchaikovsky. Early music from the West—such as Baroque—is rarely performed and neither are the works of Western contemporary composers. This affects the repertoire choices of orchestral symphonies. The 2004—2005 season calendar of both the China Philharmonic Orchestra and the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra best illustrate this fact.

**China Philharmonic Orchestra
2004—2005**

Nov 12

- Sergei Rachmaninov Symphony Concert I

Nov 13

- Sergei Rachmaninov Symphony Concert II

Nov 19

- Dmitri Shostakovich Symphony Concert

Nov 26

- Richard Strauss and Richard Wagner's Symphony Concert

**Shanghai Symphony Orchestra
2004 CONCERT FORECAST**

Nov 21

- Piano Sonata in B Minor-Liszt
- Passacaglia-Handel
- Quel bel cor-Magni
- O del mio dolce ardor-Gluck
- Lascia ch io pianga-Handel
- String Quartet in E-Flat Major-Mendelssohn

Nov 28

- Papillons-Schumann
- Frauenliebe und leben, Op.42-Schumann
- Quando men vo (from la Boheme)-Puccini
- Moon-lit river in blossoming Spring-Chinese ancient music
- Setu Mami-Pergolesi

- O mio babino caro; Quando men vo-Puccini

Dec 5

- Piano Sonata No.2 in b-Flat minor-Chopin
- Prelude "Feux d'artifice"-Debussy
- Variations on a Rococo Theme-Tchaikovsky
- The Fountain of Bakhtchisaray-Asafieff
- String Quartet No.1 in c minor-Brahms

Dec 12

- Song Cycle "Woman's Love & Life"-Schumann
- 3 Art Songs-Schubert
- Cradle Song-Tchaikovsky
- Here is nice-Rachmaninoff
- Lilac-Rachmaninoff
- The Tempest-Handel
- Piano Quartet in g minor-Mozart
- Opera Selections (Carmen, Mignon, Norma, Semiramide)

Dec 19

- Song without words-Mendelssohn
- 6 Preludes-Debussy
- Piano Sonata in G Major-Beethoven
- Solo Sonata for Cello-Kodaly
- String Quartet in C Major-Mozart

Dec 26

- Phapsody Tzigane-Ravel
- 2 Caprices-Paganini
- Solo Soata No.3 for violin-Ysaye
- Violin Sonata in 3 movements-Zwilich
- Cello Concerto in B minor-Dvorak

Finally, such a limited understanding of Western classical music also affects the development of music critique. There is not one professional Western classical music critic in China who has musical knowledge and is skilled in writing about it. The music articles in the daily newspaper are mostly a preview rather than a review. Such an article generally begins with a background introduction of the performer and the program.

Sometime the information is from an interview; sometimes it is from documents, normally provided by the performing company. Then there are some earlier quotations about the performers from some major Western Media groups, usually praises. Finally, it concluded with the conductor's or performer's own expectations of the concert and is followed with detailed information of the place, time and ticket prices of the performance. The writing is very similar to an advertisement and usually limited to a hundred words. Little music analysis is presented and no reader relationship is built. Thus said, such writing is an announcement of an upcoming musical event and contains no critique of the performance itself. I shall quote two articles about Lang Lang in the same newspapers but on different dates to demonstrate the above summarizations. The reason of choosing these two articles about two consequent events demonstrates that the articles provide only a preview with no review of the concerts. Moreover, the second article contains some kind of music critique of the performance, which is very difficult to find in the limited Western classical music articles of the daily newspapers. These two reviews of Classical Western music are presented in Appendix I and II.

In conclusion, at present Western classical music in China is facing an enduring challenge as it lacks a broad and deep cultural understanding of such music. In 1784, Kant wrote his essay "What Is Enlightenment?" and in that article, he says: "Revolutions may be able to abolish despotism, profit seeking. But they are unable, by themselves, to

reform ways of thinking. New prejudices, like the old ones they replaced, will emerge to enchain, to control the great unthinking mass.”⁵⁷ Chinese music critics should be aware of this “new prejudices”, as warned by Kant. If the critics hide themselves behind the great Western classical music composers, they will soon have a painfully intimate understanding of Kant’s warning that revolutions “by themselves” are unable to change prejudices. Indeed, the pain has begun. The only one national, journal magazine, “Philharmonic”, which has a ten-year history of critiquing Western classical music in China, is now facing a serious problem on whether to stop the publication or to change it into a popular music magazine. Ironically, the magazine was established when demands for Western classical music first appeared in China. However, it is facing a terrible circulation problem even though it is prime time for Western classical music in China.

In conclusion in assessing the impact of this cultural movement on twentieth – century Chinese music critique-history three issues have become clear:

Firstly, Western classical music critique has not kept up with the upsurge of classical music

Secondly, the ignorance about music critique is largely affected by the roots of the old culture and old habits; and

⁵⁷ Kant, Immanuel. *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* (1784). September 30, 1784, <<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/kant.html>>

Thirdly, nationalistic attitude prevents Chinese music intellectuals to notice the predisposition towards classical music by the “great unthinking mass”.

A small group of critically minded music intellectuals has begun to point out the shortcomings of current music developments. Many well-known oversea Chinese musicians are coming back to China after enjoying great success in Europe and North American to help create a more positive music education. As Lang Lang told an interviewer in China, “I hope to present classical music to all people—I mean everyone. I have some communicating work to do, For example, telling my personal experiences to youngsters who love to play the piano, as well as more Chinese music. I hope in ten years when you walk along the street, everyone can tell you something about Beethoven, Chopin, and Tchaikovsky, as well as our own Chinese composers.”⁵⁸ However, this need for greater education and sophistication exists with both the individual and the society as a whole. Chinese musicians should not be satisfied with the seemingly flourishing concert halls filled with passionate audiences or with how many of the world’s best young musicians China has currently produced. Instead, China needs to move toward a more genuine and fuller appreciation of music as an art form, and not be swayed by populist sentiment and nationalistic fervor. It could do so by addressing the absence of a proper system for importing Western classical music, the lack of education and the lack

⁵⁸ Pin, Zhou. *Music Prodigy Lang Lang*. China Daily, March, 2004, A8

of connections between performers, audiences and critics. But more than that, such a growth in understanding and appreciation could lead to a reinterpretation and exploration of the other limitations present in Chinese music culture and lead to new and innovative forms in Chinese music culture.

Music and Nationalism

Nationalism in China is a complex, controversial, and occasionally a combustible issue. It dates, roughly speaking, from the late 19th or early 20th centuries when the Chinese government was finally forced by its interactions with the West and Japan to accept the modern concept of nationhood. Prior to that, the imperial view was simply that China was the center of the world—all under heaven, as it was sometimes put—and the other lands of the earth were occupied by tributary states or barbarians. China's inherent superiority was so thoroughly assumed and its cultural pride so deep that there was no need for a special term to describe it.

Once China began to acknowledge that it was but one nation among many, the concept of nationalism was promoted as a means of sustaining its deep cultural pride and cohesiveness. But in assigning a name to what had previously been a given, the promoters of nationalism were acknowledging the defeat of China's former superiority complex. This implies that Chinese nationalism includes insecurity and pride, xenophobia and patriotism, in an ever-changing mix. Where American nationalism exaggerates its country's achievements and ignores its failures, Chinese nationalist rhetoric revels in every detail the nation's various "humiliations" at the hands of the West and Japan.

The conflicting strains and anti-Western tendencies that run through Chinese nationalism make it a difficult force to harness. Well aware of its incendiary nature, the People's Republic has suppressed it over the years almost as much as it has supported it. Even so, the shadow of nationalism has long hovered over diplomacy, politics, and many other fields of endeavor, including music.

In music history and musicology, its presence has been so strong and unpredictable that until quite recently the history of Western music in China could not be written with any semblance of objectivity. The result is that even though Western instruments and music theory dominate the curriculum of China's conservatories, few people (even musicians) have an accurate understanding about how classical music came to China and became a part of its culture.

The role that missionaries played in spreading music has been purposefully ignored, that of path-breaking educators and composers like Xiao Youmei and Huang Zi deliberately underplayed in favor of the "revolutionary" composers Nie Er and Xian Xinghai, and the contributions of professional foreign musicians cast in a negative light. This distorted version of history has been transmitted to foreign scholars, many of whom have blithely accepted it without considering that it may be a politically tainted distortion of the past.

This distorted view of history was highlighted in 1999 when the Shanghai Symphony decided to celebrate its 120th anniversary by publishing an album, hosting ceremonies, and generating publicity. Objections to this celebration soon sprang up from musicologists and other intellectuals—generally Beijing-based—who believed that the orchestra should date its founding to 1956 when it took on its current name. They argued, in essence, that the era in which the orchestra was exclusively foreign or foreign-dominated did not count. The Shanghai Municipal Band and the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra, in their view, were separate, imperialist institutions which could not be considered precursors of the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra. Other musicologists and historians—usually Shanghai-based—responded that this was nonsense and traced the development of the orchestra over the 120 year period to demonstrate its continuity. They also noted that many hospitals and universities that had been founded by foreign missionaries saw no need to eliminate their missionary past from the historical record; some even used their original names. The Shanghai Symphony ignored objections and went ahead and feted itself; and later it planned another celebration and another album for its 125th anniversary in 2004.

Nationalism has also been a powerful, if changeable, force in music creation and composition from the early 20th century until today. School-songs used Western tunes to

set Chinese texts and convey Chinese values “in order to awaken the national spirit”⁵⁹

Intellectuals like Xiao Youmei pushed for the creation of a national music that would be a combination of Chinese melodies with Western harmony and musical forms. Spirit and emotion were its most important aspect—so long as these were nationalist in character, there could be many different kinds of “national music” melodies.

But as the 1930s wore on and China became engulfed by war, fewer composers shared this sort of broad-mindedness. “Revolutionary” composers like Nie Er and Xian Xinghai came to see music and nationalism as inextricably linked, its primary purpose being to inspire resistance to Japanese imperialism. So did virtually all their peers, even if they disagreed on aspects of this approach, as did Lu Ji and He Luting.

When the Communists came to power, their urge to control virtually every aspect of public and private life took over and they turned nationalism in music from a natural tendency into a requirement. Nationalism was made one of the “three-Rs” that were intended to be the basis of all musical compositions, the others being that the music be revolutionary and understood by the masses. Nie Er and Xian Xingha were anointed as role models, and their portraits were hung prominently in conservatories and concert halls across the land.

⁵⁹ Kouwenhoven, Frank. *A composer's portrait*. Chime: Spring & Autumn, 1997.p.57

But when it came to how, exactly, music should be nationalized; the directives were inconsistent and constantly changing. Perhaps the classic example of this is the treatment of Yin Chengzong's piano concerto, the "Yellow River Piano Concerto". When the concerto was first performed in 1959, it was hailed by People's Daily as "our own symphonic music" and widely praised for its successful symphonic adaptation of a Chinese melody and legend.

When the Cultural Revolution began, the rhetoric of nationalism was subsumed in that of revolution. With few exceptions, music had to tell the story of a revolutionary hero who triumphed over the Japanese, the Nationalists, or the bourgeoisie. Despite these supremely narrow constraints, composers responded to the challenge and music is considered to be the weakest aspect of the eight model operas. Indeed, the eight model operas are the supremely successful examples of nationalism.

When the Cultural Revolution ended, the revolutionary version of nationalism that the eight model operas embodied was abandoned. The operas themselves were not condemned because too many important people, like Mao Zedong had praised them and too many millions of people had enjoyed them. However, the operas themselves were so over-performed that they were temporarily shelved. Orchestras dusted off their copies of Western composers like Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Schubert and Debussy and brought them back to stage.

Unsurprisingly, some cultural officials and critics were upset by this return to classical Western music.

“People asked, why don’t you perform Chinese pieces?” Explained Li Delun. “I said, it’s not that we aren’t performing them, it’s that there aren’t enough good pieces yet! They make it seem like if you don’t play Chinese music, you don’t love China”⁶⁰

In the relative artistic freedom that followed the Cultural Revolution, composers were for the first time in decades largely free to follow their own creative instincts. But it took some time for many to adjust.

“In our first year at the Conservatory, most of us continued to write pieces with a strongly revolutionary flavor” Guo Wenjing explained in an interview. “Tan Dun composed a violin piece called “I Dreamt of Chairman Mao”, and Qu Xiaosong wrote a string quartet based on one of Xian Xinghai’s songs, “Let’s Go Behind Enemy Lines”.⁶¹

Once it became apparent that the political situation had truly changed, students stopped writing politically motivated pieces. Instead, they queued for courses on 20th century music taught by visiting professors and immersed themselves in the basics of formal composition training such as harmony, counterpoint, form, analysis, and orchestration. Though contemporary technique created excitement because it was being

⁶⁰ Delun, Li. *Li Delun Zhuan [A Biography of Li Delun]*. Beijing: Zuoja Chubanshe, 2001, p.399.

⁶¹ Kouwenhoven, Frank, *A composer's portrait*, Chime: Spring & Autumn, 1997.p.19

taught for the first time, the formal study of China's own music still occupied a considerable portion of the composition curriculum at conservatories.

These diverse studies in contemporary Western and Chinese traditional music began leading many composition students to experiment with a merger of Chinese themes, Chinese music and Western technique. Tan Dun's 1979 symphonic work *Li Sao*, or *Encountering Sorrow*, incorporated Chinese music and instruments, used polytonality and clustering sounds, and was based on a quintessential Chinese theme, the poetry of Chu Yuan. Guo Wenjing's 1983 composition *Suspended Ancient Coffins on the Cliffs in Sichuan* is written for two pianos and orchestra. It incorporated the nasal glissandi of the erhu⁶² into the string parts and takes its strange title from the mysterious ancient coffins that hang suspended on poles above a gorge in the Yangzi River. Zhou Long's 1993 *Valley Stream* is a quartet written for traditional Chinese instruments, the di, guan, zheng and percussion.

In responding to this phenomenon, music critics provided strong support to these works. Commenting on *Valley Stream*, critic Qiao Jianzhong said that "Zhou Long has dealt a deathblow to the established formulas of Chinese music of the last thirty years."⁶³

⁶² Ancient Chinese instrument

⁶³ Ming Yan. *Ershishiji Zhongguo Yinyue Piping Daolun. [A Guide to 20th Century Music Criticism in China]*. Beijing: Renmin Yinyue Chubanshe, p.76.

Music critic Li Xian noted in an interview article about Tan Dun, Ye Xiaogang, Qu Xiaosong and many of their contemporaries in composition:

“...[they] have three characteristics in common. They are tenacious about expressing their own personalities in their music—something rare before and during the Cultural Revolution. They strive to combine traditional music with modern conduct. And they want their works to be understood.”⁶⁴

However, not all critics are as receptive as Li Xian. Critic Zhu Jianer was apparently upset by the work of some of the young generation of composers, such as Tan Dun. He says:

“Melody is important: if there are national characteristics, then our music will be liked internationally. Modern music, on the other hand, is unintelligible, it has no national characteristics. The beauty of China’s nature cannot be expressed in this monotonous atonal music.”⁶⁵

Critic Bian Liunian, who has written dozen of articles attacking Tan’s music, describes Tan’s music as “more concept than music” and “the emperor’s new clothing”⁶⁶ In the same article, he also criticizes other modern Chinese composers that their music is to individualistic and not national enough. Ironically, when Tan Dun won an Oscar prize

⁶⁴ Li Xian. *New wave in Chinese music*. Beijing Daily A8, December 16th. 1999.

⁶⁵ Ming Yan. *Ershishiji Zhongguo Yinyue Piping Daolun. [A Guide to 20th Century Music Criticism in China]*. Beijing: Renmin Yinyue Chubanshe, p.355.

⁶⁶ Liunian, Bian *Is It Music?* China Daily, Oct. 4th, 2001.

for his score in the movie “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon” in 2001, Bian changed his mind quickly and wrote in an article: “Tan’s music has won an Oscar for the Chinese aspect of his music, not its compositional techniques. This shows once more that only things that are nationalistic will be accepted by the world”.⁶⁷

This “Chineseness” is certainly an important element in the Chinese music critique world. Once a Chinese composer, performer or musician receives recognition overseas, his/her “Chinese identity” will be soon highlighted by critics in their reviews.

In the review “Li Yundi Drove Taiwan Audience Crazy”, critic Yin Zhi writes that: “Li won the gold medal in the 14th International Frederic Chopin Competition, and it is the first time the event's top prize has been awarded since 1985. In addition, he is the youngest pianist in the world and the first Chinese to ever obtain the top prize.”⁶⁸

Critic Xiao Changyan writes about Yo Yo Ma as: “At a press conference last Thursday, the 49-year-old musician looked quite excited, talking cheerfully and humorously. To the surprise of the reporters who prepared questions in English, Yo-Yo Ma persisted in answering every question in stuttering Chinese, disregarding his fluency in English.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Liunian, Bian. *Only Nationalize will be accepted by the world*. China Daily, Sep. 23rd. 2002

⁶⁸ Zhi, Yin. *Li Yundi Drove Taiwan Audience Crazy*. China Daily, Feb.20th. 2001.

⁶⁹ Changyan, Xiao. *Music without bounds*. Shanghai Daily, Nov.05th. 2004.

In the review “Concert ‘Carmen’ sets Bizet fans abuzz”, critic Jing Zuoren writes: “Chinese baritone Liao Changyong sings Escamillo in both performances. His interpretation of the “Toreador Song” is nothing less than inspiring.”⁷⁰

Critic Jie Jie in his review “Piano genius strikes a chord with US audience” says that “Unsurprisingly Lang Lang was the star of the evening performance. His exceptional technique and passion as a result of his love for his motherland moved everyone when he played the *Yellow River Concerto*.”⁷¹

Similar examples can be found everywhere in current Chinese music critique reviews. Within a few short years of the Cultural Revolution, a new form of musical nationalism began emerging to replace the government-mandated version of the 1950s and the discredited revolutionary version of the 1960s and 1970s. It was not a nationalism of politics of ideology, but of “spirit and emotion”, like once envisioned by Xiao Youmei. It was natural and individual, springing from each composer’s experience and background rather than political precepts. It included a far wider swathe of China’s culture—regional, minority, religious, musical—than ever before. It was musically far more sophisticated than previous efforts, which had often been little more than orchestrating folk songs.

⁷⁰ Zuoren Jing. *Concert ‘Carmen’ sets Bizet fans abuzz*. Shanghai Daily, May 19th. 2004.

⁷¹ Jie Jie. *Piano genius strikes a chord with US audience*. GuangZhou Daily, Oct.06, 2005.

Part Three

Conclusion

Is Chinese Music Criticism now Marxist?

The study of Chinese modern music critique started in the 1950s and 60s. With the popularization of Marxism in China, and with the founding the People's Republic of China, it was an inevitable trend that Marxist theories would be used to critique music and its essence. As a communist country driven by Marxism, most western countries would gradually regard Chinese music critique as a critique guided by Marxism. However, examination of current Chinese music critique theories does not support this criticism.

The basic theory of Marxist philosophy is “epistemology” or “reflection theory”. To explain it clearly, it is the relationship between thinking and existence. As Marx said: “The whole philosophy, especially the key point of contemporary philosophy, is the relationship between thinking and existing.”⁷² The first point of this philosophy is that our existence and material life is objective while spirit and consciousness are subjective.

⁷² Karl, Marx and Frederick, Engels. *Complete Works of Marx and Engels*. People's Publishing House, Beijing, 1995, volume 1, 5th. Edition, p. 239 (In Chinese)

This point of view became the doctrine of Chinese music critics. However this guide completely confused Chinese music critics over the next 50 years as they tried to redefine their definition of music, which until then had been thought as subjective, to objective.

Subjective music being defined as the interpretation of music by an individual or audience and *objective music* as the realization that the music as an artifact that exists per se without the need of my comprehension of it.

Reviewing 50-years of Chinese music critique, Cai Yi and Li Zehou set up the theory of “Objective Music Critique” in the 1950s and 1960s⁷³. They put forward the theory that music is objective and it typifies itself. The subjectivity of music was defined as the sum of the understanding of that music by an individual and the influence that society had on an individual. In the 1970s and 80s, Li Zehou、Liu Gangji、Jiang Kongyang and Zhou Laixiang developed “Practice Music Critique theory”. They thought that music came from practice, and it was the result or the outcome of “nature humanization” and the “essential strength of human beings”⁷⁴. “Post Practice Music Critique theory” developed by Yang Chunshi in the 1990s held the opinion that music was not the result of practice, but the product of human “existence” or “life”⁷⁵.

⁷³ Zuoren, Jing. *An introduction of Chinese modern philosophers*. Selection of Chinese Modern Philosopher’s Writing, Chongqin Publishing House, Chongqin, Aug., 1984, volume 1, 1st Edition, p.12

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 23

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 24

At the same time, there were other influential points of view, such as those of Gao Ertai who believes that music is totally subjective, meaning that music is a kind of concept which is not related to the objective world and of Zhu Guangqian who believed that music was neither subjective nor objective,⁷⁶ Obviously these theories are not associated with Marxist “epistemology” or “theory of reflection”.

As soon as Lu Ying’s “Subjective Music Critique” came out, it suffered the same destiny as the music critique theory of Gao Ertai and Zhu Guangqian. These theories had been regarded as subjectively platonic and been rejected while “Objective Music Critique” was regarded as a Marxist science or theory, and received popular recognition and became the mainstream Chinese music critique theory in the 1950s and 60s⁷⁷.

Zhu Guangqian rejected this popular recognition of the theory and instead commented that: “Correct music critique must be based on a correct interpretation of Marxist theories. The reason that music critics pursue instead a dead-end road is that although they want to use Marxist theories, they use these in a metaphysical context.” That is they are using Marxist theories without having confirmed their validity in the first place. Zhu Guangqian’s comments highlighted the weakness of the “Objective music critique” theory.

⁷⁶Zuoren, Jing. *An introduction of Chinese modern philosophers*. Selection of Chinese Modern Philosopher’s Writing, Chongqin Publishing House, Chongqin, Aug., 1984, volume 1, 1st Edition, p. 531

⁷⁷ *ibid*, p.4

When people used Marxist materialism to discuss the essence of music in the 1950s and 60s, they apply Marxist historical materialism and practice theory, to discuss the origin of music in 1970s and 80s. “Practice Music Critique” became the most influential music critique genre at that time. However, it wasn’t the most authoritative and real Marxist music critique as people thought.

Revealing the source of music and discussing the essence of aesthetic is the basic proposition and the main characteristic of “Practice Music Critique”. Wang Fuzhi, a famous ideologist in China said: “working all day and indulging in wealth and power will in time lead to a dull life.” That is to say materialism by itself will lead to a dull life. In such a situation an individual will be unable to appreciate or understand music, On the other hand practice music critic theory states that a person cannot understand or appreciate the pleasure of the artistic world unless his/her material world has already been satisfied. Such a theory is in agreement with Marxist theory; however, this is not what observed in real life implying that the theory must be incorrect.

The introduction, acceptance and practice of any theory follow a life cycle infancy, maturity and death. We should not be too hypercritical of Chinese modern critics and their application of Marxist theory. In order to critique music using Marxist theories, Chinese music critics should first analyze its meaning and not just simply use it.

APPENDIX

Appendix I

⁷⁸Lang's keyboard brilliance

(Background Introduction) Profundity is unattainable by the young, an old cliché in music goes. The inner sanctum of mature compositions only reveals its secrets to the aged and experienced...But Lang Lang, 21, has challenged the dictum with his sensitivity and virtuosity. What he nurtured at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing and honed at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia has developed into an immaculate, fearless technique. **Two years ago**, the then teenage pianist showed skills - a full package of pyrotechnic bravura, lyricism and nuance - when he performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Wolfgang Sawallisch to a packed Great Hall of the People in Beijing. **Then last year**, Lang stormed the Fifth Beijing Music Festival through Rachmaninoff's popular "C-minor Concerto" with the famed New York Philharmonic under the baton of Lorin Maazel.

(Advertisement of upcoming concert) And on Saturday night, he will join the opening concert of the China Philharmonic Orchestra's 2003-04 season at the Poly Theatre in

⁷⁸ Xiao Changyan. *Lang's keyboard brilliance*. China Daily, Aug 31st, 2004

Beijing, performing his most requested repertoire, "Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No 1."

On Sunday night, he will give his first recital in Beijing, again at the Poly Theatre.

(Introduction of the program) The programme for his recital is diverse, beginning with Schumann's early view of lyricism "Variations on the Name 'Abegg' for Piano in F" and concluding with Liszt's "Reminiscences de Don Juan." He will also make excursions into Haydn, Rachmaninoff, Chopin and Chinese composer Tan Dun's "Eight Memories in Watercolour."

(Interpretation of the program with Quotations from the interview) Lang said he selected the mixed bag of works because they embody many different characteristics, styles and techniques. Liszt's "Reminiscences of Don Juan," drawn from the Mozart opera "Don Giovanni," "is one of the most difficult pieces in the entire piano literature," he said. "It's kind of like you're taking a huge chocolate to try and produce a tiny chocolate. 'Don Giovanni' is three hours long (but) this piece is just 20 minutes..." "It's very important to play something new, but you cannot just do it for the sake of playing a new piece," Lang said. "Everything must be there: You totally understand that piece and you know the feelings."

(Quotations from Western major mediums) Whether Lang will "change the world" - as the US journal "Teen People" predicted in its April 2002 issue along with 19 other

"Top Teens" - is an open question...After the concert, the Chicago Tribune hailed: "He is the biggest, most exciting young keyboard talent in many years..."Lang Lang is a deeply emotional, exuberant player," says Yu Long, artistic director of the China Philharmonic Orchestra...Christopher Roberts, president of Deutsche Grammophon and Universal Classics & Jazz International, said: "Lang Lang is one of classical music's truly bright young stars..."

(Ending the article by quotations) This music is very old. But it's like Shakespeare, or the great novels, or the Bible, which people still read today. Some pop music is only famous for one or two years. But you can live with this kind of music forever," Lang said. The young pianist is optimistic about the future of the musical genre that he loves. "The piano is such a popular instrument around the world, to some degree, it's like basketball or football. I think classical music has a very bright future. But of course as performers, we must develop our next generation and help them to understand."

Appendix II

Orchestras Start new season

⁷⁹ **(Introduction of performer and program)** China Philharmonic Orchestra's ambitious third season started with rising pianist Lang Lang's Tchaikovsky Concerto No 1, and Mahler's profound "The Song of the Earth" with lasting thunderous calls of "Bravo" and "Encore" at Poly Theatre Saturday evening... The 21-year-old pianist demonstrated his sensitivity and virtuosity...

(Review but a repetition of former article) Lang Lang started playing Saturday night and reservations vanish. There was youth, freshness, force and agility, with no hint of the routine. Lang's powerful and very personal reading of the Tchaikovsky concerto demonstrates that he does not let bravura technique get the better of his musical judgment...

(Quotations from interview) Lang Lang himself admits that it is a hard piece to conquer..."First, you must respect everything that's written in the score. Then you need to play not only with your heart, but with your soul, because this piece has real emotional power," the musician explained. "At the beginning of the second movement, everything is reborn, you have the most beautiful flute solo, and when the piano comes in, it's like

⁷⁹ Jie Chen. *Orchestras Start new season*. China Daily, Sep 2nd, 2002

waterfalls... so beautiful and so pure. When I play that movement, I just enjoy myself. I'm not on earth, I'm in some heavenly place."

(Comments on performance) It can be reasonably argued that Lang Lang's powerhouse technique does not alone justify his fast-growing reputation and all of the accompanying promotional hype. Yet he also shows much potential as an interpreter, and a steady, balanced career trajectory should yield even greater artistic growth from this exciting young pianist. Throughout the concerto, the Chinese Philharmonic supplied imaginative and colourful accompaniments, showing sensitivity and a close rapport between Lang Lang, the orchestra and conductor Yu. The result was a sheer delight to the senses. Yu was ideally supportive, neither disappearing into the background nor pulling the music around. Like the gifted pianist he is, Lang was sensitive enough not to believe that this concerto just plays itself. He shaped the music naturally.

(Ending) Upon the warmest "encore," Lang played the lyrical Chinese song "My Motherland" and a variation of Johann Strauss' "The Bat." With a Chinese heart, Lang emotionally interpreted the popular melody of his motherland.

Appendix III

A Chinese Pianist Resumes an Interrupted Career

By Harold C. Schonberg

Published: September 25, 1983, New York Times

Cheng-Zong Yin will give a Carnegie Hall piano recital on Wednesday. He comes from the People's Republic of China, and was briefly in the news in 1973, when the Philadelphia Orchestra - the first American orchestra ever to appear on the Chinese mainland - gave concerts in Beijing and Shanghai. Eugene Ormandy wanted to put some Chinese music on his program. But Chairman Mao was alive, the Cultural Revolution was still in progress, and there was not much to choose from. So *faute de mieux* the "Yellow River" Concerto was selected.

Remember the "Yellow River" Concerto? It did have a brief vogue ten years ago. It was one of those awful ideologically-approved pieces of Socialist-realism propaganda, but it was so bad it actually had kitsch value, and it did have a glittering and rather difficult piano part. Mr. Yin was the pianist selected by Mr. Ormandy to play it. That was only right, for Mr. Yin was one of the committee of composers who had written it. Another musician took care of the orchestration, a third of the ideological content, and there was a fourth mysterious presence who contributed something or other.

Anyway it was clear, at the rehearsals that Mr. Yin was no ordinary pianist. He blazed through the piano part with utter abandon and virtuosity. Too much abandon at times. Mr. Ormandy kept trying to hold him to a steady rhythm. "Look at me! Look at me!" he kept pleading. "Follow my beat! Don't jump ahead!" Mr. Yin would say yes, then get excited and forge ahead. After the last rehearsal Mr. Yin soulfully gave Mr. Ormandy a promise. "I will look at you. I will look at you." Which he did, and the performances went splendidly.

It turned out that Mr. Yin had been a child prodigy, had studied in China with Russian teachers, had been sent to Leningrad for intensive study, had won a competition in Vienna and come in second at the 1962 Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, had done a bit of concertizing. No wonder this handsome, affable, confident, rather heavy-set young man was able to get over the keyboard as he did.

Now Mr. Yin is in New York, practising six or seven hours a day for his recital, which will consist of Scarlatti, the Mozart Sonata in C (K. 330), Beethoven's "Appassionata" and the Liszt B minor. What happened was that Mr. Ormandy told the concert manager Harold Shaw about Mr. Yin. Mr. Shaw flew to San Francisco, where Mr. Yin was staying with relatives, heard him play, and signed him to a three-year contract. For Mr. Shaw, Mr.

Yin wrote a little autobiographical sketch, the first paragraph of which is certainly arresting enough:

"I was born in 1941 in Fukien, a southern province of China. My home town was a very small island called Goolangsu in the East China Sea. It belongs to the big city of Amoy. It is famous as a 'musical island.' My parents were not musical, but all my sisters and brothers liked music very much. My father, according to Chinese custom at that time, had two wives. My mother had ten children. The other wife had five. I am the eighth child of my mother."

Mr. Yin goes on to tell about his half-brothers and half-sisters. All studied in America about 50 years ago. The youngest half-brother, who is 77, now lives in California. But Mr. Yin's mother, now 76, still lives in her home town. Several of Mr. Yin's half-brothers and half-sisters became professional musicians. As a child, Mr. Yin sang in churches, started piano around the age of 6 and sought competent teachers.

"In our home," he writes, "there were too many children and not enough money for me to be able to study piano. But I wanted so much to study that I helped the other mother set out her shoes, and she gave me two U.S. dollars, and I took one dollar and went to have my first lesson with the wife of the pastor."

Set out her shoes?

Mr. Yin explained the other week. The other mother had money. Indeed, she was rich. She owned many shoes. So young Cheng-Zong would carefully arrange the footwear, for which he got \$2. Of that, \$1 went for four lessons a month. The other half of the money was spent for music. Things progressed. At 9, Cheng-Zong gave his first recital. "I played well, selecting Schubert's 'Marche Militaire' and Serenade, a Chopin waltz, Paderewski's Minuet and also my own compositions. The high school auditorium was sold out. I earned money toward the tuition of my brothers and sisters."

The boy clearly was talented, and was admitted to the Shanghai Conservatory, where he not only studied piano but also sang Schubert songs to his own accompaniments. He worked with a Russian teacher and in 1959 won first prize at the World Youth Festival in Vienna. In 1960 he graduated from the Shanghai Conservatory and was sent to Leningrad. After taking second prize at the 1962 Tchaikovsky Competition he played all over the Soviet Union. In 1963 he returned to China, joined the Central Philharmonic Society as soloist, and has held that position ever since.

Some Chinese musicians had a terrible time during the Cultural Revolution. Mr. Yin was one of the lucky ones. He was not sent to a rehabilitation or labor camp. Instead he played in many Chinese cities. But it was not Western music that he played. Three or four ideologically-approved works - the "Yellow River" Concerto was one - and some

transcriptions of Chinese music that he himself composed were all that he was allowed to play. He met a pianist and married her in 1976. They have a daughter. Wife and child are currently with Mr. Yin in New York. Mrs. Yin is studying with Robert Goldsand at the Manhattan School of Music.

But she got here before Mr. Yin, arriving in 1980. Under the present Chinese administration, some talented young people are permitted to leave the country for study abroad. It was not until last March that Mr. Yin reached California. He secured a working permit that allows him to stay in the United States for three years. Naturally he would like to give as many concerts as possible, and he realizes how much is hanging on his Wednesday debut. But if he is nervous, he does not show it. Physically he has changed very little in the last ten years. A trifle heavier, perhaps, but otherwise calm, easy to break into a smile, relaxed, an intent listener, a voluble talker.

He got here late in the season and thus was not able to hear many concerts. But he did hear Alicia de Larrocha at a Mostly Mozart concert, and loved every note of it. Then he heard Magda Tagliaferro, the venerable Brazilian-French pianist, and was so impressed by the elegance of her style that he sought her out, played for her and got a few lessons.

He is not entirely unsophisticated musically, even though a good chunk of his professional life was removed during the Cultural Revolution. In Russia he went to some

kind of musical event every night - the opera, concerts, chamber music and symphony.

He heard the greatest of Soviet artists and was especially impressed - as who is not? - by Emil Gilels and Sviatoslav Richter. He collected all of the Horowitz records he could get his hands on. He heard Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, whom he regards as one of the world's supreme pianists.

His own style he describes as basically Russian, and that could not be otherwise considering his training. But, he says, he also brings to his Russian style "a background of 5,000 years of Chinese history," and he thinks that that must have some bearing on his musical philosophy.

Basically, of course, he recognizes himself as a Western pianist who has a good deal of catching-up to do. For about 10 years during the Cultural Revolution he had to play the same silly pieces over and over again, trying to sneak a few hours here and there to practice his own repertory. He had studied the standard repertory of solo works and concertos, but a professional pianist has to keep working at them, day in and day out, and Mr. Yin had no chance at all to do that. Not until 1980 was he allowed to brush up, and he did play a few concertos in China and, later, in Japan - the Rachmaninoff Second and Third, the Liszt Second and other virtuoso finger breakers.

The curious thing is that for a well- built man, Mr. Yin has a surprisingly small hand. But the spread between thumb and index finger is wide, and he has unusually long little fingers. Thus he can squeeze out a tenth when he has to. "My hand seems to be growing," he grinned. "Only a few years ago I had a very small stretch. Now I can play all sections of the Rachmaninoff Third." If his Carnegie Hall recital comes off as well as he hopes, perhaps the United States will be hearing how he handles the Rachmaninoff and the other music he so dearly wants to play.

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