

The Influence of Bartók's Approach to Keyboard Compositions
on Contemporary Chinese Solo Piano Music: A Portfolio of
Recorded Performances and Exegesis

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Abstract

Although Bé la Bartók ne ver vi sited China, his music was widely performed and accepted in China after 1949 because of his significant contributions to the combination of western compositional techniques and national music elements. Many Chinese composers of different generations have been inspired by his achievement. This research focuses on the study of selected contemporary Chinese solo piano music after 1980 and investigates Bartók's influence on these works.

Besides repertoire practice, which occupied most research time, the research methods included a literature review, analysis of compositions and interviews with composers. This research discusses Bartók's treatment of Hungarian folk music on three levels in keyboard compositions, and explores their influence on selected contemporary Chinese piano music. Furthermore, it develops performance techniques and approaches to interpretation of these selected works, especially the specific techniques which are related to the playing of traditional instruments and folk singing. This research highlights not only how the composers combine their national musical language with western compositional techniques, but also how pianists can deliver this national musical idiom and the spirit of folk music through performance. The outcomes of this project are two 60-minute recital recordings and this supporting exegesis.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the university Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Qiaoyue Zhao

19 December, 2012

Repertoire of Recitals 1 & 2

Recital 1	
1. Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs (Sz.71) Béla Bartók (1881-1945)	11:56
2. Night Music from Out of Doors (Sz.81) Béla Bartók (1881-1945)	5:26
3. Wu Kui Zhou Long(b.1953)	8:27
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6. Long and Short Quan Jihao (b.1956)	7:45

Recital 2	
1. Improvisations Op.20 (Sz.74) Béla Bartók (1881-1945)	10:59
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1. Introduction

This research focuses on the study of selected contemporary Chinese solo piano music after 1980, discusses Bartók's influence on these works and consequently develops pianistic techniques and interpretation relating to these works. Modern Chinese composers who are the subject of this project, including Zhou Long, Chen Yi, Bright Sheng, Zou Xiangping, Quan Jihao, Zhao Xiaosheng, and Chen Qigang, arm themselves with robust western compositional technique. At the same time, they hope to stamp national origin on their compositions. Béla Bartók has been regarded as a model by these Chinese composers because of his significant contribution to the combination of western compositional technique and national music elements.

The project discusses Bartók's treatment of the Hungarian folk idiom on three levels, and explores its influence on selected contemporary Chinese piano music. According to Bright Sheng's article *Bartók, the Chinese Composer* (Sheng, 1997), the first level of Bartók's treatment is giving accompaniment to an original or slightly modified folk melody. Bartók described setting "the main thing, the peasant melody", as "like fixing a precious jewel into its setting" (Ujfalussy & Pataki 1972). The second level of Bartók's treatment is composition based on folk material; in other

words, the folk melody just serves as a motif. In the third level of Bartók's treatment, folk music becomes the composer's own language (Sheng, 1997); he can create his own imitation of folk music or write music which does not contain any real folk material or show the imitation of folk music, but is permeated by the spirit of folk music.

The project has three aims; firstly to examine the combination of western compositional technique with Chinese musical idioms; secondly to explore the different levels of Chinese composers' treatment of folk music; and thirdly to develop an understanding of the techniques of modern piano performance, especially the techniques which are inspired by Chinese musical tradition. In each case, parallels with Bartók's piano works, and evidence of direct influence, will be examined.

The study draws upon existing documents in the English and Chinese language which provide abundant information, including composers' biographies, analysis of compositions and knowledge of cultural background. Through interviews with composers by telephone or email, the researcher gained first-hand documents and detailed composers' instructions. Concert repertoire practice occupied most research time, as these works contain modern pianistic techniques, and require advanced and comprehensive performance skill.

2. Repertoire Selection

Firstly, five pieces from Bartók were selected in order to illustrate the approaches to keyboard and his three levels of utilizing folk material.

Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs (Sz.71) is an example of the first level; Bartók took over 15 existing peasant songs and wrote accompaniment to them with maintaining the authenticity of those folk songs, in Bartók's words, with "complete absence of any sentimentality or exaggeration of expression." (Atar, 2013) For example, Bartók used the original folk song "In the green forest, the prűcsűk is getting ready to get married" which Bartók recorded in Kűrűstűrkűny in the Bihar district in 1912.

Improvisations Op.20 (Sz.74) demonstrates the second level; for example, in No.3, the composer used a very short peasant melody as a thematic material to create a relatively long and atmospheric piece. (see the example 41 and its description in later part)

Suite Op.14 (Sz.62) is classified in the third level; *Seven Sketches, Op.9b (Sz.44)* is a combination of three levels: Bartók used a Rumanian folk melody in No.5 and created an adroit imitation of a Walachian folk tune in No.6. *Night Music* from *Out of Doors (Sz.81)*, with its evocation both of the sounds of nature and of folk music, demonstrates Bartók's interest in the 'phenomenon of Nature'[1]. In fact, Bartók also considered folk songs as natural phenomena, writing that:

peasant music ... is just as much a natural phenomenon as, for instance, the various manifestations of Nature in fauna and flora. Correspondingly it has in its individual

parts an absolute artistic perfection ...(1928) (Suchoff 1976,)

Secondly, and most importantly, seven contemporary Chinese works, which will be explicated in the later section, were chosen for this project. All selected Chinese composers, who consider Bartók as their mentor, have a similar educational background. They were strictly trained in western classical music and Chinese traditional music in China, and pursued higher degrees overseas. Most of them were born in the 1950s except Zhao Xiaosheng, who was born in 1945. Like Bartók, they had experience of collecting folk music. All these Chinese composers have strong compositional technique and have gradually realized their desire to combine Chinese philosophical and aesthetic elements with western compositional techniques. The concert works from these composers illustrate their technical skills and approaches to merging western and Eastern musical languages. Moreover, all these works contain inspirational elements evoking traditional Chinese instruments to some extent. Finally, these compositions could be regarded as milestones of contemporary Chinese music and share a significant place in the repertoire of the last fifty years.

3. Case studies

3.1 *Wu Kui* by Zhou Long

The compositions of the Chinese composer, Zhou Long[2], are deeply

rooted in Chinese traditional culture. He writes:

Verses of poetry may give you the frame; the movements of calligraphy may give you the rhythm; an ancient dark ink painting may give you space, distance and layers; a variety of sound sources may give you the color. Finally, craft ensures your own full expression. (2009)

Zhou Long started composing *Wu Kui* (in CD1, track3) at the end of 1982, when he was a composition student in Beijing Central Conservatory of Music. His teacher, Professor Zhu Gongyi, encouraged him to develop the percussive characteristic of piano, which coincides with Bartók's approach to keyboard music.

Wu Kui literally means "five masks". It is a kind of folk dance full of momentum which originates from the Manchu people's hunting lifestyle. In performance, five dancers with different animal masks mimic the leaping, scampering and various other expressions of animals with rhythmic and lively movements.

The researcher found two slightly different score editions of this work. One is in a collection of Chinese piano works published by People's Music Publishing House, China, the other is the Oxford University Press edition. The researcher used the Oxford edition at the composer's suggestion.

Zhou Long did not utilize original folk material and traditional Chinese harmonization, but the whole work is full of the vigor of Manchu folk dance. The treatment of folk material in *Wu Kui* is therefore similar to Bartók's third level. This piece basically has ternary form, but is more

flexible in some ways than western traditions. For instance, it includes variations, and the tempo and rhythm alter frequently within one section. Consequently, it can be very challenging to maintain the integrity and coherence of the different sections in performance.

Zhou Long stated in an interview with Zhao Jin (2011) that some Chinese traditional percussion instruments inspired him to create the unconventional harmonies. He intended to produce the complex and crashing overtones and sonorities of instruments like Chinese bells, or gongs, sounding stones and bronze cymbals. The composer treated dissonant intervals as a foundation, such as pervasive fourths and sevenths. The sections with parallel fourths are presented four times in the whole piece. They are very similar to No.131 of Bartók's *Mikrokosmos*, which is titled *Fourths*. (See example 1)



Example 1a: Bartók: *Mikrokosmos No.131*, bars 1 - 4



Example 1b: Zhou Long: *Wu Kui*, bars 40 - 43

In Bartók's own article *The Minor Seventh as a Consonant Interval*, he

said that in pentatonic scales the third, fifth and seventh are of equal rank and importance (Vinton, 1966). Zhou Long also used sevenths as constant material in *Wu Kui*. The music starts and ends with seventh. (See example 2)



Firmness of fingers and flexible wrists are essential to produce the type of percussive effect that the composer imagined and to bring out the melodic line distinctly from the broader texture of parallel fourths and harmonic sevenths. To achieve the required sonority and clarity at the same time, pianists need to apply more arm movement instead of using too much finger work.

To present the swift and violent momentum of the *Wu Kui* dance, Zhou Long employs pervasive asymmetrical rhythms, polyrhythm and frequently a altered tempo, obscuring the regular rhythmic pulse. The composition has no time signature and lacks bar lines in many sections. In the first page, we can see irregular rhythms in which some bars contain three semiquavers while some contain four or five. (See Example 2c)

Similar to Bartók's many works, such as No.2 and No.6 from *Improvisations Op.20*, Zhou Long uses many tempo marks. Tempos vary between some materials and their repetitions. This characteristic is exemplified in bar 1 and bar 151 particularly. (See Example 3)



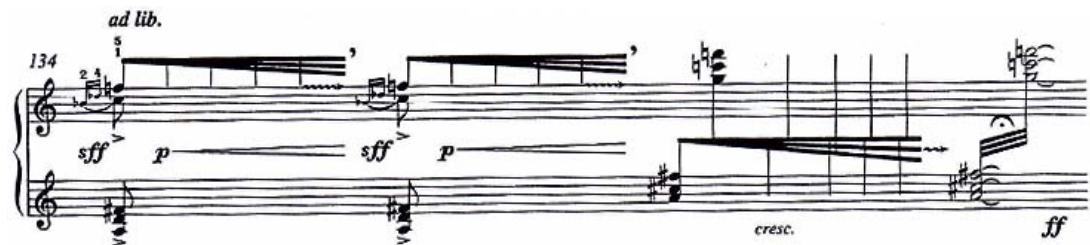
Example 3a: Zhou Long: *Wu Kui*, bars 1 - 7

Animato (♩ = 126)

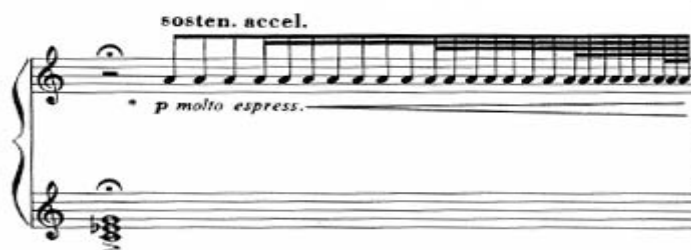


Example 3b: Zhou Long: *Wu Kui*, bars 150 - 154

The gradual acceleration is also a characteristic of *Wu Kui*, a technique also found in Bartók's music, such as 14 Bagatelles Op.6, No.12. (See example 4)



Example 4a: Zhou Long: *Wu Kui*, bar 134

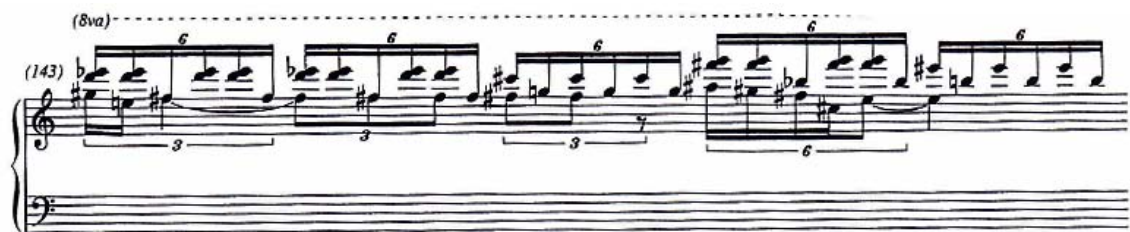


Example 4b: Bartók: *14 Bagatelles*, Op.6.No.12, bar 1, with footnote of Edition Music Budapest: gradual acceleration, with undefined number of repeated notes.

There are three main issues regarding rhythm and tempo in practice. Firstly, the flexibility of rhythms and tempos brings both freedom and difficulties in interpretation for pianists. In early stages of practicing, the use of a metronome will help to provide a better sense of the differences

between each tempo before finally considering the coherence of the whole performance.

Secondly, it is helpful to realize that rhythm is closely linked with articulation. These are carefully notated by the composer. The freedom of rhythm and tempo should be delivered with proper and well-constructed phrasing. Furthermore, *Wu Kui* includes a very interesting polyrhythm in the *scherzando* part (bar 143), a hemiola rhythm based on the ratio 3:2. (See Example 5)



Example 5: Zhou Long: *Wu Kui*, bar 143

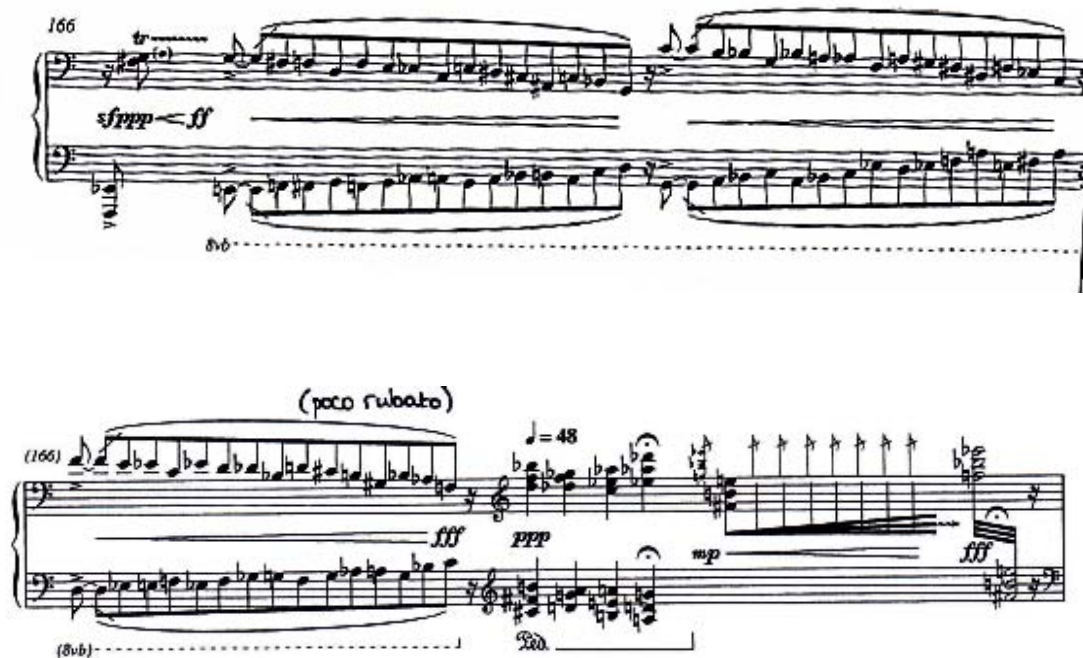
Accents from both independent rhythms must be brought out; as seen above, the rhythm is 3+3 in the top voice and 2+2+2 in bass voice.

Thirdly, the rests and breath marks are very important for rhythm and phrasing even though they are easily ignored. Pianist should explore and sense the musical intention behind all of them. For example, before *tranquillo* part in bar 128, the breath mark gives pianist and audience a chance to prepare for the change in acoustic effect and musical emotion. (See example 6)



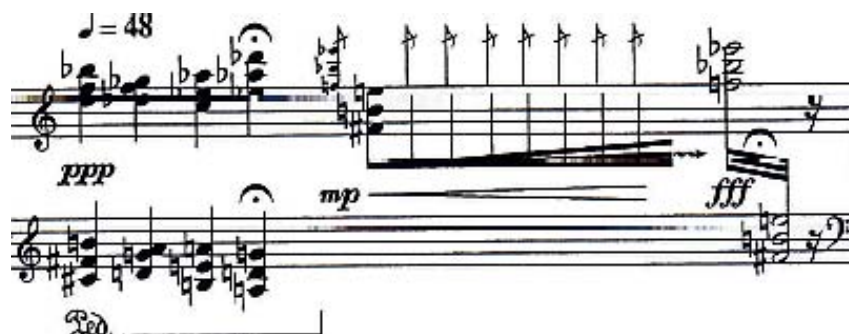
Example 6: Zhou Long: *Wu Kui*, bar 128

In bar 166 a semiquaver rest after every phrase indicates that these fast-tempo phrases need to be finished immediately. (See example 7)



Example 7: Zhou Long: *Wu Kui*, bar 166

Contemporary Chinese music often uses a wide dynamic range. *Wu Kui* has nine levels of dynamics from *ppp* to *fff*. We even can see the lowest and highest level of dynamics in one bar. (See example 8)



Example 8: Zhou Long: *Wu Kui*, bar 166

The music demands a rich variety of tonal colors along with these dynamic levels. For example, in bars 129 and 134 (*tranquillo* and *scorrevole*) *ppp* can be related to a flowing and gliding sound in which those accents are occasionally shimmering. The researcher found that to play those accents within the range of *ppp* can be challenging. The touch should be quick and close to keys. (Also see example 2c)

In bar 142, the composer indicated that the pianist should stop the string inside piano when playing the low Cs to imitate the wooden percussion instrument. Different sounds can be gained by tapping different locations along the strings. After experimenting, the researcher found an ideal location close to the side of the music stand that created the desired percussive sound.

3.2 *Taiji* by Zhao Xiaosheng

Taiji (in CD1, track 5) is a highly significant milestone in contemporary Chinese piano music. It received the first prize for a short piece in the Shanghai International Music Competition in 1987. The composer Zhao Xiaosheng [3], with whom the researcher of this project had been learning piano for two years, provided abundant information on both the analyses of composition and performing practice through personal

contact.

Professor Zhao has discussed three levels of his understanding about Chinese musical style: the first level is about musical techniques or the elements of composition, which is the exterior level; the second level is the presentation of the relationship between a specific musical idiom and the ethnic group from which it originates; the highest level is to deliver the spirit which can connect the souls of people (Qian, 2001). His opinion coincidentally resembles Bartók's three levels of treatment of folk material. *Taiji*, which was finished in July 1987, presents the third level of his understanding of Chinese style without ignoring the first and second levels.

The composer created a *Taiji* compositional system in which all sixty-four hexagrams of the *I Ching* are translated into pitch sets and their permutations. Zhao's *Taiji* chart is the central theory and conclusion of this whole system in which the outer circle presents 64 pitch class sets, each corresponding to one of the 64 hexagrams, and the inner square includes the 12-note *Taiji* chord, *Taiji* pitch class sets and 64 chords. The essence of the *Taiji* chart is the basic *Taiji* chord. (Zhao, 2006) (See example 9)

Taiji for solo piano is a complete presentation of the *Taiji* compositional system in which 64 pitch class sets in the outer circle go clockwise and return to the start.

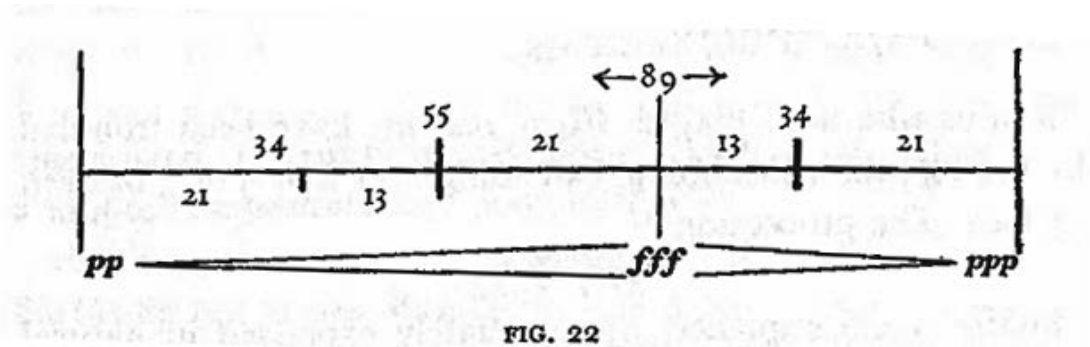
Taiji is structured in eight sections. It is associated with not only the eight paragraphs of Chinese traditional ‘eight-legged’ essay[5] and *Daqu*[6] in the Tang dynasty, but also the Golden Section structure[7](Qian 2001, p.20). It resembles sonata form, but mainly accords with the general structural principles of Chinese instrumental music: gradualism and extensibility. The whole piece starts from a slow tempo with only two pitches, gradually adding pitch material and increasing its intensity.

In the first part 破 (differentiation), the essential material C and D flat appears in the low register. C represents yin and D flat represents yang. They combine, complement, interact and divide throughout the work. The Golden Section point, which is also the climax, is the fifth part, *lento*, in which all 12 notes of the basic *Taiji* chord are present. (See example 10a)



Example 10a: Zhao Xiaosheng: *Taiji* (Climax)

This use of the Golden Section as a structural device is similar to that found in many musical works by Bartók. Example 10b is Ernő Lendvai's analysis of the structure and dynamics of Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta, Movement I*.



Example 10b: Golden Section proportions as shown in Ernő Lendvai's analysis of Bela Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta, Movement I*.

In Bartók's keyboard compositions, we also can see some examples of the Golden Section. The climaxes of *Free Variations* and *From the diary of a fly* from *Mikrokosmos* fall at the Golden Mean. (Lowivisaw, 1971)



Example 10c: Bartók: *Mikrokosmos No. 140*, bars 51 - 54 (climax bar 52)



Example 10d: Bartók: *Mikrokosmos No. 142*, bars 55 – 59(climax bar 58)

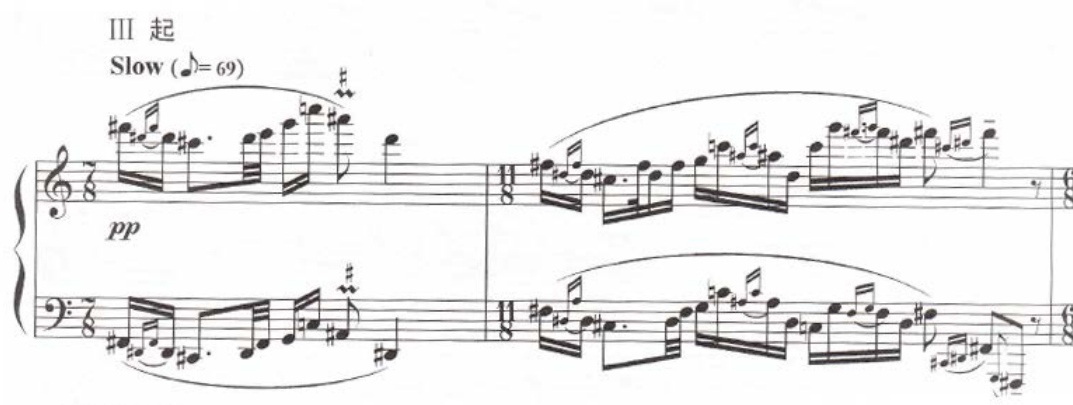
The conclusion of *Taiji* uses the same material as the beginning, referring to Chinese philosophy in which everything in the universe returns to its origin at last.

To deliver the Chinese philosophical spirit in performance, the pianist needs to pay close attention to the following aspects. Firstly the proper tone color needs to be discovered. It is closely linked with Chinese aesthetic appeal. The composer stated that he intended to produce the specific timbres of some Chinese instruments, such as *qin* and bronze bell (Zhao, 2006). Four kinds of *qin* [8] technique inspired specific sections: ‘scattered sound’, ‘floating sound’, ‘stopped sound’ and ‘sliding sound’. For example, C and D flat in the bass voice throughout many sections refers to ‘scattered sound’, which is a relatively firm sound. (See example 11)



Example 11: Zhao Xiaosheng: *Taiji*

In contrast, the ‘floating sound’ is heard in the top voice of some sections, such as the slow part at the beginning of the third section. ‘Licking’ touch using finger pads can produce the subtle timbre which is close to the delicacy and transparency of the ‘floating sound’ on the *qin*. (Zhao, 2006) (See example 12)



Example 12: Zhao Xiaosheng: *Taiji*

It is difficult to produce the effect of the ‘sliding sound’ on the piano. The ornaments in above example refer to this effect. The pianist needs to relax fingers and smoothly slide from key to key. This movement requires a flexible wrist to gently carry fingers from key to key. The coexistence of

floating sound and firm sound is a significant trait of Chinese music.

Secondly, *pedaling* is also an important and difficult aspect in the performance of *Taiji* since there are no indicated pedal markings from the composer in the published score. It needs abundant experiments because the 64 pitch class sets are related to each other and sometimes could be independent to some extent. Professor Zhao suggested several practical methods of *pedaling*, which he refers to as ‘gluing’ and ‘folding’ (Zhao, 2003). However pianists need to make their own decision about the right location for each *pedaling* method. The composer’s intention and the pianist’s ideal acoustic effect are the conditions for making *pedaling* decisions. For example, in the end of the second part 承 (continuing), the pedal can be maintained in the whole section of E flat chord to evoke the sonority of a bronze bell, but needs to be released at the end while silently depressing G, G flat and B flat, in order to clear other resonances and leave this last soft cluster. (See example 13)



Example 13: Zhao Xiaosheng: *Taiji*

The rhythmic complexity of the work requires careful attention. For example, multiple rhythmic levels occur on the first page, in which every

voice has its own rhythmic divisions. Rests are also important in *Taiji*. They have a similar function to the blank-leaving [9] in Chinese painting which presents the essence of Chinese philosophy. (See example 14)



Example 14: Zhao Xiaosheng: *Taiji*

Additionally, Zhao applied gradual acceleration and deceleration in many spots in *Taiji*, such as example 14, which is similar to Bartók's *14 Bagatelles*. (Example 4b)

3.3 *Dong Xiang Gu Lou (Impromptu Dong Township Drum Tower)* by Zou Xiangping

Zou Xiangping (b.1953) is an associate professor of composition at the Sichuan Conservatory of Music. His piano solo *Dong Xiang Gu Lou* (in CD2, track6) is a highly influential work in the field of contemporary Chinese music.

Like most Chinese composers of his generation, Zou has been greatly influenced by Bartók. In 1987 he visited a Dong minority village and collected folk music there. Dong grand chorus is the only polyphonic music in China which is improvisational, without conductor or accompaniment. Zou was impressed by the phonetic tones of the Dong language, which is inseparably linked with their wavelike singing. In an article Zou wrote that he combined his own subjective reflection and imagination of Dong culture with the abstracted elements of traditional Dong music. (Zou, 2001) This treatment of folk material parallels Bartók's third level. The composer did not use any original Dong tune but the whole work is full of the characteristics of Dong music, such as polyphonic devices and improvisational style.

The work is developed in ternary form with flexibility of material collage and combination. The composer exposes all pitch materials, which are centered on minor third, tritone and major seventh, in the introduction. The opening minor third D-F (see example 14) is the essential motivic material which describes the contour of the Dong drum tower (Zou, 2001). It should be played distinctly with a soft but penetrating touch. (See example 15)



Example 15 : Zou Xiangping: *Dong Xiang Gu Lou*, bar 1

Different touch and tone need to be applied to distinguish different levels and registers in the introduction.

Gradual rhythmic acceleration is used in the introduction and part B. This effect is very common in Chinese instrumental music and is an element of improvisational style. (See example 16)



Example 16 : Zou Xiangping: *Dong Xiang Gu Lou*, bar 1

It is worth mentioning that we can see the major-minor chord in the introduction, which is often used by Bartók. (See example 17)



Example 17a: Zou Xiangping: *Dong Xiang Gu Lou*, bar 2



Example 17b: Bartók: *Suite Op.14*, IV

After the introduction, Part A contains two sections. The first section is the composer's recreation of a Dong folk melody, *Duo Ye*, which is graceful dancing and singing with a rather slow and flexible rhythm. (See example 18)



Example 18: Zou Xiangping: *Dong Xiang Gu Lou*, bars 4 - 7

As seen in the above example, frequent tempo changes are an issue for the performance practice. This is also the case with the second of Bartók's *Improvisations Op.20*, in which there are twelve tempo marks in two pages. In order to achieve the coherence of music, the researcher identified the following effective solutions about this issue. At first, the pianist should realize that tempo does not only present the speed or pace of music; the performer should discover the character and expression behind every tempo mark. For example, in Part 1, quarter note = 46 corresponds to

the graceful dance; $\text{♩} = 88-98$ recalls the Dong people's flowing singing. Secondly, the pianist can measure the tempo with a metronome to guarantee the marked tempos remain constant; consequently the continuity of the music will be maintained.

Due to the varied rhythm in traditional Dong music, in *Dong Xiang Gu Lou* the composer not only applies a number of different time signatures such as 4/4, 5/4, 6/4, 7/4, but also designs various polyrhythms. (See example 19):



Example 19: Zou Xiangping: *Dong Xiang Gu Lou*, bars 18 - 20

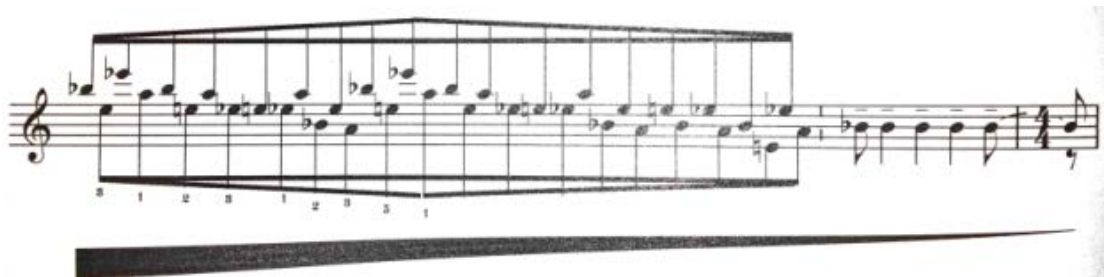
It is necessary to consider that the independence of both voices depends on the articulation of different rhythmic pulses and tonal colors. Following this relatively smooth section, the extremely percussive rhythm pattern 3+3+2 bursts out. (See example 20)



Example 20: Zou Xiangping: *Dong Xiang Gu Lou*, bars 28 - 30

This was inspired by Dong traditional percussive music. To obtain the brightness and dryness of percussive sonority, it requires the firm fingers and flexible wrist.

After the first climax at the end of part A, there is a transition to the peaceful and poetic part B, using rhythmic gradual acceleration and deceleration. (See example 21)



Example 21: Zou Xiangping: *Dong Xiang Gu Lou*, bar 54

The pedaling in this transition requires some experiments. The researcher considers the harmony and pitch construction, which moves from rich resonance to acoustic clarity, and accordingly gradually clears the pedal to slowly reduce the resonance and enter part B with clarity.

Similar to Bartók's 'phenomenon of Nature' in his *Night Music* (in CD 1, track 2), Zou intended to interpret the beauty of nature in Part B, including cicadas singing, river flowing, wind blowing and villagers' mountain singing. This requires the pianist to discover the delicacy and subtle timbres to portray natural sounds from far or near. Close attention must be paid to the variable rhythms to produce the atmospheric and improvisational style. Professor Zou admitted that in the beginning of part B he learned from Bartók's use of bitonality, making two voices

always in different tonalities and modes to represent a trait of Dong people's mountain singing. The upper voice is in E flat Yu [10] modulating to F Yu tonality; the bass voice is written in E Yu tonality. (Zou, 2001) The pianist should consider the independence of these two different voices. (See example 22)



Example 22: Zou Xiangping: *Dong Xiang Gu Lou*, bars 55 - 57

At the beginning of the recapitulation part (bars 76-79), polyrhythm combined with *accelerando* creates the momentum of increasing energy. (See example 23)



Example 23: Zou Xiangping: *Dong Xiang Gu Lou*, bars 75 - 77

The upper fifth is related to the sound of a small gong; the middle voice is melody whilst the bass fifths represents a large gong.

The coda concludes with the acoustic effect of multiple and unstable tonalities. Meanwhile, the top chromatic melody is distinct in the

complex resonance.

In summary, it is crucial to produce the sharp contrast between delicate singing tone and percussive sonority. The interpretation of flexible and variable rhythm is also an important factor to capture the spirit of Dong music. To obtain an impressive and convincing interpretation, the researcher has reviewed many documents about Dong culture, such as Dong chorus, Dong architecture etc.

3.4 *Long and Short* by Quan Jihao

Recalling Bartók's dedication to Hungarian folk music, Quan Jihao [11] is also deeply rooted in the culture of the Korean ethnic group in China and intends to promote the raw folk material to an artistic level. His piano solo work *Long and Short* (in CD1, track6) holds a prominent position in the realm of contemporary Chinese music, with its elaborate integration of traditional Korean folk rhythm and modern western pitch material. The treatment of folk material is equivalent to Bartók's second level, which is applied in Bartók's *Improvisations Op.20*. However *Long and Short* employs the material of folk rhythm whilst *Improvisations* used material of folk melody.

The title *Long and Short* refers to the conception of rhythmic formulation, which includes meter, rhythmic pattern, tempo, emotion and style. It is a

very important characteristic of Korean folk music that is evident in performances by percussive instruments, such as *buk* (a barrel drum), *sogo* (a small hand-held drum), *jing* (a large gong) etc. Following Bartók's path, Professor Quan greatly developed the potential of rhythm and uses the piano as a percussion instrument to some extent. He employs diverse rhythmic patterns based on three patterns of long and short, in three movements, entitled *Deng De Kong*, *Jin Yang Zhao*, and *En Mao Li*. The explosive and passionate first movement opens with the *Deng De Kong* rhythm and dissonant note clusters. (See example 24)



Example 24: Quan Jihao: *Long and Short*, I, bars 1 - 3

A small gong is represented as a cluster in the right hand. To suggest the bright and crisp timbre of a small gong, the pianist needs to apply forearm weight from the elbow, while keeping the firmness of fingers and palm. The major seventh and minor ninth in the bass represent the sounds of a drum and a large gong. The pianist needs to use the whole arm weight with relaxed movements to get a deep and adequately resonant sound. Apart from this dominant percussive sonority, the melody which is inserted in the middle register is the thematic material of the whole movement. It is important to bring out the

flexibility and liveliness of this folk melody. (See example 25)



Example 25: Quan Jihao: *Long and Short*, I, bars 6 - 9

The pitch material in the second movement comes directly from the core pitch material of the first movement: the dissonant note cluster.

(See example 26)



Example 26: Quan Jihao: *Long and Short*, II, bars 1 - 5

However, the composer expands this pitch material across a wider register and enlarged rhythm to obtain a spacious effect. The melody can be closely related to the Korean language and folk singing. During the concert preparation, the researcher met Korean guitarist Lee Song-Ou[12], who is familiar with the Korean rhythmic patterns of this work.

Lee sang the melody of the second movement to the researcher. It is inseparably linked with Korean language and is full of primitiveness which was beyond the researcher's imagination.

Following the example of Bartók's imitation of nature in *Night Music*, the composer imitates the birds singing with parallel minor sevenths in both hands in the *allegro* part. (See example 27)



Example 27: Quan Jihao: *Long and Short*, II, bars 23 - 28

The third movement *En Mao Li* is a vigorous festival dance. In the beginning the composer arranged two voices in two different keys, D minor and C sharp minor, to create a dissonant sonority. This device of bitonality can be always seen in Bartók's piano works, such as *Night Music* from *Out of Doors*. (See example 28)



Example 28a: Bartók: *Night Music* from *Out of Doors*

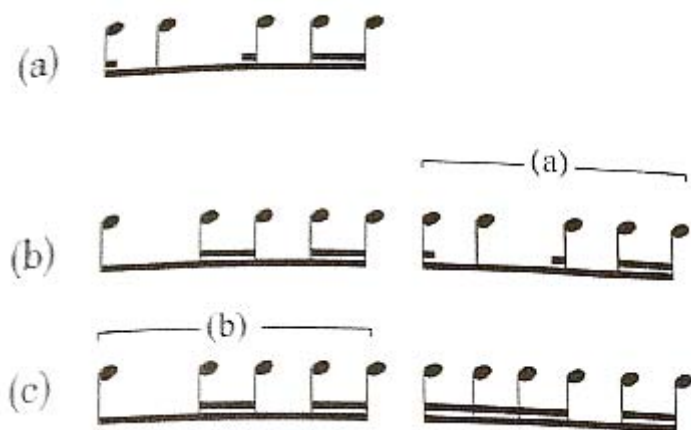


Example 28b: Quan Jihao: *Long and Short*, III, bars 1 - 5

Based on the *En Mao Li* pattern, the composer devised some interesting rhythms. At the beginning the time signature $5/8+3/8+6/8$ indicates a flexible metre. $5/8$ bars are divided into both $2+3$ and $3+2$. (See example 28b)

As another example, the composer designed three rhythmic patterns in this passage, which influence and combine with each other. These patterns become more and more intensive and reach a climax before the recapitulation. (See example 29)





Example 29: Quan Jihao: *Long and Short*, III, bars 36 - 41

The researcher found that from the point of view of performing the most difficult issue is to capture the quick transition between different time signatures and also varied rhythmic patterns. For instance, in the above example, the pianist must keep highly active to respond quickly to those abrupt and unexpected rhythmic and dynamic changes.

Generally, the researcher applied two principal methods in practising this work: firstly, documents relating to Korean musical culture, especially its traditional percussion instruments needed to be thoroughly researched; secondly, some of Bartók's piano works could be references for this piece. For instances, the first movement in *Out of Doors* and *Allegro barbaro* (Sz.49) provide models for the percussive treatment of the piano. *Night Music* from *Out of Doors* (track 2 of CD 1) forms a reference point for evoking the sound of nature.

3.5 *My Song* by Bright Sheng

Bright Sheng [13], a Chinese-American composer, conductor, and pianist,

considers Bartók as his spiritual mentor. In his article *Bartók, the Chinese Composer*, he said:

This is nationalism in its truest sense. It is why Bartók's music has such strong resonance in the music of some Chinese composers like myself. It is the spirit of his approach to composition and the essence of his deep understanding of both the folk and classical tradition that I find meaningful. This goes beyond the immediately apparent similarities—such as the pentatonic scale—shared by Hungarian and Chinese folk traditions. (Sheng 1997)

Bright Sheng's piano solo *My Song* (in CD2, track 3) was selected for the first concert in this research. *My Song* was premiered in November, 1989 in New York City by Peter Serkin. In the program note Sheng wrote:

My Song was an inspiration of two folds: first, Peter Serkin's musicality and virtuosity, and second, composer's attachment to Chinese folk music. (Sheng, 1989)

The whole music is in folklore style, based on the pentatonic 4-2-3 pitch class set (like G, A, C, D four pitches). Combined with a analysis of compositional intention, the researcher will illustrate these four movements from the perspectives of performing techniques and interpretation.

The folklore-style first movement is developed with a typical Oriental music device: heterophony. It has parallels with Bartók's third level of treatment to folk music. It does not contain any authentic folk material, but is full of folk spirit, especially on aspects of glissando effect of acciaccaturas and heterophony device. In the beginning stage of learning this movement, rhythmic calculation is necessary because the simultaneous two to four voices have their own way to elaborately divide

the crotchet. (See example 30)



Example 30: Bright Sheng: *My Song*, I

After working out the rhythmic relationships, the horizontal melodic line becomes more important in practice. The moving wave of melodic line and the different tones of each voice need to be considered. The piano trio version of these four movements is a useful reference for this purpose. A crucial effect in this movement is the acciaccaturas through which the composer intended to imitate the glissando effect of folk performance. The exact spots of accents should be on the acciaccaturas instead of the principle notes. As for the modern pedaling, the sostenuto pedal is required throughout the whole movement to sustain the pentatonic chord of the beginning. (See example 31)



Example 31: Bright Sheng: *My Song*, I

The importance of rests should be realized; they allow the sustained resonance caught by the sostenuto pedal to be heard.

The second movement is inspired by a cheerful folk song from Sichuan province, *Happiness in Sunrise*. It is developed in variation style. Sheng's treatment of this folk song is similar to Bartók's second level. The folk tune only serves as a motif. (see example 41 of Bartók's second level). The most important issue for practice is to bring out distinctly the main melody from the fast and numerous demisemiquavers. The rotation of wrist and forearm can help carry the fifth finger to bring out the melody; at the same time the pianist needs to reduce the vigor of finger movements to avoid too much emphasis of demisemiquavers. The polyphonic texture of the *legatissimo* section requires the independence of both hands. (See example 32)



Example 32: Bright Sheng: *My Song*, III, bars 21 - 24

In bars 49-61, the bass fifths marked fortissimo are linked to the sound of a large gong; the pianist needs to use arm weight to gain rich sonority.

The third movement is a savage dance in which the melody develops with

a series of "Chinese sequences." [14] The pitch construction in this movement is significantly similar to Bartók's *From the Diary of Fly* in *Mikrokosmos*. (See example 33)



Example 33a: Bartók: *From the Diary of Fly*, bars 1 - 5



Example 33b: Bright Sheng: *My Song*, III, bars 1 - 4

The notable issue in performance is the sharp contrast of dynamics, from *p* to *ffff*. However, the pianist should realize that to emphasize the roughness of folk music, especially the percussive sonority, composers tend to exaggerate the dynamic level. Literally following the instructions may produce unpleasant sounds during performance. Especially, the pianist should not overdo dynamic levels in high and low registers. Too forceful striking in extreme register will produce a large amount of inharmonicity, which may produce an unpleasant effect because of the frequency of the overtones above the harmonics of the fundamental.

Often, a composer's dynamics markings do not only indicate the loudness but also contain the conception of timbres. For example, in the last page of the third movement, the pianist could use direct arm movements and keep the firmness of knuckle and fingers together to get the dry and rough percussive effect, instead of only considering the dynamics *ffff*.

The fourth movement is based on the folk song from Shanxi Province, *San Shi Li Pu*. The treatment is very similar to Bartók's first level, as Bartók's own description "like fixing a precious jewel into its setting" (Ujfalussy & Pataki 1972). Sheng uses unconventional harmonization to give unusual feeling to this old song, such as tritone, major seventh and bitonality. In so doing, Sheng manages to "avoid the trap of being labeled Western or Chinese". (Ciccone, 2011) Resembling Bartók use of this device (see also example 35c and 35d), the two hands are in different tonalities on black and white keys. Interpreting this movement, the performer needs to make the piano speak sadly. A slow tempo is necessary, while soft pedal and legato touch are also important to produce the atmosphere of nostalgia.

3.6 *Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin* by Chen Qigang

Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin (in CD2, track 5) by Chen Qigang[15] was commissioned by 2000 International Olivier Messiaen Competition. Chen Qigang studied composition with Messiaen from 1984 to 1988. In

an interview with Myung-whun Chung[16] Chen recalled that Messiaen encouraged him to discover his own musical language from Chinese folk music, using the example of Bartók (Chen, 2010). *Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin* is a good demonstration of this approach, corresponding to the second level of Bartók's treatment to folk music.

This single movement work is based on the theme which is extracted from *Xingxian* in Beijing opera. *Xingxian* is the background music played by *jinghu* [17] when an actor is acting or reciting. The improvisational style of the performer's acting allows *Xingxian* flexibility and creative space. Chen Qigang did not adopt directly any singing material from Beijing opera but captured the character of *Xingxian* and created the feeling of Beijing opera. As to the harmonization, the influence of Messiaen's style is evident, such as the chord of resonance [18], chords in fourths and chords with added 6ths.

Research focused on the development of performance practice for this piece. The researcher found the following aspects which the pianist should emphasize.

At first, the unusual hand position causes difficulty for performance. The linear motion is based on the pentatonic system. (See example 34)



Example 34: Chen Qigang: *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pékin*, bars 103 - 106

The pianist needs to practise slowly at the beginning stage to become accustomed to frequently changing hand positions. Vertically, Chen Qigang often arranges both hands in black-white position, a device typical in Bartók. (See example 35)



Example 35a: Chen Qigang: *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pékin*, bar 7



Example 35b: Chen Qigang: *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pékin*, bars 66 - 68



Example 35c: Bela Bartók: *Mikrokosmos*, No.105, Bars 1-12



Example 35d: Bartók: *Night Music* from *Out of Doors* (in CD1, track 2)

This creates many minor second intervals which are highly dissonant. It requires the pianist to properly control the touch for attenuating the extent of dissonance.

Moreover, it is crucial for performance to get the delicacy of timbre and the clarity of multiple levels. The pedaling is very helpful for this purpose. The sostenuto pedal may be used often in this piece to differentiate multiple levels. For example, in the first page the seventh in the bass voice may be maintained by the sostenuto pedal when both hands move

to play the upper two voices. (See example 36)



Example 36: Chen Qigang: *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pékin*, bar 4

The pianist also needs to pay attention to the precise timing of pedaling. For example, in the *largando* part (bars 185-188) pedal changes should be quicker on the ornaments in order to release previous chords clearly and involving these ornaments in the next harmony, despite the difficulty because these ornaments are very short. If pedal changing is too late or takes too long, the ornaments in the left hand will be left out of the harmony. Another example of pedal timing is the *grandioso* in bar 189. (See example 37)



Example 37: Chen Qigang: *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pékin*, bar 189

There are three levels present in different registers simultaneously. If we use the sostenuto pedal for maintaining the bass sevenths, some other harmonies in the top voices will also be caught by the pedal, causing a muddy effect. The reasonable solution is only using the damper pedal. The pedal catching all those chords of top voices should be quick and light so as not to dampen the bass seventh.

Additionally, the contrast of diverse timbres can help capture the composer's instant reflection of Beijing opera. In some sections the composer arranged simple motivic material into an open and wide register through octave transposition to produce the melting and glittering effect, for which pianists need to apply the 'licking-like' (Zhao,2006) finger action. (See example 38)



Example 38a: Chen Qigang: *Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin*, bars 1 - 3



Example 38b: Chen Qigang: *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pékin*, bars 16 - 18

On the contrary, there are some dissonant chords which imitate percussion instruments of Beijing opera, such as small gong and drum. This dry and tense sound requires more straightforward forearm movement. (See example 39)



Example 39: Chen Qigang: *Instantes d'un Opéra de Pékin*, bars 96 - 99

Furthermore, in the *largando* part (bars 185-190) the composer arranges harmonies across a large span from low to high register, producing a splendid acoustic effect. The pianist should apply a deep touch from the shoulder, or even from the abdomen. (See example 40)



Example 40: Chen Qigang: *Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin*, bars 185 - 186

Finally, structural integrity is difficult to achieve when performing this piece. It is developed with variations in style but without clear division. The structural gradualism and extensibility accord with the general traits of Chinese instrumental music. When the performer is considering the contrast of different characteristics between each section, the integrity should not be ignored.

3.7 *Ba Ban* by Chen Yi

Chen Yi[19], an outstanding Chinese-American composer, devotes herself to merging elements from various music traditions, with encouragement from her two mentors Chou Wen-chung [20] and Mario Davidovsky.

Different to Bright Sheng's adoption of original folk tune, Chen Yi says 'her composing style 'very rarely employs pre-existing material such as tunes from traditional Chinese music, but taps it for its own particular charm and tries to re-create that through the use of new concepts and new technology.' (Liu, 2010) The piano solo *Ba Ban* (in CD2, track 2) was

commissioned by the Carnegie Hall Corporation in 1999. It merges Western and Chinese elements to create a stylistic fusion which can be understood and accepted by both western and eastern audiences. *Ba Ban* literally means eight beats in Chinese. It has two meanings. One is the title of a traditional tune; it also refers to a traditional structural model of Chinese instrumental music. A typical *Ba Ban* melody and mode is generally comprised of eight phrases; each phrase has eight beats except the fifth, which has four more beats than others. The phrases are grouped in four different ways: 3+2+3, 4+4, 3+2+3+4, and 5+3. In an article “The Beauty of the *Ba Ban* Form”, Du Yaxiong, an important musicologist, pointed out the structure of *Ba Ban* as it corresponds to the Fibonacci series and the Golden section. Du Yaxiong writes:

... the structure of *Ba Ban* corresponds to the mathematical proportion expressed in the Golden Section. In *Ba Ban*, the additional four *ban* of the fifth *daban* [big beat which refers to a "phrase"] are numbered 41 to 44. Since the whole piece contains sixty-eight *ban* and 68 times 0.618—the Golden Section ratio—is 42.024 (or rounded off to 42), the point of division for the Golden Section is right in the middle of the forty additional *ban*. . . . The resultant ratio of 5:3—a part of the Fibonacci sequence—is further evidence supporting this conclusion. (Du, 1984)

As a sophisticated composer, Chen Yi does not apply the entire *Ba Ban* tune in this solo piano work, but separately uses *Ba Ban* pitch material and *Ba Ban* rhythm. The fragments of *Ba Ban* tune are fused with a western element, a twelve-tone row. The whole piece does not follow the traditional *Ba Ban* structure, but has four parts which are developed with variation style. This approach is similar to Bartók's treatment of folk materials in his Op.20 *Improvisations* (in CD2, track 1) in which Bartók

developed some short folk tunes into a larger scale work with sharp dynamic contrasts. For example, the original folk tune (see example 41) in No.3 from Op.20 is short and simple; Bartók created an atmospheric effect with cluster chords in left hand, then the main thematic material passed from right hand to left hand, and also is presented in both hands later with a polyphonic texture.



Example 41: original folk song which is used in Op.20 *Improvisation* by Bela Bartók, No.3

In the letter to a Chinese pianist Li Song Wen, the composer wrote that:

general impressions of the style of Chinese mountain song singing, and Chinese instrumental playing also influences the sounds that are heard in the textures of the solo piano. (Li, 2006)

We can hear the theme in the beginning of part A (bar 1-48), in which motivic material is arranged in different registers to imitate the different groups in mountain singing. This thematic material comes from the beginning of an original Ba Ban melody. (See example 42)

3 3 | 6 2 | 1 | 5 6 | 1 | 6 1 | 1 3 | 2 |
 3 3 | 6 2 | 1 | 5 6 | 1 | 3 2 | 1 6 | 5 |
 5 5 | 3 3 | 5 3 | 2 | 2 3 | 2 1 | 6 1 | 2 |
 3 2 | 2 3 | 5 | 5 6 | i | 6 i | i 6 | 5 |
 5 6 | 5 3 | 2 | 2 3 | 5 | 5 6 | 5 3 | 2 | 2 5 | 5 2 | 3 2 | 1 |
 6 1 | 5 6 | 1 3 | 2 | 2 5 | 5 2 | 3 2 | 1 |
 6 1 | 1 2 | 5 6 | 5 3 | 2 | 6 5 | 3 2 | 1 |
 7 6 | 5 6 | 1 3 | 2 | 2 5 | 5 2 | 3 2 | 1 |

Example 42a: a traditional Ba Ban tune in folk notation

The musical score for Example 42b consists of three systems of piano accompaniment. The first system is marked with a forte dynamic (*ff*) and features a right-hand melody with a trill and a left-hand accompaniment. The second system is marked with a mezzo-forte dynamic (*f*) and continues the melodic and harmonic development. The third system is marked with a mezzo-forte dynamic (*f*) and includes a tempo change to *Più mosso*. The score is written for piano with a treble and bass clef.

Example 42b: Chen Yi: *Ba Ban*, bars 1 - 14

The melodic material is pentatonic and bitonal as well. When the theme is presented in the beginning and in the *allegretto* section, it is mostly accompanied by the same melody a semitone lower. This section

contrasts consonant and dissonant harmony. Bar 6 and 9 begin with dissonant harmonic complexes, whilst bar 8 and 10 are largely pentatonic. It is important to notice that major seventh is prevailingly used as to the aspect of dissonance in *Baban*. This interval is also favored by Bartók. (see example 43)



Example 43a: Chen Yi: *Ba Ban*, bars 39 - 42



Example 43b: Bela Bartók: *Mikrocósmos*, No.144, bars 4-6

As to interpretation, the pianist needs to distinguish different tones colours in different levels of the thematic presentation, and also distinctly bring out the theme in the *allegretto* part. Secondly, it is necessary to know that the ornaments in this part are inspired by a Chinese instrument, the *zheng* [21]. The pianist also needs to observe all the accents properly, as they are used to distinguish the melodic material from their surrounding resonant or dissonant pitch arrangements. (See example 44)



Example 44: Chen Yi: *Ba Ban*, bars 6 - 9

Additionally, the rhythmic intricacy needs sufficient attention. Shen Zhibai, a Chinese musicologist, said that rhythm in western music resembles gymnastics whilst rhythm in Chinese music resembles *Tai Chi* martial art. (Zhao, 2006) Irrational rhythms are found throughout *Ba Ban*, including triplets, quintuplets, sextuplet, and septuplets. The metronome can help in the beginning stage of practice, but the pianist must musically bring out the flexibility of rhythm while considering the relationship between rhythm and the creation of linear shape and momentum.

After the thematic presentation in Part A, the music includes three variations in Part B (bars 48-97), C (98-156), and D (157-232). Like the first part, pitch construction shows the same tendency of melding tradition with modernism, combining pentatonic and atonal. The composer segments the thematic material and weaves atonal pitch manipulation around those fragments. (See example 45)



Example 45: Chen Yi: *Ba Ban*, bars 85 - 94

Careful attention to the slurs assists in articulating the phrasing, without which the structural integrity of the music will be lost.

Rhythmic complexity is still a great issue for practice. The notated rests are also crucial for the phrasing of this work. It provides the space for the breath of performer and audience. (See example 46)



Example 46: Chen Yi: *Ba Ban*, bars 157 - 159

Equally important, the relationship between diverse timbres of multiple levels and sharp dynamic contrasts with pedaling and touch require many experiments. Some sections with a dreamy texture (Li, 2006) need the arm to carry the fingers to create the linear shape without active finger

action. (See example 47)



Example 47: Chen Yi: *Ba Ban*, bars 53 - 58

Dynamic contrast is sharp throughout the piece. In bars 157-257, a combination of a clear and light touch with both soft pedal and damper pedal will increase the delicacy and enrich the timbre. (See example 48)



Example 48: Chen Yi: *Ba Ban*, bars 168 - 169

There are parts with an even softer dynamic, such as bar 151 with *ppp* mark. The pianist can employ the ‘licking’ touch, (Zhao, 2006) with the fingers close to the keys, stroking the keys with the finger pads.

Conversely, in sections with relatively strong dynamic level, the bright sonority with fast running notes requires active finger work. (See example 49)



Example 49: Chen Yi: *Ba Ban*, bars 145 - 148

The density of sections with a great number of octaves requires a deep touch, firm palm support and the application of weight from the shoulder and body. (See example 50)



Example 50: Chen Yi: *Ba Ban*, bar 176

Similar to another piano solo by Chen Yi, *Duo Ye*, from bar 193 the repetitions of ostinato bass notes were gradually reduced to intensify the rhythmic tension. (See example 51)



The image displays a musical score for Example 51, Chen Yi's *Ba Ban*, covering bars 193 to 222. The score is presented in four systems. The first system (bars 203-207) shows a bassoon part with a dotted line labeled '8ba' below it. The second system (bars 208-212) also has a '8ba' label. The third system (bars 213-217) includes a 'loco' marking and an '8va' label. The fourth system (bars 218-222) features an '8va' label and a treble clef for the upper staff.

Example 51: Chen Yi: *Ba Ban*, bars 193 - 222

As we can see, the bassoonist begins with C repeats 8 times, followed by an ostinato starting on D which repeats 5 times, then E flat repeating 3 times and so on. To analyze this rhythmic device is greatly helpful for memorization. Another interesting rhythmic device is the coda, in which the pianist presents the complete rhythm of *Ba Ban* with repeated highest C. (See example 42a & 52)



Example 52: Chen Yi: *Ba Ban*, bars 248 - 253

4. Conclusion

Through this research, it is found that Béla Bartók's influence on these Chinese composers is embodied in three levels. Firstly, Bartók's approach to keyboard compositions inspired Chinese composers to discover their own musical languages from Chinese folk traditions. Secondly, to a greater or lesser extent, these Chinese composers learnt modern compositional techniques from Bartók to utilize Chinese folk materials. Thirdly, Bartók's interest in the 'phenomenon of Nature' accords with Chinese cultural traditions and influenced Chinese composers to interpret the sound of nature at the piano. From the perspective of performance, the

researcher has also discovered contemporary pianistic skills during this research, such as modern pedaling and playing inside the piano. Moreover, interpretation required research into various relevant aspects of Chinese musical culture to deliver the spirit of these works, including traditional Chinese instruments, mountain singing and folk dancing of some minority ethnic groups.

Endnotes

- [1] This expression is quoted from Bartók's "The Folk Songs of Hungary" (1928), but it also appears in "The influence of folk music on the art music of today" (1920), "The relation of folk song to the development of the art music of our time" (1921) and, in a slightly different version, in "What is folk music?" (1931). (Harley, 1995)
- [2] Zhou Long is one of the most accomplished contemporary Chinese composers. He was born into an artistic family in 1953. Zhou Long arrived in United States to pursue higher degree in 1983, after a brief stay when he finished his study in Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. He won the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for Music for his opera, *Madame White Snake*. He currently holds the position of Distinguished Professor of Composition at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music.
- [3] Zhao Xiaosheng, composer, virtuoso pianist, music theorist and educator, professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, doctoral tutor. *Piano Artistry* magazine deputy editor, originator of the *taiji* compositional system.
- [4] In Chinese philosophy, *yin* and *yang*, literally meaning "shadow and light", are used to describe how seemingly opposite or contrary forces are interconnected and interdependent in the natural world; and, how they give rise to each other as they inter-relate to one other.
- [5] The "eight-legged" essay was a style of essay writing that had to be mastered to pass the imperial examinations during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. It is named so because it was divided into eight sections. The eight "legs" or sections were as follows: opening, amplification, preliminary exposition, initial argument, central argument, later argument, final argument, and conclusion.
- [6] The form of *Daqu* which developed during the Tang Dynasty, combining instrumental music, singing and dancing, was a comparatively sophisticated artistic achievement which was clearly inseparably linked to musical exchanges

with other nationalities, and was certainly not a result of the natural development of Han and Wei *Daqu*. The structure of Tang *Daqu* was extensive, consisting of 20, 30 or even 50 sections.

- [7] According to Ernő Lendvai's analysis, Bartók applied the Golden Section in many works, such as *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta Sz. 106, BB 114*.
- [8] *Qin* is a plucked seven-string Chinese musical instrument of the zither family. It has been played since ancient times, and has traditionally been favored by scholars and literati as an instrument of great subtlety and refinement. The music of the *qin* can be categorised as four distinctively different "sounds": scattered sound, floating sound, stopped sound and sliding sound.
- [9] Chinese painting is based on the idea that "less is more." Often, artists decide to simplify the image or emphasize one part of the painting by leaving a large part of the page blank. The areas of blank rice paper become important parts of the painting and the composition.
- [10] The five notes of the ancient Chinese five-tone scale (*gong, shang, zhi, jiao, and yu*) are equivalent to 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 in numbered musical notation or do, re, mi, so, and la in western solfeggio. E flat Yu means Yu mode with E flat as tonic. The E flat Yu scale is E flat, G flat, A flat, B flat, D flat and E flat.
- [11] Quan Jihao was born in Tumen city Jilin province, northeast China in 1956. He is a member of the Korean ethnic group. From 1983-1986 he studied composition and conducting at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. He is currently the composition professor in China Conservatory of Music, Beijing.
- [12] Lee Song Ou is a South Korean guitarist. He is currently Guest Professor at the Shenyang Art University in China and also teaches at the Korean National University of Arts in Seoul. In 2002, Lee Song-Ou was nominated "Artist of the Year" by KBS Broadcasting.
- [13] Bright Sheng was born in Shanghai in 1955 and began learning piano at age four. He had been a piano and percussion performer in Qinghai song and dance theatre during Cultural Revolution. Sheng studied composition from 1978 to 1982 in Shanghai Conservatory of Music and then moved to the US and studied composition in Queens College, CUNY and Columbia University. In November 2001, Sheng received a MacArthur Fellowship.
- [14] Composer explains "Chinese sequence" in the program note: "This is a term of my own invention that describes a type of melodic development in Chinese folk music in which each repetition of the initial motive increases the number of notes, duration, and tessitura".
- [15] Chen Qigang is a Chinese French composer, who was born in a family of artists in 1951. He was admitted to the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing to study composition immediately after the Cultural Revolution in 1977. At the age of 33, he went to Paris where he learnt composition with Olivier Messiaen as his last student until 1988.
- [16] Myung-whun Chung (born 22 January 1953, Seoul) is a South Korean pianist and conductor.
- [17] *Jinghu* is a Chinese bowed string instrument, has two strings, being used primarily in Beijing opera.

- [18] “Chord of Resonance” is Messiaen’s term for an 8-note chord, built in the third mode of limited transposition, containing “nearly all the notes perceptible, to an extremely fine ear” in the resonance of a low bass note. See Messiaen: *The Technique of My Musical Language*, Alphonse Leduc, Paris.
- [19] Chen Yi was born into a family with strong musical background in Guangzhou in 1953. Chen was the first Chinese woman to receive a Master of Arts (M.A.) in composition from the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music in 1986. After that, she went to the US to continue her study with Chou Wen-chung and Mario Davidovsky at Columbia University.
- [20] Chou Wen-chung is a Chinese American composer of contemporary classical music. He immigrated in 1946 to the United States where he lives. He can be regarded as the founder of the contemporary Chinese musical idiom, one whose music sets the standard and an example for succeeding generations to emulate.
- [21] *Zheng* is a Chinese plucked zither. It has 18-23 or more strings and movable bridges.

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Appendix 1 -- Recital on 7th, September, 2012 in Elder Hall



Solo Piano Recital

Qiaoyue Zhao (赵桥月), Piano
Elder Hall, September 7, 2012

Program

1. **15 Hungarian Peasant Songs, Sz71** **Béla Bartók (1881-1945)**
 1. *Rubato (Old Tune)*
 2. *Andante (Old Tune)*
 3. *Poco rubato (Old Tune)*
 4. *Andante (Old Tune)*
 5. *Scherzo*
 6. *Ballade (Tema con variazioni)*
 7. *Allegro (Old Dance Tune)*
 8. *Allegretto (Old Dance Tune)*
 9. *Allegretto (Old Dance Tune)*
 10. *L'istesso tempo (Old Dance Tune)*
 11. *Assai moderato (Old Dance Tune)*
 12. *Allegretto (Old Dance Tune)*
 13. *Poco più vivo (Old Dance Tune)*
 14. *Allegro (Old Dance Tune)*
 15. *Allegro (Old Dance Tune)*
2. **Night Music from Out of Doors, Sz81** **Béla Bartók (1881-1945)**
3. **Wu Kui (五魁)** **Zhou Long (b.1953)**
4. **Seven Sketches, Op. 9b (Sz.44)** **Béla Bartók (1881-1945)**
 1. *Portrait of a girl*
 2. *See-saw, dickory-daw*
 3. *Lento*
 4. *Non troppo lento*
 5. *Romanian folksong*
 6. *In Wallachian style*
 7. *Poco lento*
5. **Taiji (太极)** **Zhao Xiaosheng (b.1945)**
6. **Long and Short (长与短的组合)** **Quan Jihao (b.1956)**
 1. *Allegretto(Deng De Kong)*
 2. *Lento(Jin Yang Zhao)*
 3. *Allegro(En Mao Li)*

Program Notes

1. Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs, Sz 71 by Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs is one of Bartók's greatest cycles based on folk song. The title makes a point of using the word "peasant", which Bartók nearly always used in preference to the more general term "folk", thus emphasizing that, for him, "folk", meant village farmers. Usually for Bartók, the manuscript is undated and only the evidence gleaned from available collections and the first performances of parts of the work enables us to deduce that the work was written between 1914 and 1918. *Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs* almost constitutes a sonata, with a slow first movement ('Four Old Sorrowful Songs'), a Scherzo (so-called, setting its tune in a tiny A-B-A pattern), a slow movement (a theme and eight variations on a ballad Bartók himself collected in 1918) and a finale ('Nine Old Dance Tunes'). The melodies are all from folksongs, but Bartók's variations, harmonisations and textural complementations go beyond the scope of mere arrangement.

2. Night Music from Out of Doors, Sz81 by Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

'Night music' is a musical style of the Hungarian composer Béla Bartók which he used mostly in slow movements of multi-movement ensemble or orchestra compositions in his mature period. It is characterized by "eerie dissonances providing a backdrop to sounds of nature and lonely melodies".

This night music is the fourth piece from a suite of five piano solo pieces *Out of Doors*, Sz. 81. The form is described variously in the literature, e.g., a loose rondo, ABACABA or as ternary, with the middle as 'developmental' section.

Three types of material are distinguished:

The Hungarian Unka frog *Bombina bom bina*, whose call is imitated in *Night Music*. After making a first noisy appearance in bar 6, he is featured throughout the piece, disregarding metre and tonality, ribbiting a last time in bar 70 before finally hopping off.

Material A: imitation of the sounds at night in a Hungarian summer, tonal centre G or ambiguous tonality. A highly dissonant arpeggiated cluster chord is repeated throughout the section on the beat. On top of this, six imitations of natural sounds (birds, cicadas, and the particular Hungarian unka frog) are scored in a random fashion. Material B: Chorale in G. This material is found in bars 17–34 and 58–66. Material C: Peasant flute imitation strictly in the Dorian mode on C#. Bartók frequently composed contrasting sections with a tonal centre which is a tritone apart C#-G from a previous section.

3. Wu Kui (五魁) by Zhou Long (b.1953)

Zhou Long studied composition in Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing and went to US to continue study with Chou Wen-chung, Mario Davidovsky in

Columbia University. In recent years, Zhou Long has become an internationally renowned composer. He won the Pulitzer Prize for music with his opera *Madame White Snake* in 2011.

Wu Kui 五魁 was composed in 1983 by Zhou Long. *Wu Kui* is a traditional Manchu folk dance with expression of villagers' hunting life in northeast China, in which dancers wear 5 kinds of animal masks. Whole music is developed in single movement with a ternary structure. The first and third parts are savage dance which is full of Bartókian asymmetrical rhythm and dissonant harmony. The middle part presents a sharp contrast with rubato rhythm and cantabile style which is similar with contrast between Bartók's parlando and guisto.

4. Seven Sketches, Op. 9b (Sz.44) by Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

In Bartók's opinion, his *Seven Sketches* represented a new direction for his piano music. In fact, it is really a two-faced work; that is, it looks both forwards and backwards.

Bartók used a number of experimental techniques, along with whole tone scales, polytonality, and chromaticism in these sketches, but also employed clear tonal structures, traditional accompaniment figures, and folk song settings. These pieces are similar in kind to the *Fourteen Bagatelles*, composed in the same year Bartók began writing his *Sketches*.

5. Taiji (太极) by Zhao Xiaosheng (b.1945)

Zhao Xiaosheng, who is a composition professor in Shanghai Conservatory of Music, developed a Taiji composition system in 1987 where all sixty-four hexagrams in Yijing are translated into pitch sets and their permutations. The piano solo *Taiji* is based on this system. The composer stated he intended to represent the *guqin*'s artistic effect on piano in *Taiji*. *Guqin* music is typical high art music in ancient China.

6. Long and short (长与短的组合) by Quan Jihao (b.1956)

Quan Jihao, who was born in the area of Korean ethnic group in northeast China, is a composition Professor at the China Conservatory of Music, Beijing.

“Long and short” is the conception of rhythmic representation, which includes meter, rhythmic pattern, tempo, emotion and style. It is very important characteristic of Korean folk music and often has been performed by percussive instruments, such as *ganggu*, *buk*. Melodically, it is similar to the Han nationality's pentatonic scale in which seconds and fourths are common and crucial components.

There are many kinds of long and short systems. Professor Quan chose three of them in three movements of his piano solo *Suite Long and Short: Deng De Kong, Jin Yang Zhao*, and *En Mao Li*. *Deng De Kong* is lively festival dance, in which Professor Quan followed Bartók's path to greatly develop the potential of rhythm,

such as asymmetric meters, irregular subdivision and explosive force. In some extent, Bartók and Professor Quan make the piano to be a percussion instrument.

Jin Yang Zhao is a kind of “long and short”, which is reciting style with rubato rhythm.

The third movement *En Mao Li* is a savage folk dance. Similar with the first movement, piano needs to continue its percussive function with a large amount of irregular accents of dissonant harmony.

Appendix 2 -- Recital on 18th October 2012 in Elder Hall



Solo Piano Recital

Qiaoyue Zhao (赵桥月), piano

Elder Hall, October 18, 2012

Program

1. *Improvisations Op.20* Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

1. *Molto moderato*
2. *Molto capriccioso*
3. *Lento rubato*
4. *Allegretto scherzando*
5. *Allegro molto*
6. *Allegro moderato*
7. *Sostenuto, rubato*
8. *Allegro*

2. *Ba ban* (八板) Chen Yi (b.1953)

3. *My Song* Bright Sheng (b.1955)

1. ♩ = 54
2. ♩ = 72
3. ♩ = 112
4. *Nostalgia*

Interval

4. *Suite Op.14* Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

1. *Allegretto*
2. *Scherzo*
3. *Allegro molto*
4. *Sostenuto*

5. *Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin* (京剧瞬间) Chen Qigang (b.1951)

**6. *Dong Xiang Gu Lou* (Impromptu Dong Township Drum Tower) (侗乡鼓楼)
Zou Xiangping (b.1951)**

Program Notes

1. *Improvisations Op.20* by Béla Bartók (1920)

Bartók's *Improvisations Op. 20* are eight short improvisatory pieces based on Hungarian folk melodies. They represent what he termed the "second way" of composing with authentic folk material, i.e. using it as a "motto" surrounded by, embedded in and juxtaposed to totally alien, invented, "daring" musical substance.

2. *Ba ban (八板)* by Chen Yi (1999)

Chen Yi was born into a family with strong musical background in Guangzhou in 1953. Chen was the first Chinese woman to receive a Master of Arts (M.A.) in music composition in the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music in 1986. After that, she went to US to continue her study with Chou Wen-chung and Mario Davidovsky in Columbia University.

Chen Yi's *Ba Ban (八板)* for piano solo, is commissioned by Carnegie Hall Corporation. *Ba Ban* is a traditional instrumental tune which contains certain rhythmic organizations. This tune is comprised of eight phrases and each phrase has eight beats except the fifth, which has four more beats than others. The phrases are grouped in four different ways: 3+2+3, 4+4, 3+2+3+4, and 5+3. Compared with Bartók's three levels of treatment of folk music, Chen's *Ba Ban* is similar to Bartók's second level of treatment. The composer abstracted brief musical material from the beginning of traditional *Ba Ban* as a motif and developed it with her own devices. Regarding the pitch system, Chen Yi created a combination of Chinese pentatonic scale and western twelve tone system in which the tritone is a vital component.

3. *My Song* by Bright Sheng (1989)

Bright Sheng, born December 6, 1955 in Shanghai, China, is a Chinese-American composer, conductor, and pianist. He has lived in the United States since 1982 and is on faculty at the University of Michigan. In November 2001, Sheng received a MacArthur Fellowship. Sheng is the New York City Ballet's first composer in residence. He said Bartók's music arouses strong resonance among Chinese musicians because of his approach of combining nationalism with western compositional tradition which is beyond the apparent similarities between Chinese and Hungarian folk music, such as pentatonic system.

My Song was premiered in November, 1989 in New York City by pianist Peter Serkin, for whom it was written. The entire work is in folkloric style and is developed using a 4-note subset of the pentatonic scale. The first movement, which can be looked upon as the prelude, is developed through the device of heterophony, a characteristic texture of Chinese music. The composer writes a lot of acciaccaturas ('crushed notes') to imitate the glissando effect common in

Chinese folk music. The second movement is inspired by a folk song from Sichuan province, *Happiness at Sunrise*, and is developed in variation style. The third movement is a savage dance in which the melody develops with a series of 'Chinese sequences.' The composer explains this term as follows: "This is a term of my own invention that describes a type of melodic development in Chinese folk music in which each repetition of the initial motive increases the number of notes, duration, and tessitura". The pitch material in this movement is significantly similar to Bartók's 'From the Diary of a Fly' in Vol.6 of *Mikrokosmos*. The fourth movement is based on a folk song from Shanxi Province, *Sanshi Lipu*, but the composer uses unconventional harmonization to give an unexpected feeling to this old song, including bitonality, in which composer arranges both hands in different tonalities on the white and black keys.

Interval

4. Suite Op.14 by Béla Bartók (1916)

The *Suite Op. 14* for solo piano was written in February 1916 and published in 1918. This suite in four movements is one of Bartók's most significant works for piano, only comparable with his 1926 *Piano Sonata*. Though much of Bartók's music makes frequent use of Eastern European folk music (especially from his native Hungary), this suite is one of the few pieces without melodies of folk origin.

"The Suite op. 14 has no folk tunes. It is based entirely on original themes of my own invention. When this work was composed I had in mind the refining of piano technique, the changing of piano technique, into a more transparent style. A style more of bone and muscle opposing the heavy chordal style of the late, latter romantic period, that is, unessential ornaments like broken chords and other figures are omitted and it is more of a simpler style," Béla Bartók, radio interview with David Levita, July 2, 1944.

5. Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin (京剧瞬间) by Chen Qigang (2000)

Chen Qigang is a Chinese-French composer, who was born into a family of artists in 1951. At the age of 33, he went to Paris where he studied composition with Olivier Messiaen as his last student until 1988. *Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin* (*Moments from a Peking Opera*) for solo piano was commissioned by the 2000 International Olivier Messiaen Competition. This single movement work is based on a theme which is abstracted from *Xingxian* (行弦) in Beijing opera.

6. Dong Xiang Gu Lou (Impromptu Dong Township Drum Tower)(侗乡鼓楼) by Zou Xiangping (1987)

Zou's *Impromptu Dong Township Drum Tower* for piano solo won first prize in

the Himalayan Cup - International Composition Competition in Chinese Style in 1995.

The composer was greatly impressed by his experience of fieldwork in a Dong (ethnic minority) village in 1987. He was deeply attracted by Dong culture, such as the performance of the Dong grand chorus in a village drum tower. Dong grand chorus is the only polyphonic music in China which is in an improvisational style without conductor and accompaniment. The composer also noted that Dong people's singing is closely related to their language. In the piano solo *Impromptu Dong Township Drum Tower*, the composer not only represents the traditional music of the Dong minority but also adds his own imagination and passion for nature.

Program notes by Qiaoyue Zhao.

NOTE:

2 CDs containing 'Solo Piano Recitals 1 & 2' are included with the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

The CDs must be listened to in the Music Library.