

8-19-2024

Reflections of Chinese Opera in Contemporary Chinese Piano Repertoire: A Cultural, Analytical, and Pedagogical Guide

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REFLECTIONS OF CHINESE OPERA IN CONTEMPORARY CHINESE PIANO
REPERTOIRE: A CULTURAL, ANALYTICAL, AND PEDAGOGICAL GUIDE

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in

Piano Pedagogy

School of Music

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2024

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DEDICATION

To my beloved parents, Song Xiangyang and Liu Yingxin, for their exceptional role as the superheroes in my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would love to express my heartfelt appreciation to the persons listed below, since their invaluable contributions were indispensable in enabling me to successfully conclude this research endeavor and my pursuit of a doctoral degree:

To my committee chair and major professor **Scott Price**, for his constant encouragement, support, patience, guidance, and dedication for six consecutive years.

To my committee members **Nicholas Susi, Philip Bush, and Ana Dubnjakovic**, for their direction, expertise, and insightful ideas through my research process.

To my pedagogy professors **Scott Price, Yeeseon Kwon, and Sara Ernst**, for leading me to the piano pedagogy world and shaping me to a better teacher.

To my piano teachers **Chu Yu, Yuan Wei, Wang Xiumin, Lin Jingjing, and Winston Choi**, for their inspiration, profound influence, and constant support in refining my skills as a musician.

To my **family**, for their invariable love, encouragement, and support throughout the years in my academic and musical pursuits.

To my husband **Chen Weixing**, for his emotional support, unwavering care and love.

ABSTRACT

Over 5,000 years, Chinese opera has been inspired by many imperial dynasties, regions, and ethnic cultures, making it a unique reflection of Chinese culture. Chinese composers have incorporated traditional Chinese opera in piano compositions to express cultural identity and artistic significance. This music has a broad and profound cultural significance, fostering cultural interchange and understanding and presenting a diverse and inclusive musical experience for non-Chinese students and musicians.

This research study provides a comprehensive overview of Chinese traditional operas, vocal technique and instrumentation, the development of piano music in China, and corresponding piano literature in progressive difficulty for early-intermediate to advanced players. Piano teachers and performers now have access to a varied repertoire of Chinese traditional opera and a stylistic and practical guide to performance. The goal of this study is to educate and inspire piano teachers and performers to understand the cultural significance of the repertoire, give culturally informed performances, provide an educational guide, and promote these underrepresented piano works. This study also investigates how piano repertoire incorporates Chinese traditional opera music and examines the educational benefits of selected works. Promoting informative teaching and pedagogical tools to help piano teachers use this music is another goal. This study highlights underrepresented compositions, improves the appeal of this form of music in China and abroad, and examines music education and cultural diplomacy.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Opera, as a unique art form, has captivated audiences around the world for centuries. Its synthesis of music, singing, and drama transcends cultural boundaries and provides a rich foundation for the exploration of diverse musical traditions. Western opera, with its origins in the late Renaissance period of Italy, has long been an influential force in the world of classical music with its music, drama, and spectacle, including numerous sub-genres, such as *opera seria*, *opera buffa*, *tragédie en musique*.¹ Rooted in one of the longest and most distinguished traditions of drama among the world's civilizations, Chinese opera is an important part of the global artistic heritage. Like its western counterpart, Chinese opera is a unique and influential art form that has a rich history spanning thousands of years. In the five-thousand-year history of China, the art form of opera has developed and been auspiciously preserved in more than 300 different styles.² A significant amount of diversity developing from imperial dynasties, various regional theater traditions, and certain minority nationalistic and traditional forms, presents a cultural blossoming of philosophical-aesthetic origin.

¹ Brown, Howard Mayer, Ellen Rosand, Reinhard Strohm, Michel Noiray, Roger Parker, Arnold Whittall, Roger Savage, and Barry Millington. "Opera (i)." Grove Music Online. 2001; Accessed 23 Mar. 2023. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040726>.

² Siu Wang-NGai and Peter Lovrick. 1997. *Chinese Opera: Images and Stories*. Vancouver B.C: UBC Press, 27. <https://www.deslibris.ca/ID/406821>.

Piano music, as another rich and varied field, spans several centuries and numerous cultural contexts around the world. Greatly flourishing during the European Renaissance, keyboard music not only served the function of primarily doubling or substituting for voices in polyphonic vocal music but also provided music for dancing. The history of non-organ keyboard music began in the fourteenth century and continued through the fifteenth century with steady development until, by the end of the sixteenth century, it spread through all of western Europe. As a landmark of fully developed keyboard literature and performance repertoire, the Baroque period, which began in the early seventeenth century, is usually treated as the starting point for most pianists to explore earlier repertoire. Music styles and genres flourished at the time due to the rapid evolution of keyboard instruments that were increasingly treated as solo instruments.

Transcription, which involves adapting music from one medium to another, has become an independent art in conjunction with the flourishing of keyboard music. With the popularity of opera, composers have unearthed ideas from opera, and regenerated them in the context of composition for the piano. From a letter of the Italian composer and pianist Ferruccio Busoni to his wife, transcription captures a significant place in piano literature; every piano work represents a reduction in the proper perspective, and the piano is the means of this operation.³ Transcription, therefore, has become an independent art form and was valued by great composers such as Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms, and Franz Liszt. Composers extracted ideas from the achievements of other music fields and reestablished them into the keyboard

³ Penrose, James F. "Music: The Piano Transcriptions of Franz Liszt." *The American Scholar* 64, no. 2 (1995): 272. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41212325>.

repertoire. Opera, as one of the most popular and artistic synthesis, has been extensively explored by western composers when creating piano transcriptions. The genre of transcription was not only popular among composers but also prevalent among performers and audiences. *Rigoletto Paraphrase S. 434*, as the transcription of Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto*, is a representative work by Franz Liszt from his more than seventy operatic fantasies.⁴ Sigismond Thalberg, a Viennese virtuosic pianist and composer,⁵ produced many transcriptions from operas, including *Casta Diva* from Vincenzo Bellini's *Norma*, and *Fantaisie sur des thèmes de l'opéra Moïse Op. 33* by Gioachino Rossini. Another more recent example is the *Carmen Variations* adapted from Georges Bizet's *Carmen*, created by the virtuoso pianist Vladimir Horowitz.

While western piano music emerged in the fourteenth century and began to flourish by the end of the sixteenth century in Europe,⁶ the emergence of the piano in East Asia originated from a cultural convergence in China. The earliest documentation of a keyboard instrument in China can be traced to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).⁷ Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), an Italian Jesuit missionary,⁸ brought a harpsichord to a church in

⁴ Friedheim, Philip. "The Piano Transcriptions of Franz Liszt." *Studies in Romanticism* 1, no. 2 (1962): 83–96. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25599545>.

⁵ Gooley, Dana. "Enacting the Revolution: Thalberg in 1848." In *Taking It to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, edited by Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill, 102–24. University of Michigan Press, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.345788.11>.

⁶ Young, William. "Keyboard Music to 1600, I." *Musica Disciplina* 16 (1962): 115–50. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20531957>.

⁷ Xu, Shuangshuang. "Reflections on the timing of the introduction of the piano to China -- The connection between the harpsichord and the modern piano." [关于钢琴传入中国时间的思考——兼说“古钢琴”与现代钢琴的关联] *Journal of Literature and History* 06(2012):70-

⁸ Maverick, L. A. (1954). Review of *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci, 1583-1610*, by M. Ricci & L. J. Gallagher]. *Pacific Historical Review*, 23(2), 189–192. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3634309>

Zhaoqing, a city of Guangdong province, in 1583; with the spreading growth of his influence, in 1600, Ricci was invited by the Wanli Emperor (the fourteenth emperor of the Ming dynasty) to Beijing and brought a clavichord as one of tributes.⁹ Even though keyboard instruments sprang from European and Chinese religious and political agendas in the sixteenth century, they remained in the Chinese court as aristocratic entertainment and barely spread in popularity until the early twentieth century. Yuanren Zhao's *March of Peace* (1915),¹⁰ the first published piece of Chinese piano music, unfolded the developmental processes of Chinese piano art. Modern Chinese composers integrated conceptual models of traditional cultures into western musical traditions, bringing Chinese musical traditions into new artistic synthesis.

Chinese piano music is becoming increasingly prominent in today's worldwide piano culture. It has been frequently played in recent decades throughout the world. For more than a century, generations of Chinese composers have been exploring numerous possibilities in Chinese piano art, adapting the national cultural language into Western European musical traditions. Chinese opera, as one of the most representative facets of Chinese culture, has been incorporated into piano compositions by these composers.

⁹ Xu, Shuangshuang. "Reflections on the timing of the introduction of the piano to China -- The connection between the harpcichord and the modern piano." [关于钢琴传入中国时间的思考——兼说“古钢琴”与现代钢琴的关联] *Journal of Literature and History* 06(2012):70-72.

¹⁰ Yuan-ren Zhao (1892–1982), born in Tianjin, was a composer and Chinese American linguist. He received a government grant while attending Tshihua University and began his studies in the United States in 1910. Mr. Zhao earned his doctorates in physics and philosophy at Cornell University and Harvard University during his almost 10 years in the country. Mr. Zhao also enrolled in elective music theory and composition classes around this time, and he began to write a few works that fused western composing methods with traditional Chinese music.

Purpose of the Study

Chinese traditional opera has been a cultural landmark in China throughout the nation's history. With the introduction of the harpsichord in 1583,¹¹ interest in western keyboard instruments grew with the piano emerging in popularity in the twentieth century. Chinese composers' interest in western musical traditions resulted in investigations into the possibilities and challenges of combining Western classical music with Chinese traditional opera elements. The creation of new works for piano incorporating Chinese cultural elements is no exception.

This study seeks to enlighten the reader about representative Chinese opera selected from over three hundred types, including Beijing opera, Kun opera, Yu opera, Yue opera, Si Chuan opera, Qinqiang opera and Cantonese opera. The manner and characteristics of each opera type are discussed, such as vocal technique, instrumental arrangement, differences in scenery, make-up, costumes, and musical and improvisatory elements.

A subsequent section about piano repertoire that incorporates Chinese traditional opera is provided to aid audiences in presenting culturally informed performances. This study also examines how Chinese traditional opera music is incorporated into the Western classical piano repertoire, including adaptations, arrangements, and original tunes from vocal and instrumental music from various operas. This research endeavors to examine the pedagogical benefits of selected pieces to provide music educators with insight into their use. In addition to the cultural context, a discussion of the technical and

¹¹ Maverick, L. A. (1954). [Review of China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci, 1583-1610, by M. Ricci & L. J. Gallagher]. *Pacific Historical Review*, 23(2), 189–192. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3634309>.

artistic challenges in performance is presented. An additional purpose is to promote effective teaching and pedagogical strategies to aid piano teachers in the use of this music. The majority of the selected pieces are not broadly represented in the United States, therefore, two leveling systems for piano repertoire are applied to assist in understanding the levels of difficulty of each piece and to provide a relevant reference: Jane Magrath's *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature*¹² and Maurice Hinson and Wesley Roberts's *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire*.¹³ Magrath classifies ten levels (Levels 1-10) that span from beginning to early advanced, while Hinson and Roberts divide the literature into four categories: Easy (E), Intermediate (I), Moderately Difficult (M-D), and Difficult (D). Although some collections are mentioned in *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire*, the majority of the selected pieces are not found in the leveling systems. In the following chapters, the two leveling systems are indicated for each piece that is discussed. This research identifies underrepresented compositions, increases the potential reception of this style of music among audiences in and outside of China, and discusses implications for music education and cultural diplomacy.

Need for the Study

Traditional Chinese opera is an integral component of Chinese cultural heritage. Chinese opera developed and has been practiced over a period of more than 5,000 years,

¹² Magrath, Jane. *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature*. Van Nuys: Alfred Music, 1995.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=ram&AN=A593396&authtype=sso&custid=s3604775&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹³ Hinson, Maurice, and Wesley Roberts. *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire*. 4th ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=ram&AN=A866335&authtype=sso&custid=s3604775&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

and has been influenced by various imperial dynasties, regions, and ethnic cultures making it a distinctive representation of Chinese cultural heritage. Chinese composers have incorporated elements of traditional Chinese opera into new works for the piano to demonstrate cultural identity and artistic significance. The broad and deep cultural connotation of this music presents a need to educate non-Chinese audiences about traditional Chinese opera and these works for piano to facilitate cultural exchange and promote cross-cultural understanding.

Through this research study, the audience will gain a thorough review of the development of Chinese traditional operas, vocal technique and instrumentation, the emergence of piano music in China, contemporary Chinese composers, and their corresponding piano literature that incorporates elements of Chinese traditional opera. Music scholars and performers would gain access to a diverse repertoire that incorporates Chinese traditional opera and a guide to performance practice with stylistic and pedagogical analysis. The definitive objective of this study is to enlighten and encourage piano teachers and performers to comprehend the cultural significance of the repertoire, give culturally informed performances, to provide teachers with an educational guide, and to promote these underrepresented works in the piano repertoire.

Literature Review

The research, literature, and bibliographical materials related to this study may be organized into three main categories: 1) traditional Chinese opera, 2) the development in popularity of the piano in China, 3) selected piano repertoire that incorporates elements of Chinese opera. These resources include monographs, books, articles, dissertations and theses, recordings, online resources including databases, and educational resources.

Traditional Chinese Opera

Traditional Chinese opera is a rich and multifaceted art form that has been passed down through generations. Scholars and researchers have extensively studied and written about this unique cultural phenomenon, providing valuable insights into its history, style, and cultural significance. Information regarding traditional Chinese opera may be broadly divided into three categories, each offering a unique perspective on this intricate art form: 1) monographs about Chinese opera cataloged historically by imperial dynasties, 2) monographs about traditional Chinese opera cataloged by region and local area, 3) monographs on particular opera styles.

One approach to reviewing Chinese opera is to examine its historical development over time. Monographs about Chinese opera cataloged historically by imperial dynasties provides a comprehensive view of the evolution of this art form. Guowei Wang (1877-1927), a renowned modern Chinese historian and scholar, wrote *The History of Song and Yuan Opera*,¹⁴ which was one of the earliest books focusing on the comprehensive history of Chinese opera in China. Wang's opera studies began in 1908, and he completed *The History of Song and Yuan Opera*, which was written in Classical Chinese,¹⁵ in 1912. The book contains sixteen chapters that discuss the formation of Chinese opera: the origin of drama and literature from the period of Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors to the Five Dynasties (chapter 1), and then the Song and Yuan dynasties (chapter 2 through

¹⁴ Wang, Guowei. *The History of Song and Yuan Opera* [宋元戏曲史]. China: Commercial Press. 1915.

¹⁵ Also known as Literary Chinese, is the written language of the classical period of Chinese literature, which was used from the end of the Spring and Autumn period (early 5th century BC) until the early 20th century before being replaced by vernacular written Chinese.

16). It also contains a chapter on operatic tunes and is considered a primary source by Chinese scholars.

More recent resources by Chinese scholars include Chuanjia Zhou's *Chinese Ancient Operas*¹⁶ and Xuwei Liu's *Ancient Operas*.¹⁷ Beginning with the origin, formation, prosperity, splendor, and renewal of ancient opera, both books are written in simplified Chinese¹⁸ and describe the development of Chinese opera from its ancient inception to military opera, southern opera, Yuan opera, and Ming and Qing legends. The book's in-depth content, and evocative language are important for readers to comprehend ancient Chinese opera and enhance traditional cultural cultivation.

Another significant monograph is *The Art of Chinese Drama*¹⁹ by Jin Fu. It briefly describes the history and genre of Chinese drama, reveals the composition and form of Chinese drama, and argues that Chinese drama is a lyrical art form. On this basis, it provides an in-depth analysis of the programs and stage expressions commonly employed in Chinese drama. *A History of Chinese Theatre in the Twentieth Century*²⁰ was another notable publication by Fu. It divides Chinese theatre in the twentieth century into two sections with 1949 as the dividing point, and systematically organizes the development of

¹⁶ Zhou, Chuanjia, *Chinese Ancient Operas*, [中国古代戏曲]. Commercial Press, 2007.

¹⁷ Liu, Xuwei, *Ancient Operas*, [古代戏曲]. Chongqing Publishing. Co. 2016.

¹⁸ Along with Classical (or Traditional) Chinese, Simplified Chinese is one of the two primary character sets used in modern Chinese writing. Since the 1950s and 1960s, the government of the People's Republic of China on the Chinese peninsula has advocated Simplified Chinese use in printing to prompt literacy. It has been officially used in the People's Republic of China, Malaysia, and Singapore, while Traditional Chinese characters are still used in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan.

¹⁹ Fu, Jin. *The Art of Chinese Drama* [中国戏剧艺术论]. Taiyuan, China: Shanxi Education Press, 2006.

²⁰ Fu, Jin. *A History of Chinese Theatre in the Twentieth Century* [二十世纪中国戏剧史]. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2017.

theatre in the twentieth century, illustrating the evolutionary process and the inner rhythm of Chinese theatre in the century. The first volume examines the evolution of Chinese theater from 1900 to 1949, including the flourishing of Beijing Opera, the emergence of drama, and the dazzling variety of local theaters. The second volume examines the evolution of Chinese theater from 1949 to 2000, including the fluctuations of the "opera reform," the marvels of the "Cultural Revolution," and the various settings of the new era.

Non-Chinese scholars have also made substantial contributions to the study of traditional Chinese opera. *A History of Chinese Drama*²¹ by William Dolby is one of the most comprehensive books written in English, reviewing the history of Chinese drama from antecedents to modern China. Colin Mackerras, a renowned Australian sinologist, has written extensively on Chinese opera. *Chinese Theater: From Its Origins to the Present Day*²² offers an academic exploration of the evolution of Chinese theater. It comprehensively investigates several fundamental elements and genres of Chinese theater, encompassing its historical progression, societal backdrop, performance techniques, attire and cosmetics, actors, playwrights, and theatrical venues. Another crucial monograph from Mackerras, *Chinese Drama: A Historical Survey*²³, recounts and investigates the history of Chinese play from the Song Dynasty until the end of 1988. One section focuses on tradition and the pre-1949 society, while the other discusses after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 as a pivot point.

²¹ Dolby, William. *A History of Chinese Drama*. London: P. Elek, 1976.

²² Mackerras, Colin. 1983. *Chinese Theater: From Its Origins to the Present Day*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

²³ Mackerras Colin. 1990. *Chinese Drama: A Historical Survey* (version 1st ed). 1st ed. Beijing China: New World Press: Distributed by China International Book Trading Corp. <http://books.google.com/books?id=MkcHAQAIAAJ>.

There are also specified chapters in the literature in which the authors provide useful information. The English travel writer, John Archibald Little (1845-1926) who lived in China for fifty years, provides a profound and detailed observation about the Chinese drama in the chapter “The Chinese drama” from his book *Gleanings From Fifty Years in China*,²⁴ including conventional and stylistic comparison with western opera, the performance practice, and translation of several Chinese dramas. In the chapter "Chinese Opera" of *The Other Classical Musics: Fifteen Important Traditions*, Terry E. Miller and Michael Church present a comprehensive overview of traditional Chinese opera.²⁵

The second approach involves categorizing traditional Chinese opera by region and local area. With the gradual unification of China’s territory, starting with the Qing dynasty and notably after the establishment of New China, the types of Chinese drama were gradually classified according to regions rather than imperial dynasties. Typically, the term of an opera type reflects the distinctive customs and traditions of a particular region, as distinct styles and techniques characterize the genre. There is a substantial body of literature from this perspective. These studies highlight the regional variations of Chinese opera and how they reflect regional traditions and styles. They investigate the distinctive characteristics of each regional style and its cultural content, as well as the ways in which regional opera forms have influenced each other over time. *Local Operas*²⁶, authored by Bo Luan, is a monograph written in Chinese for anyone interested

²⁴ Little, Archibald John. *Gleanings from Fifty Years in China*. England: S. Low, Marston, 1910, 1910. P. 216

²⁵ Miller, Terry E., Michael Church, Dwight Reynolds, Scott DeVeaux, Ivan Hewett, David Hughes, Jonathan Katz, et al. “Chinese Opera.” Chapter. In *The Other Classical Musics: Fifteen Great Traditions*, edited by Michael Church, 126–37. Boydell & Brewer, 2015. doi:10.1017/9781782045359.008.

²⁶ Luan, Bo. *Local Operas* [地方戏曲]. Chongqing: Chongqing Publishing. 2016

in learning about the basic characteristics and features of Chinese local operas. The book introduces nine local opera genres with the key elements of performance, including Henan opera, Yue opera, Huangmei opera, Ping opera, Hebei opera, Qin opera, Sichuan opera, Jin opera, and Cantonese opera. It illuminates the colorful performing arts from various aspects such as history, repertoire, actors and troupes. In addition, the book also contains relevant historical information for easily understanding the Chinese local operas.

For English readers, a significant source, *Chinese Opera: Images and Stories*,²⁷ introduces the theatrical form and describes the traditional tales of local operas. Each distinguishing regional style and character type is shown through engrossing text and astonishing images. It provides a brief overview of the development of Chinese opera and introduces a theatrical convention language that is completely foreign to the Western audience. It also identifies the characteristics of the roughly dozen regional opera styles included in this collection. In addition, the book provides a revelatory perspective on Chinese social traditions and experiences for the non-Chinese audience and addresses that the repertoire of Chinese opera is derived from history, legends, mythology, folklore, and classic novels.

Lastly, monographs on particular opera styles provide in-depth overview and analysis of specific types of traditional Chinese opera. They explore the unique characteristics of each style, such as its musical structure, vocal techniques, and performance style, and examine the historical and cultural context in which they developed. They also discuss the major themes and stories featured in each style and how

²⁷ Siu Wang-NGai and Peter Lovrick. 1997. *Chinese Opera: Images and Stories*. Vancouver B.C: UBC Press. <https://www.deslibris.ca/ID/406821>.

they are performed on stage. These monographs are valuable resources for scholars, performers, and enthusiasts alike who want to deepen their knowledge and appreciation of traditional Chinese opera. Johnson's *Yuarn Music Dramas: Studies in Prosody and Structure and a Complete Catalogue of Northern Arias in the Dramatic Style*²⁸, Jiang's *Women Playing Men: Yue Opera and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*²⁹, Ng's *The Rise of Cantonese Opera*³⁰, and Mackerras's *Peking Opera*³¹ are the substantial sources for particular opera styles.

The Development in Popularity of the Piano in China

This section includes studies that explore the rise of the piano as a popular instrument in China, especially during the 20th century. Resources cover topics such as the introduction of the piano to China, the development of piano pedagogy and performance practice in China, the influence of Western classical music on Chinese piano repertoire, the role of the piano in contemporary Chinese music, and characteristics of Chinese piano music.

Based on the author's actual teaching experience, in *A Study of the Development of Piano Music Culture in China and the West*,³² Qin Li begins from the development in construction of the piano, explains the morphological and functional characteristics of the

²⁸Johnson, Dale R. *Yuarn Music Dramas: Studies in Prosody and Structure and a Complete Catalogue of Northern Arias in the Dramatic Style*. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies Publications, 1981.

²⁹Jiang, Jin. *Women Playing Men: Yue Opera and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009.

³⁰ Ng, Wing Chung. *The Rise of Cantonese Opera*. Urbana, [Illinois]: University of Illinois Press, 2015.

³¹Mackerras, Colin. *Peking Opera*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1997.

³² Li, Qin. *A Study of the Development of Piano Music Culture in China and the West [中西方钢琴音乐文化发展研究]*. Beijing: China Book Publishing House, 2014.

piano in different eras, and explore the development of Western piano music. On the basis of extensive data collection and research, Li examines in depth the evolution of Chinese piano music culture, as well as its creation and nationalized characteristics. The study of the development of Chinese and Western piano music focuses on the systematization and comprehensiveness of knowledge with a horizontal comparison of the influence of contemporaries and the theoretical study of piano music literature.

In the book titled *Chinese Piano Music Studies*,³³ Baisheng Dai, a pianist and scholar from China, offers a comprehensive examination and analysis of Chinese piano music. This study encompasses cultural, sociological, and pedagogical aspects, positioning Chinese piano music as a significant component of contemporary Chinese musical culture. Moreover, Dai highlights the role of Chinese piano music in facilitating cultural exchanges within the field of music studies. Its originality is reflected in the fact that the study of piano compositions transcends the conventions of ontological analysis of music and delves into the depths of culture. The evolution of Chinese piano music exemplifies the interplay between the preservation and relinquishment of Chinese cultural traditions. The exploration of the unique "Chinese style" serves as a means to uncover the enduring essence of Chinese music culture that ought to be upheld amidst societal progress. This pursuit holds practical significance in fostering the preservation and promotion of national cultural traditions.

³³ Dai, Baisheng. *Chinese Piano Music Studies* [中国钢琴音乐研究]. Shanghai: Shanghai Music Publishing House, 2014.

*Studies in Piano Art*³⁴ compiled by Daojin Tong, another significant initiative, devoted to the study of Chinese piano works, collects a significant number of articles on piano instruction, performance, and analysis. The anthology represents the efforts and knowledge of several generations of musicians and is a compilation of high-quality, precise, and incisive research concerning the development of the piano in China. The book includes more than 30 articles introducing and studying the formation of Chinese piano pieces, which from the catalog includes the more important works in the development process of Chinese piano art, and some comprehensive historical overviews about the establishment of Chinese piano pieces. In this regard, the development of Chinese piano art is inextricably linked to the success of the country's piano compositions, for which our composers and pianists have collaborated.

Selected Piano Repertoire that Incorporates Elements of Chinese Opera

A growing body of journal articles, theses, and dissertations from recent studies have investigated works that focus on pieces that incorporate elements of Chinese opera. Resources in this category may cover topics such as the history and context of selected pieces, biography and interviews of composers, pedagogical and theoretical analyses of the repertoire, the musical techniques used to blend Chinese and Western styles, and the significance of these pieces in the history of Chinese music. For example, Hisey's article discusses a significant composition, "Instant D'un Opéra De Pékin Pour Piano" by

³⁴ Tong, Daojin. *Studies in Piano Art* [钢琴艺术研究]. Beijing: People's Music Publishing House. 2003.

Qigang Chen.³⁵ Zhao concentrates on a renowned composer Zhao Zhang.³⁶ Du presents another recognized composer, Yi Chen,³⁷ and Li explores the popular compositions with comparison between different composers.³⁸

Overall, these categories provide a framework for comprehending the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Chinese opera and piano music, and the ways in which these traditions have intersected and influenced each other over time. While all of the literature previously discussed supports the current research, there are no analytical studies that provide an overview of different types of operas and a list of piano repertoire arranged by level of progressive difficulty with stylistic annotations, pedagogical suggestions, or a culturally informed guide for this underrepresented repertoire.

Limitations

From the extensive Chinese Contemporary piano repertoire, this research study documents nine pieces that are composed by Chinese or composers from other countries who are ethnic Chinese and incorporate elements of representative Northern Chinese opera, Beijing opera, Yu opera, and Qinqiang opera. While the author aims to include as much literature incorporating traditional Chinese operatic elements, works for this

³⁵ Hisey, Andrew. "Instants D'un Opéra de Pékin Pour Piano." *American Music Teacher* 52, no. 2 (2002): 102–4.

³⁶ Zhao, Yu, Chutima Maneewattana, and Ren Xiulei. "A Study on the Musical Characteristics of Zhuang-Style Piano Music in China." *Webology* 19, no. 1 (2022): 7124–32.

³⁷ Du, Pan. "'When East Meets West,' Chen Yi's From Old Peking Folklore: The Merging of Chinese and Western Musical Idioms." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2020.

³⁸ Li, Minghua. "The Application of Peking Opera Elements in the Piano Works Instants D'un Opéra de Pékin by Qigang Chen and Pi Huang by Zhao Zhang." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2021.

substantial listing in the main chapters are chosen based on the compositional and stylistic traits of a certain opera, musical and artistic refinement, pedagogical value, variety of technical challenges, accessibility of the score, ability to be sequenced, and presentation of different operatic styles. Corresponding operas pairing with selected pieces are discussed thoroughly, including their musical characteristics and art forms. Limitations to repertoire and bibliography reference access faced during the research process included works being out of print, books in Chinese with no access in the United States, the translation of the language not being descriptive, and the original scores of operas not being notated.

Methodology

The qualitative methodology for justifying the inclusion of Chinese opera in piano repertoire demands a comprehensive approach that considers both the musical characteristics of the pieces and the cultural and historical context in which they were created. Table 1.1 shows aspects that are discussed to justify each of the selected piano repertoire that incorporates Chinese opera.

This research provides a context for presenting the aesthetic of Chinese piano music, as well as how it echoes traditional opera and enhances affective expression, in order to better appreciate the complexity and richness of Chinese piano music.

Table 1.1 The aspects are discussed to justify each of the selected pieces

Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive understanding of the various types of traditional Chinese opera • The acquisition of Chinese opera repertoire • Understanding the evolution of Chinese opera • The characteristics and styles of various operas • Conventions, performance practice • Traditional instruments and popular tunes • Social and political factors, and historical events that may influence the conception of music. • The cultural and historical context • Biographical information of the composer • Composers’ interviews and preface to their compositions
Analysis and how they present Chinese opera elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form • Melodic patterns • Rhythmic structures • Tonalties • Timbre
Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical difficulties • Artistic challenges • Levels of difficulties

Design of the Study

The study comprises five chapters, a bibliography, and one appendix. Chapter 1 consists of an introduction, the purpose of the study, the need for the study, limitations of the study, a literature review, methodology of leveling system for pedagogical literature, and design of the study. Chapter 2 consists of a historical overview of traditional opera in China. Chapter 3 includes an overview of the introduction and rise in popularity of the piano in China. Chapter 4 consists of an analysis of piano repertoire in three parts. Each part introduces the selected piano works with the corresponding specific opera in progressive difficulty, including annotations on style and form in its related opera,

technical and musical challenges, and pedagogical suggestions. The first part consists of repertoire incorporating Beijing opera elements at progressive levels. The second part outlines works blending Yu opera elements. The third part consists of repertoire in the style of Qinqiang opera. Chapter 5 consists of a concise overview, recommendations for further research, and a conclusion. The bibliography consists of full bibliographic details for sources referenced throughout the study and additional reference sources related to the study. Appendix A lists the composers, titles, and collections (if applicable) of the works discussed in Chapter 4 by opera-type.

CHAPTER 2: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF TRADITIONAL OPERA IN CHINA

Chinese opera, also known as Xiqu (戏曲), is a venerable genre of musical theatre that originated in ancient China and has persisted throughout its rich history. The art style is the result of a synthesis of diverse artistic traditions that were present in ancient China, including primitive song and dance. Undergoing a steady evolution over a span of more than one thousand years, Chinese opera ultimately reached its pinnacle during the thirteenth century within the historical context of the Song dynasty (960–1279). Zongyi Tao³⁹ is credited as the originator of the term "Xiqu" which in historical records refers in particular to the Zaju⁴⁰ opera style of the Song dynasty. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, modern historian Guowei Wang⁴¹ used the term "Xiqu" as a generic term for all kinds of traditional Chinese theater culture, including Song and Yuan dynasty

³⁹ Zongyi Tao (1322-1403), a historian in the turning of the Yuan and Ming dynasty, who first mentioned Xiqu in his book *Nan Cun Chuo Geng Lu - The Name of the Courtyard*: "In Tang, there were Chuan Qi (legends). In Song, there were Xiqu, Changhun and Cishuo. In Jin, there were Yuanben, Zaju, and Zhugong tunes."

⁴⁰ Zaju of the Song dynasty, a theatrical art style that emerged during the Song Dynasty, may be traced back to the influences of the Adjutant Play as well as Song and Dance Play. During the Northern Song Dynasty, the term Zaju encompassed a diverse range of artistic skills, including burlesque, puppetry, shadow play, balladry, song and dance, acrobatics, martial arts, and more. It referred to a form of theatrical performance that incorporated various skills.

⁴¹ Guowei Wang (1877-1927) was a prominent figure in Chinese academia, known for his contributions to the fields of history and poetry. Renowned for his versatility and originality, the researcher in question made significant contributions to the fields of ancient history, epigraphy, philology, vernacular literature, and literary theory.

southern opera, Yuan and Ming dynasty Zaju, Ming and Qing dynasty legends, and modern Beijing Opera, as well as all local opera styles. The historical development and general characteristics of Chinese opera are mainly discussed in this chapter, while the musical elements are introduced in chapter four.

The early manifestations of Chinese opera were distinguished by their inherent simplicity. Over the course of its development, traditional Chinese opera incorporated a wide array of artistic components, including music, song, dance, martial arts, acrobatics, costume and make-up art, and literary genres. This integration of varied elements played a pivotal role in establishing the fundamental framework of Chinese opera. The attainment of a thorough understanding of the roles required performers to participate in prolonged periods of education and practice. The incorporation of exaggerated features and vivid colors enhanced the audience's capacity to perceive and distinguish the many roles being portrayed.

Chinese opera, as a performance art, serves as a confluence of both temporal and spatial artistic elements. The phenomenon of synthesis is prevalent in theatrical cultures across the globe, with Chinese opera showcasing a particularly robust example of this synthesis. Chinese opera, a highly integrated art form tightly intertwined with the performing arts, has evolved through an extensive period of historical development. Table 2.1 shows the timeline of Chinese history

Table 2.1 Timeline of Chinese history

Primitive Society (Prehistoric)	Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors in Myth/legend	1.7 million years ago - 2070 BC
Slave Society (Ancient)	Xia	ca. 2070-1600 BCE
	Shang	ca. 1600-1046 BCE
	Zhou: Western Zhou Eastern Zhou: Spring and Autumn; Warring States	1046-256 BCE
Feudal Society (Imperial)	Qin	221-206 BCE
	Han: Western Han; Eastern Han	206 BCE-220 CE
	Six Dynasties Period: Three Kingdoms (Wei, Shu, Wu) Jin (晋) Dynasty; Period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties	220-581 CE
	Sui	581-618 CE
	Tang	618-907 CE
	Five Dynasties and ten kingdoms	907-960 CE
	Song: Liao; Xi Xia; Jin (金); Northern Song; Southern Song	960-1279
	Yuan	1279-1368
	Ming	1368-1644
	Qing	1644-1912
Semi-colonial and semi-feudal society (Modern)	Republic Period	1912-1949
Socialistic Society (Modern)	People's Republic of China	1949-present

Proto-Opera Phases

Chinese opera, in addition to its role as a source of entertainment, functions as a unifying art form that encompasses various aspects of Chinese culture, history, and

societal conventions. Gaining insight into the historical roots of traditional Chinese opera is essential to fully comprehend its intricate nature and its profound importance within the realm of Chinese cultural heritage. The origins of Chinese Opera can be traced back to its early manifestations in shamanistic rituals and communal storytelling practices.⁴² During these ceremonial rituals, shamans or tribal elders would orally transmit narratives, frequently accompanied by basic musical and choreographic elements, with the purpose of imparting ethical teachings, recounting past occurrences, and/or seeking spiritual harmony. The objective of these performances was primarily utilitarian, serving either religious rituals or the transmission of common knowledge. Nevertheless, these narratives served as the cornerstone for the subsequent development of more intricate storytelling techniques.

From its embryonic stages, Chinese opera gradually developed and transformed into various styles that show its inherent evolution. By the conclusion of the Western Zhou dynasty (1046–771 BC), the emergence of skilled practitioners marked the advent of professional performers in this domain. The post-Han dynasty era (c. 210-220 CE) was characterized by a significant lack of national unity, a decentralization of power, invasions by Turkic and other non-Chinese groups, due to frequent instances of non-Chinese political dominance, internal discord, natural disasters, and military conflicts.⁴³ These circumstances undeniably facilitated the flood of ideas from foreign origins and the emergence of novel attitudes and interests. As a result, there was a notable integration of folk arts within the imperial court in the Han dynasty.

⁴² Cong, Yu. *Pictorial Handbook of The History of Chinese Drama*. Institute of Chinese Drama, China Academy of Arts. People's Music Publishing House (2003): 6-10.

⁴³ Dolby, William. *A History of Chinese Drama*. London: P. Elek, 1976: 4.

Under the reign of Emperor Wudi (156-87 BC), a grand spectacle referred to as the "hundred entertainments" emerged, serving as evidence of the prosperous state of performing arts during this period.⁴⁴ The style of the "Hundred Entertainments" (百戏) may be traced back to the Qin dynasty and gained significant popularity throughout the Han dynasty. The "Hundred Entertainments" in the Han dynasty were characterized by a diverse range of folk acrobatics, music, and dancing, which collectively served as significant indicators of the advanced state of development during that period.

Wrestling Play (角抵戏), originating in the Warring States period, was another significant style in the Qin and Han dynasties which evolved an acrobatic narrative performance into music. The style emerged from an ancient mythological narrative, exhibiting a highly theatrical nature. During the prehistoric era, a monarch from the southern region initiated an offensive against the esteemed ruler known as the Yellow Emperor, who held dominion over the northern territories. The adversary from the southern region and his numerous relatives had formidable combat skills. They adorned their heads with horned headpieces reminiscent of those worn by Vikings, utilizing them to engage in forceful contact with individuals.⁴⁵

Formalization of Opera

During the Wei, Jin, Southern, and Northern dynasties, there was a persistent presence of song and dance, a diverse range of entertainments, and the inclusion of farce as a prominent form of artistic expression. Jesters were first documented as being present

⁴⁴ Cong, Yu. *Pictorial Handbook of The History of Chinese Drama*. Institute of Chinese Drama, China Academy of Arts. People's Music Publishing House (2003): 5.

⁴⁵ Siu, Wang-Ngai, and Peter Lovrick. *Chinese Opera: Images and Stories*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997:6.

inside the palace of Emperor Youwang during the Western Zhou dynasty.⁴⁶ In his esteemed position as a courtier, the jester demonstrated exceptional proficiency in various forms of entertainment, including singing, dancing, mimicry, and jesting, all of which were intended to gratify the king. One key aspect of the jester's position encompassed the liberty to critique the monarch by means of satirical performances.

Until the Sui and Tang dynasties, the performance style of jesters underwent a division into two distinct roles, namely the adjutant (canjun) and the grey hawk (canggu),⁴⁷ while also adopting a more structured narrative framework. Subsequently, the theatrical performance characterized by jesters engaging in play-acting, commonly referred to as farce, has been designated as "Adjutant Play" (参军戏).

Meanwhile, the diverse and affluent traditions of royal music and dance, folk music and dance, and secular balladry collectively played a significant role in the development of Chinese theatre in the Sui and Tang dynasties. The period of transition witnessed a significant flow of music and dance among different ethnic groups, described as "Song and Dance Play" (歌舞戏).⁴⁸ This cultural contact played a crucial role in fostering the advancement of song and dance forms, ultimately giving rise to the emergence of song and dance suites. These suites integrated various artistic elements such as music, dance, wrestling, and other performative skills. Significantly, they

⁴⁶ Siu, Wang-NGai, and Peter Lovrick. *Chinese Opera: Images and Stories*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997:6.

⁴⁷ It is a form of performance in which one artist pretends to be a seneschal and the other teases him from the sidelines. The one who is teased is called "adjutant" and the one who teases him is called "grey hawk", and the two characters make comical dialogues and performances.

⁴⁸ Cong, Yu. *Pictorial Handbook of The History of Chinese Drama*. Institute of Chinese Drama, China Academy of Arts. People's Music Publishing House (2003): 30.

incorporated narrative elements, so establishing themselves as the earliest forms of theatrical presentations.

The renowned Pear Orchard Conservatoire, which was created in the Tang dynasty capital of Changan, the present city of Xian in Shanxi province in the north of China, was attributed to Emperor Minghuang. This institution was dedicated to the education and training of a substantial cohort of male and female performers. Despite being later revered as the esteemed progenitor of Chinese theater, it is important to note that the word 'Pear Orchard' primarily denoted the vocation of musicians and vocalists inside this conservatory, rather than stage actors.⁴⁹ In general, the Song and Dance Play, together with Adjutant Play, had rudimentary characteristics in terms of their characters, stories, and comedy, thereby representing the early stages of Chinese theater.



Figure 2.1 China Map that shows Provinces and Major Cities⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Dolby, William. *A History of Chinese Drama*. London: P. Elek, 1976: 11.

⁵⁰ Map purchased through <https://m.tb.cn/h.5tf2RcH4RxS0oqZ?tk=AbzgW9xfvBmCZ3456>.

Flourishing and Diversification of Opera

The Song dynasty was divided into two distinct phases. The first period, known as the Northern Song dynasty, commenced in 960 and was characterized by a centralized government that governed a unified China with its capital at Bianliang, the present city of Kaifeng in Henan province in the north of China. The non-Chinese Jurchen people, who are the ancestors of the Manchus, successfully invaded and ended the Northern Song government in 1126. Consequently, the Jin dynasty (1115-1234) was established and set one of their capitals in present-day Beijing. The Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279) subsequently emerged and governed the central and southern regions of China with its capital being at Hangzhou, located in the southeastern section of China's Zhejiang province. The most significant expansion of theater and related forms of entertainment occurred during the era when the Jin and Southern Song dynasties jointly controlled the majority of China.

By the onset of the Song dynasty, the various elements of drama had already been established as enduring traditions. The performance encompassed various elements such as dramatic narratives, musical renditions, rhythmic accompaniment, collective singing, recitation, dialogue, choreographed movements, elaborate costumes, theatrical makeup, cross-gender performances, acrobatics, comedic acts, the integration of spoken word and song, and other notable characteristics. Throughout the Song period, there is a growing body of evidence indicating the convergence and amalgamation of various elements which can now be recognized as distinct and innovative forms of entertainment. These forms can be considered as significant precursors to the development of theater.⁵¹

⁵¹ Dolby, William. *A History of Chinese Drama*. London: P. Elek, 1976: 15.

During the time, there was a notable increase in the professionalization of theater performances due to the presence of numerous performance genres in amusement centers and performance arenas. This development was accompanied by competition and exchange, as well as the inclusion of the Hundred Entertainments and song and dance at court. Chinese drama under the Song dynasty encompassed a diverse range of theatrical forms, including variety plays, storytelling, and the Yuanben⁵² of the Jin dynasty. Balladry genres also emerged, such as changzhuan,⁵³ all-keys-and-modes (zhu-gong-diao),⁵⁴ drum ci,⁵⁵ and popular tales.⁵⁶ The progressive evolution of balladry during this century facilitated the subsequent advancement of Chinese play in both musical and literary domains. Finally, at the conclusion of the 12th century, Chinese opera evolved as a distinct and multifaceted entity, establishing its independence.

⁵² The Yuanben of the Jin dynasty refers to a style of opera that emerged during the Song and Jin dynasties after the division of the northern and southern regions. This style was primarily preserved in the northern region of the Song dynasty and contributed to the development of stage art. The representative type of drama of the Jin Dynasty, known as Yuanben, holds immense historical significance as it serves as the foundation for the transition from "drama" to "opera" in Chinese theatrical evolution.

⁵³ Changzhuan is a form of balladry art that originated during the Song Dynasty in China. It gained popularity as a folk singing style during Southern Song dynasty. The practice of multiple melodies in a consistent tonal center to create a predetermined set is recognized as the most ancient manifestation of musical expression.

⁵⁴ Zhu-gong-diao is a traditional folk art that falls within the broader category of balladry literature in China during the Song, Jin, and Yuan dynasties. The development of this musical composition was founded upon variant texts, melodies, and tunes. It derived its name from several collections of tunes associated with different keys and modes, which were performed in a sequential manner.

⁵⁵ Drum ci refers to a form of Chinese balladry art that emerged during the Song Dynasty. The composition comprises of a combination of rhymed text and prose, characterized by its concise length. The majority of the material is straightforward and condensed, with approximately ten chapters dedicated to the melodic verses. The composition derives its title from the percussive instruments that accompany the vocal performances.

⁵⁶ Cong, Yu. *Pictorial Handbook of The History of Chinese Drama*. Institute of Chinese Drama, China Academy of Arts. People's Music Publishing House (2003): 40.

The emergence of two major theatrical genres, namely Nanxi/Southern drama (南戏) and Northern Zaju (北杂剧), during the transition from the Southern Song dynasty to the Jin and Yuan dynasties, played a crucial role in establishing the fundamental characteristics of Chinese traditional drama. The Yuan dynasty successfully achieved the unification of China in 1279. During this period, there was a significant convergence between Nanxi drama and northern Zaju drama, resulting in a prolific and vibrant theatrical landscape.

During the transition from the Yuan dynasty to the Ming dynasty, there was a notable divergence in the development of theatrical forms in China. Nanxi, a popular form of drama, had significant growth, while the northern Zaju witnessed a fall.

Northern Zaju was performed with the accompaniment of melodies originating from the northern region. The development of this genre was influenced by various sources, including the Song-dynasty variety play, Jin-dynasty yuanben, and balladry all-keys-and-modes.⁵⁷ Undoubtedly, the extensive range of topics available to the northern drama played a significant role in its domination during the thirteenth century.

The structure of Northern Zaju adhered to a rigorous framework. Traditionally, it was customary for each theatrical performance to consist of four acts, along with an initial wedge. In the opening scenes of the play, the wedge served the purpose of providing exposition regarding the narrative's background and original storyline. Additionally, the wedge frequently assumes the position of introducing the principal characters in the play and elucidating their interpersonal connections. The use of the

⁵⁷ Cong, Yu. *Pictorial Handbook of The History of Chinese Drama*. Institute of Chinese Drama, China Academy of Arts. People's Music Publishing House (2003): 86.

"wedge" within the act primarily serves to introduce a crucial plot element during the progression of the narrative. Meanwhile, the four sets of tunes correspond to the four acts of the dramatic conflict: the beginning, the development, the climax, and the ending. Each act incorporated numerous arias in the same tonal system (gongdiao) to create a unified suite. Typically, one suite features a primary performer assuming the role of either a male or female character.

The northern Zaju experienced its early period of prosperity in various locations in northern China, including Beijing, Shanxi, Shandong, and Henan.⁵⁸ Following the establishment of the Yuan dynasty, there was a dissemination of northern Zaju theatrical performances into the southern regions of China. The influence of Zaju plays on subsequent generations of drama was extensive, encompassing both narrative structures and the modes of theatrical presentation. Numerous segments derived from northern Zaju theatrical productions underwent continual revisions and adaptations to suit the requirements of local stage performances.

The other major theatrical tradition Nanxi/Southern drama, alternatively referred to as Yongjia xiqu, or Wenzhou Zaju, emerged in the region of Yongjia (Wenzhou, Zhejiang province) between the years 1190 and 1194. Nanxi originated from the Song variety play, incorporating elements of balladry, all-keys-and-modes, song and dance, and other popular drama styles. The Nanxi theatrical tradition used melodies from the southern regions of China, as well as employed both extended and condensed dramatic frameworks. Additionally, the participation of literati had a significant role in shaping the

⁵⁸ Cong, Yu. *Pictorial Handbook of The History of Chinese Drama*. Institute of Chinese Drama, China Academy of Arts. People's Music Publishing House (2003): 86.

development of Nanxi. Due to the intricate plot developments, the duration of these plays tends to be considerably longer, often surpassing the length of Zaju plays by several folds. Nanxi usually consisted of more than fifty plays, whilst a comparatively shorter opera may have approximately twenty to thirty plays.

Nanxi incorporates traditional southern songs and rhymes, with a flexible structure that allows for modifications to both the tunes and rhymes, without tight regulations or limitations imposed on the use of these elements. The primary musical instruments utilized are percussion instruments, specifically drums and clappers. The Nanxi genre is particularly well-suited for narrating stories imbued with lingering and subtle emotions, owing to the delicate and euphemistic qualities inherent in southern songs. The act of singing exhibits a notable degree of flexibility and variability, as it does not adhere to the constraints of a designated lead vocalist. Instead, it adapts to the demands of diverse roles within the musical context, allowing for the performance of solos, duets, rounds, choruses, and other vocal arrangements.⁵⁹ Due to its adaptable nature, a play has the capacity to vary in length, unlike a fixed four-act structure typically found in Zaju. Furthermore, it incorporates both northern and southern musical elements, allowing for the incorporation of local folk tunes. As a result, the musical performances in plays are diverse and appealing to audiences.

Consequently, Nanxi gained popularity and spread throughout the nation, as it incorporated regional dialects, folk music, and innovative artistic creations. It disseminated to different regions following the establishment of four distinct vocal

⁵⁹ Sun, Mei. *Cross-cultural Studies of Chinese Opera*. Beijing: Zhong Hua Book Co, 2006, 56-60.

systems, so including the historical development of opera within these four prominent vocal styles. The language accents under consideration include the Haiyan accent of Zhejiang province, the Yuyao accent of Zhejiang, the Yiyang accent of Jiangxi province, the Kunshan accent of Jiangsu province.⁶⁰ The roles were categorized as sheng, dan, jing, mo, chou, tie, and wai.⁶¹ The popularity of this form of opera reached its zenith and gained significant prominence at the conclusion of the Yuan dynasty, and afterwards through a slow transition as it was supplanted by the emerging Kunshan opera during the middle of the Ming dynasty. Over time, it transformed into the principal theatrical genre during the Ming and Qing dynasties, known as the Legend (Chuanqi).

Turning to the Yuan dynasty, the events of Jin's overthrow of the Northern Song dynasty and Yuan's overthrow of Jin might be understood as a manifestation of the northern populace's resistance against the Jurchen and Mongol forces. The resistance of individuals against both national oppression and class oppression has been a challenging struggle, necessitating the utilization of several powerful forms of literature and art to convey their experiences. The development and incorporation of opera as an art form has been a lengthy process, influenced by a multitude of variables.

By the year 1280, any lingering resistance offered by the vestiges of the Song dynasty had been unequivocally suppressed. The vicinity of Hangzhou was renowned for possessing the highest population density not only in China but globally at the time, thus serving as a crucible for Chinese civilization across centuries. In the wake of the cessation of extensive internal strife and the eventual reunification of the territories, it

⁶⁰ Liu, Xuwei, *Ancient Operas [古代戏曲]*. Chongqing Publishing. Co. 2016: Chapter 4.

⁶¹ Cong, Yu. *Pictorial Handbook of The History of Chinese Drama*. Institute of Chinese Drama, China Academy of Arts. People's Music Publishing House (2003): 68.

appeared quite logical and predictable that the nexus of cultural activities would naturally revert to this historically significant region.

Subsequent to the reunification, a discernible pattern emerged wherein eminent playwrights began to congregate in or around the vicinity of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. This migration consisted of individuals hailing from the northern territories who resettled in Hangzhou, as well as native inhabitants who assimilated the dramatic arts that were pervasive in the northern part of the country. Following an intermediate period characterized by adaptation and acculturation, historical records indicate a consolidated shift occurring around 1320 or 1330,⁶² wherein the Yuan-dynasty Zaju theatrical form predominantly established its stronghold in the southern territories, epitomizing a substantial shift in the cultural dynamics of the era.

Hanqing Guan (c. 1234-1300), a prominent playwright during the Yuan Dynasty, showed exceptional productivity by authoring a substantial corpus of over sixty plays.⁶³ Among his works were some highly acclaimed productions that enjoyed significant popularity during his era. Furthermore, certain plays penned by Guan have endured the test of time, undergoing revisions and adaptations that have allowed them to persist in contemporary theatrical performances. Guan is credited with authoring a total of eighteen

⁶² Dolby, William. *A History of Chinese Drama*. London: P. Elek, 1976: 52.

⁶³ Cong, Yu. *Pictorial Handbook of The History of Chinese Drama*. Institute of Chinese Drama, China Academy of Arts. People's Music Publishing House (2003): 94.

surviving plays, such as *Snow in Midsummer*⁶⁴ and *Rescued by a Coquette*.⁶⁵ *A Dream of Splendor*, a recently premiered Chinese historical drama in 2022, has garnered international acclaim for its adaptation of Guan's *Rescued by a Coquette*.

Yuan-dynasty Zaju emerged as a result of the incorporation of Jin-dynasty Yuanben and the utilization of Northern Song-dynasty Zaju. These operas, driven by the demands of reality and the preferences of the public, significantly broadened the scope of subject matter and content. Consequently, they played a pivotal role in enriching the historical landscape of Chinese opera.

Inheritance of Song-dynasty Zaju, Yuan-dynasty Zaju performances comprised four primary acts, occasionally supplemented by one or two brief wedge acts. The songs played a significant role in demarcating the divide into acts, surpassing even the stages of plot development. Every performance was structured by a series of songs. In the context of the wedge act, it was customary for the performance to be a singular composition, typically with a solitary melody accompanied by one or two stanzas.⁶⁶ The melodies inside a single song-set were all in the same key, with the occasional authorized borrowings, and were organized in a predetermined sequence, concluding with what were

⁶⁴ The play depicts the narrative of Dou E, a female protagonist who was wedded into the Cai family but tragically lost her husband shortly after their nuptials. The antagonist of the theatrical production, Zhang Luer, coerces Dou into matrimony with him and alleged Dou and her mother-in-law's involvement in the murder of his father. In an effort to preserve the life of her mother-in-law, Dou E admitted to the act of poisoning, subsequently leading to her conviction and subsequent capital punishment. Prior to her death, Dou E expressed her grievances, asserting that she had been unjustly treated, and prophesied the occurrence of an anomalous event - the occurrence of heavy snowfall in the month of June - as a means to vindicate her innocence.

⁶⁵ In the narrative, Zhao Pan-er employs cunning tactics to outwit the antagonist Zhou She, with the ultimate objective of rescuing her sister Song Yinzhang who is tricked into marrying Zhou. As a result of her strategic maneuvers, Song is successfully liberated.

⁶⁶ Dolby, William. *A History of Chinese Drama*. London: P. Elek, 1976: 52.

referred to as *weisheng*, or "coda-tunes". Each primary act employed a distinct key that was not utilized in any other primary acts of the plays. The utilization of the wedge instruments involved the performance of unique melodies in the identical key as the one that was consistently employed for the initial primary act.

In the context of the play, specific keys were often employed for particular acts, although the adherence to these norms became less stringent in the latter acts. This deliberate choice of keys likely served to enhance the musical reinforcement of the audience's and actors' perception of dramatic movement, division, and progression over the entirety of the play. Additionally, it placed significant focus on the musical elements throughout the commencement and culmination of every act, thereby establishing a cohesive musical coherence for each act.

Yuan-dynasty *Zaju* incorporated a form of musical expression referred to as *qu*. The three primary classifications of Chinese poetry are usually recognized as Tang-dynasty *Shi*,⁶⁷ Song-dynasty *Ci*,⁶⁸ and Yuan-dynasty *Qu*.⁶⁹ In fact, the concept of the *Qu*

⁶⁷ Tang *Shi* encompasses the body of poetic works composed during or in close proximity to the Tang dynasty of China (618 – 907). The *shi* form had a predilection for pentasyllabic lines, which had assumed prominence since the second century C.E. However, heptasyllabic lines gradually gained favor starting from the eighth century. The poems often included several rhyming couplets, exhibiting a flexible structure in terms of line count, while displaying a clear inclination towards multiples of four lines.

⁶⁸ Song *Ci*, often known as Classical Chinese poetry, pertains to the poetic works that are characteristic of or associated with the Song dynasty in China, which spanned from 960 to 1279. This particular style, rooted in traditional structures and cadences, ultimately derived from existing popular tunes, however incorporated new lyrics.

⁶⁹ Yuan *Qu* is a prominent genre of Classical Chinese poetry that emerged during the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368). It encompasses verses composed in specific tone patterns, which are derived from the melodies of many songs. The *Qu* poems can be described as lyrical compositions characterized by lines of varying lengths. These lines adhere to specific and fixed patterns of rhyme and tone, which are derived from traditional musical compositions.

had already emerged throughout the Song and Jin dynasties and had been employed in various forms of entertainment. Undoubtedly, it is conceivable that an individual would have initially crafted a musical composition to accompany a melody, or alternatively, devised a melody to complement a song. This creative process likely involved drawing inspiration from preexisting songs or melodies. After being written, adopted, or adapted into the Qu repertoire, the melody would have become widely accessible for any Qu poets for coupling with their verses.

The Qu is commonly recognized as a form that allows for more artistic freedom compared to the ci. In the realm of poetry, the utilization of "restrictions" by a skilled poet can serve as a mechanism for enhancing one's abilities and honing the art of expression. This can result in a more focused, melodious, or aesthetically pleasing conveyance of ideas and emotions. Consequently, determining the precise significance of "freedom" within this context becomes a challenging endeavor. The metrical effects of the Qu in Chinese language are achieved through the alternating use of four pitch-tones, which were utilized in the pronunciation of nearly every syllable in the language.⁷⁰ The alternations in question were determined by the prosodic patterns, exhibiting a notable degree of rigidity, particularly in relation to the concluding segment of each line. It is worth noting that the conclusion holds utmost significance inside a line.

Consequently, the Qu genre of Chinese poetry exhibited a higher level of strictness compared to other forms. This characteristic can be attributed to its initial development in the northern region, where it adhered to a specific dialect in terms of rhymes and pronunciation. This familiarity with a particular dialect among song-

⁷⁰ Dolby, William. *A History of Chinese Drama*. London: P. Elek, 1976: 59.

composers and their audiences facilitated the skillful manipulation of sounds and the discernment and control of the phonetic and musical attributes of Qu. The origins of the stringent requirements imposed by rhyming patterns in Qu poetry likely stem from similar factors.

The rhyme scheme and rhythmic patterns that constructed is highly condensed. In each stanza, the majority of lines conclude with a consistent rhyme, frequently exhibiting a rhyme scheme where every line adheres to this pattern. In a song-set, a consistent sound is maintained for the purpose of rhyming throughout. Consequently, it is not uncommon for over eighty percent of the lines in a song-set consisting of three or four hundred lines to exhibit the same rhyming sound. Prosodic norms typically dictate the specific lines that are expected to exhibit rhyming patterns. The ability to compose an entire collection of songs using the most limited rhyme categories, where the selection of rhyming words was severely restricted, might be regarded as a remarkable feat.

However, these restrictions were not implemented out of a fondness for constraints, nor were they willingly embraced out of affection for them. These entities were established and thrived due to their provision of liberties that facilitated enhanced and aesthetically pleasing forms of literary and musical articulation. The establishment of metrical norms resulted in the development of a harmonious language characterized by alternating sounds, which both poets and audiences were accustomed to via repeated exposure.

Maturity and Characterization of Opera

As forementioned, from 1330 onwards in the transition from the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), the Nanxi genre had a notable resurgence

in popularity, as a significant influx of playwrights emerged during this period. The early Ming Dynasty was distinguished by a period of socio-economic recuperation and advancement. Upon the ascension of Ming inaugural emperor Zhu Yuanzhang (1328-1398) to the imperial throne in the early year of 1368, the decision was made to establish Nanjing of Jiangsu province as the capital city. As soon as he ascended to the throne, he and his imperial family took a keen interest in both the Zaju and the Nanxi. His princes were required to collect a substantial number of songs and plays.⁷¹ The interest in drama remained strong at court for the remainder of the dynasty in result of the refinement of the opera art.

Without a doubt, the esteemed literary luminaries demonstrated a preference for the "sophisticated music." However, it is worth noting that in certain regions, the importance attributed to playwrights may have experienced a certain degree of decline. During the latter years of the Ming dynasty, there was a notable proliferation of highly regarded and celebrated theatrical productions, which led to a progressive decrease in the emphasis placed by actors on the generation of original works. The amalgamation of Northern and Southern play, coupled with the revival of interest in old dramatic literature, has led to a wide range of choices, even in the lack of new theatrical productions. Indeed, it is evident that there has been a consistent emergence of significant contemporary theatrical works. However, it is conceivable that in the absence of any political or social turmoil or any other catalyst that would prompt a substantial change in preferences, the actors could have continued their pursuits without the need for new dramatic productions. In the

⁷¹ Dolby, William. *A History of Chinese Drama*. London: P. Elek, 1976: 77.

coming centuries, there seems to be an increasing focus in the realm of theater on the actors and their portrayals, rather than the birth of innovative authors. Nevertheless, it is crucial that we practice prudence. The distinction between the processes of revising and creating is often subtle, and it is possible that a potential reason for the perceived decline in the importance of playwrights could be linked to the limited acknowledgement and lasting praise given to those involved in revising theatrical works, particularly in the late Ming dynasty and subsequent eras. This phenomenon could perhaps have been detected in previous occurrences, such as in the case of Nanxi.

During the time, the Nanxi's standardized system of full-length operas underwent development and maturation. Chuangi, derived from the Nanxi theatrical tradition and drawing influences from both southern and northern theatre genres, encompassed a diverse array of vocal styles including the Yiyang style, Yuyao style, Haiyan style, and Kunshan style. In terms of singing characteristics, the Chuanqi opera differed from the northern Zaju as it was primarily performed in the southern regions and was not limited by specific roles. The structure deviated from the traditional "four acts and a wedge" format commonly found in northern opera, with variable lengths ranging from twenty or even sixty scenes. Additionally, it witnessed a shift from the prevalent usage of folk tunes in the Song and Yuan operas to a predominant reliance on prevalent vocal styles, such as Yuyao style, Haiyan style, Yiyang style, and Kunshan style. It gained popularity during this period and continued to be widely circulated in the middle Ming dynasty to the early Qing dynasty. Finally, the Chuanqi gradually evolved into a more refined form, with the Kunshan style dominating a central role in its musical system. Additionally, the authorship of the Chuanqi in the Ming and Qing dynasties differed from that of the Song

and Yuan operas. While the Song and Yuan Nanxi operas were primarily created by a group of folk artists in the lower classes, the Chuanqi operas were mainly composed by literati and scholars in the upper class.

The emergence and popularity of the Kunshan and Yiyang styles, as well as the growing participation of literati in creating Chuanqi theatre, were indicative of the many social norms prevalent during the Ming and Qing dynasties. The demand for theater performances was driven by upper-class parties, temple gatherings, and religious events. Private opera troupes and professional troupes played significant roles in meeting this demand and spreading theatre across society. The Yiyang style was bold and unconstrained. These plays were normally composed by lower ranked scholars and artists and were easy to understand with a wide range of themes.

In contrast, the Kunshan style was better aligned with the qualities of intimacy, enclosure, and refinement exhibited in private stages.⁷² To enhance the audience's comprehension and appreciation of a play, Kunshan style appeared to employ alternative methods. One such approach involved placing heightened emphasis on bodily movements and facial expressions to underscore the significance of the dialogue and accentuate the melodic elements.⁷³ The major incorporation and engagement with Kunshan style significantly contributed to the development of Chinese drama's dramaturgy and stagecraft, particularly in the domains of singing, recitation, acting, dancing, and acrobatic combat.

⁷² Dolby, William. *A History of Chinese Drama*. London: P. Elek, 1976: 104.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

Liangfu Wei (1489-1566), as the essential figure who developed the Kun opera, expressed dissatisfaction with the rough and unrefined nature of southern Qu, prompting him to modify the modes and tonal patterns, to create a novel musical style. Wei collaborated with numerous musicians and made significant enhancements to the accompaniment of the Kunshan style, resulting in a widely held perception of increased refined musical quality. The Kunshan style, therefore, received praise due to its exceptional refinement and eminence and finally cultivated the substantial Kun opera, featuring its poetic verses, lyrical vocal expressions, and intricate and graceful performances. The Kun opera became as the prevailing theatrical genre for the subsequent two centuries.

The role categories of the Kun opera underwent significant expansion and refinement as it progressed. The four primary categories, namely sheng, dan, jing, and chou, are further classified into numerous subcategories (Table 2.2). The clarity of the performers' make-up and clothing is also appreciated by the audience. The ability to discern the character traits of individuals based on their appearance is seen in the recognition that a man wearing oily white make-up is likely to possess cunning and should not be relied upon, while a man adorned in red make-up is likely to exhibit bravery and a propensity for generosity. The facial expressions of these characters serve as a visual representation of their inner emotions and distinct individualities. The spectators perceive a specific facial configuration on an actor and promptly recognize that he is embodying a specific military leader or a specific mythical figure. The attire worn by individuals serves as a means of conveying their social status.

Table 2.2 Subcategories of Characters in Kun Opera

<p>Sheng: Male roles Unpainted faces</p>	<p>Laosheng: middle aged or elderly roles Wai: secondary roles Mo: elderly household, presenter of prologue Guansheng: leading roles, young scholars Jinsheng: young scholars, secondary roles</p>
<p>Dan: Female roles</p>	<p>Laodan: elderly women Zhendan: main young women role Zuodan: various young women roles, secondary role Wudan: aristocratic young women</p>
<p>Jing: Forceful male roles Painted faces</p>	<p>Damian: forceful and powerful roles Baimian: violent roles</p>
<p>Chou: Comic roles Painted faces</p>	<p>Fu: villainous roles Xiaomian: admirable comic roles</p>

Chinese theater has exhibited a significantly greater emphasis on singing and music, notably since the Ming period. From approximately 1500 onwards, the evolution of opera in China has gradually shifted its emphasis towards the diverse musical elements utilized, rather than the particular genres of theatrical works. The Yuan-dynasty Zaju placed great importance on music, and this significance was further heightened in the Chuanqi and succeeding regional dramas. Music had a vital role in various theatrical forms, functioning as a defining trait. During the Yuan dynasty, the regional pronunciations were of considerable importance in differentiating between the dramatic traditions of the northern and southern regions. Nevertheless, with the passage of time, a multitude of dramatic genres started to proliferate extensively and swiftly over the

entirety of the nation. In some instances, the collective musical attributes of the dramas assumed a more significant role as a defining trait, surpassing the mere aspects of pronunciation and form inherent to the play.

The Ming dynasty conclusively saw a decline, leading to the emergence of a subsequent dynasty. The Qing dynasty (1644-1912) originated from the region of Manchuria, situated in the northern part of China. Starting from the mid-Qing period, the Kunshan style, Yiyang style, and several other styles underwent a process of fragmentation, leading to the establishment of localized opera systems. This phenomenon played a significant role in expediting the formation and subsequent growth of local operas. During the latter decades of the fifteenth century and the initial decades of the sixteenth century, there was a widespread dissemination of all mentioned types of opera. These musical forms underwent frequent modifications and were influenced by various musical styles, pronunciations, rhyming patterns, and singing styles from different regions. Additionally, the emergence of many dramatic tune systems, such as xiansuo

qiang,⁷⁴ bangzi qiang,⁷⁵ lantan qiang,⁷⁶ and pinuang qiang,⁷⁷ led to a competition for prominence in the theatrical domain. Among these systems, bangzi, lantan, and pinuang emerged as the most influential.

During the 18th century, Chinese musical theatre was distinctly categorized into two distinct classes, namely Yabu, which represented refined theatre, and Huabu, which represented popular theatre. Yabu signifies the Kunshan style or Kun opera that was predominantly embraced by the higher echelons of society. Due to its meticulous metrical structure and refined use of language, the Kunshan style of writing posed a challenge for individuals with limited educational background in terms of comprehension.

The term "Huabu" encompassed theatrical tune systems that were distinct from the Kunshan style. The diction employed in the work was characterized by its simplicity and clarity, rendering it easily understandable. Additionally, the musical elements of the piece

⁷⁴ Xiansuo qiang originated from the Shandong province and drew inspiration from traditional folk tunes. The musical performance was complemented by the inclusion of stringed instruments, thus earning the alternative designation of xiansuo qiang, which translates to "tunes accompanied by stringed instruments." Folk songs served as a medium expressed the story of ordinary people. Various styles of theatre in the regions of Shandong, Henan, and southern Hebei incorporate folk melodies and are classified under the xiansou tune system.

⁷⁵ Bangzi qiang has its origins in the center region of Shaanxi, the eastern area of Gansu, and the southern section of Shanxi. The librettos of Bangzi performances incorporated the shangxiaju structure, which consists of opening and closing lines that are paired in couplets, maintaining both rhyme and semantic coherence.

⁷⁶ Luantan qiang, denoting music that does not fall under the categories of kunqu or refined music, has become associated with clapper genres and is frequently referred to Qin opera. The opera included clapper music, which was derived from the onomatopoeic representation of the sound produced by the wooden clappers employed throughout the performance. The opera is commonly referred to as Qin opera, owing to its association with the historical state of Qin that encompassed present-day Shanxi province.

⁷⁷ Pihuang qiang is a tune system comprised of xipi and erhuang. Both tunes employ seven or ten-word couplets in their lyrical patterns. Additionally, the primary musical instrument employed in these theaters is the huqin for both.

were vibrant and captivating, thereby endearing it to individuals belonging to the lower socioeconomic classes. Huabu, sometimes known as Luantan, emerged as the prevailing form of Chinese drama following the era of Chuanqi.

During the time, Kun opera experienced a decline in its prominence within the realm of performing arts, as it was overshadowed by the emergence of a new theatrical form known as Beijing opera emerging in the capital in Beijing, characterized by its amalgamation of refined and popular artistic elements. Remarkably, this unique style has endured the test of time and is widely appreciated in contemporary society. The pivotal occurrence in question pertained to the celebration of the Qing emperor's birthday in the year 1790, which served as a catalyst for provincial troupes to go towards the imperial capital, Beijing.

Four theatrical companies hailing from the southeastern province of Anhui graced the occasion of the birthday celebration, introducing novel musical genres known as Erhuang and Xipi. During the nineteenth century, these four companies and their music emerged as the dominant theatrical influence in the capital city. Over the course of its development, the theatrical art form that emerged in the region grew closely associated with the capital city, eventually acquiring the name "Beijing opera" that is recognized

today. The Beijing opera gradually disseminated throughout the southern and northern regions by combining luntan⁷⁸ and pihuang qiang.⁷⁹

Beijing opera is regarded as the pinnacle of ancient Chinese theatrical art, encompassing elements from several forms of classical theatre. It possesses a broad appeal, captivating both the upper echelons of society and the general populace. Beijing opera, widely regarded as China's foremost theatrical art form, has made substantial contributions to the global advancement of the performing arts.

Regional Operas

China is a geographically extensive nation characterized by a substantial population and intricate variations in dialects and phonetics. The phenomenon of vocal adaptation, wherein the vocal style is tailored to the preferences of the local population, is observed throughout different regions. This adaptation involves incorporating elements of the local dialect, intonation patterns, and traditional folk tunes, resulting in the emergence of a distinct regional vocal style.

Over time, the practice of singing has given rise to several branches, leading to the development of distinct styles. These styles have diverged significantly from one another, resulting in the eventual emergence of autonomous vocal traditions. Based on the

⁷⁸ Luntan has grown closely linked with clapper genres and is commonly referenced in the context of Qin opera. The opera incorporated clapper music, which originated from the onomatopoeic depiction of the sound generated by the wooden clappers utilized during the entirety of the performance. The opera is often known as Qin opera because to its historical connection with the state of Qin, which comprised the present-day Shanxi region.

⁷⁹ The Pihuang qiang is a musical system that consists of two distinct tune types, namely xipi and erhuang. Both compositions utilize poetic patterns consisting of couplets with either seven or ten words. Moreover, the predominant musical instrument utilized in these theatrical settings is the huqin, which is common to both.

available historical evidence, it is understood that the origins of the bangzi may be traced to the border region including Shanxi. Subsequently, as it traversed into the Guanzhong region in Shaanxi⁸⁰ province, it underwent a transformation and came to be known as Qinqiang. Furthermore, spreading to Beijing and Hebei, it resulted in the emergence of Hebei bangzi. The introduction of bangzi to the province of Henan facilitated an exchange and fusion with the pre-existing local operas, resulting in the emergence and development of a distinct form known as Henan bangzi; then it gave rise to the region known as Shandong Bangzi in Shandong province.

The emergence of various independent opera genres with distinct styles can be attributed to the amalgamation of dialect, local folk songs, and operas. These genres not only exhibit variations in singing techniques, but also showcase unique instrument usage and playing methods. Additionally, each genre possesses its own characteristic repertoire, even when some plays share the same script. However, the content and acting methods employed in these performances differ significantly. This phenomenon is not limited solely to the northern opera but extends to the southern Gaoqiang (Yiyang style) and Pihuang as well. Hence, Chinese opera encompasses a prevalent stylistic approach alongside a diverse range of artistic personalities, thereby facilitating a vibrant and multifaceted avenue for artistic expression.

Throughout history, the integration of many theatrical forms within a particular location has generally resulted in the local populace successfully assimilating them and facilitating their coexistence on shared performance platforms. The integration of foreign styles with local art, cultural practices, and individual preferences resulted in the

⁸⁰ Shaanxi, an adjacent province with Shanxi in the mid-north of China.

emergence of a distinct local aesthetic, eventually culminating in the formation of a cohesive artistic ensemble. The members of this theatrical ensemble possess the ability to proficiently execute performances in both the genre-specific vocal style associated with this particular troupe, as well as in an alternative vocal style.

These styles have undergone a prolonged process of amalgamation and exchange, resulting in a somewhat cohesive creative style that enjoys popularity among the inhabitants of the region, aesthetically evolves, and readily cultivates a discerning audience from around the nation. Over the course of time, there was a progressive expansion of its reach outside the local context, resulting in its transformation into a theater that held national significance.

Yu Opera—豫剧

Yu opera, a prominent Chinese opera genre, holds the distinction of being one of the most major local opera genres in China. It is a traditional form of drama that enjoys widespread popularity primarily in Henan Province, Hebei Province, and Shandong Province, but has also gained recognition throughout the entire country. Its rich heritage spans several centuries, with its influence dating back to the Qianlong emperor (1736-1796) of the Qing Dynasty. Particularly in Henan Province, Yu opera has established itself as a highly influential and esteemed opera genre. The Yu opera underwent a process of generation and development, incorporating artistic elements from various vocal styles such as Kunqiang, Pihuang, and Bangzi. Additionally, it extensively incorporated popular Henan folk music and songs. As a result, the genre acquired distinct characteristics characterized by directness, simplicity, subtlety, and a rich vernacular flavor.

The melodic structure of the system of Yu opera is categorized into two distinct regions: eastern Henan and western Henan. The western tunes provide a calming quality,

whilst the eastern tunes are characterized by their boisterous nature. Additionally, female performers in the field of Yu opera experienced a notable rise in recognition, ultimately attaining a prominent position within the art form.

Yue Opera—越剧

Yue opera enjoyed widespread viewership among China's provincial theatres and embodied a comparatively recent form of opera, which emerged and evolved during the twentieth century. Yue opera originated from the indigenous narrative traditions and storytelling chants in the southeastern region of Zhejiang province during the early twentieth century. The rhythm was produced by employing a modest-sized drum and manual clappers. Hand clappers exhibit distinct characteristics compared to the clapper or wood block commonly employed in clapper opera. Yue Opera is characterized by its extensive employment of lyrical elements, predominantly focusing on vocalization. It showcases exquisite vocal abilities, emotionally evocative performances, and aesthetically pleasing presentations exuding a sense of grace and refinement that is emblematic of the southern region. Furthermore, the majority of Yue Opera productions revolve on the central topic of romantic stories.

Initially, the performers consisted of individuals lacking professional training who conducted performances during local village festivals. However, as time progressed, these troupes garnered more recognition, leading to the emergence of professional companies in Hangzhou, a prominent cultural hub inside China. The interaction and integration of various opera styles facilitated a notable advancement, namely the incorporation of comprehensive orchestration. By the year 1916, the emerging opera style had made its way onto the stages of Shanghai, assimilating narratives and performing

techniques from the prevalent Great Shaoxing opera, which had been introduced from the province of Zhejiang at an earlier time.

Traditionally, Yue opera companies were commonly divided into separate troupes consisting only of male performers and those exclusively composed of female performers. The inception of the initial all-female troupes took place during the early 1920s. By the mid-1930s, the female companies had achieved remarkable success, to the extent that they had entirely supplanted the male companies. Consequently, this emerging opera style became closely associated with female performers. The outcomes encompassed the emergence of opera directors, novel costume designs, vibrant make-up, and expansive scenery and lighting from Western-style stage theater and popular film.

Yue opera programs exhibit a dual nature, as they not only adapt ancient narratives but also introduce original compositions that reflect contemporary topics. The performance style encompasses expressive and emotional elements, incorporating contemporary dramatic approaches. The presence of men has been reintroduced to the Yue opera stage; nonetheless, the prestige of this art form continues to primarily rely on the contributions of women in terms of performance and innovative practices.

Cantonese (Yue) Opera—粵劇

Cantonese opera, which derived its name from the city of Canton, presently known as Guangzhou, was widely regarded as the predominant theatrical art form in the southern province of Guangdong. It gained significant recognition and influence throughout Chinese communities across the globe. The operatic style referred to as “Yue” (粵) opera in China which differed from the “Yue” (越) opera style originating from Zhejiang province. Cantonese opera developed through a lengthy historical background. Since the

fifteenth century, troupes in Guangdong have utilized indigenous singing traditions to stage theatrical productions in Cantonese.⁸¹ During the early Qing dynasty, there was an influx of theatrical troupes specializing in the Gaoqiang and Kunqiang styles into the regions of Guangdong and Guangxi. During the mid-Qing period, indigenous theater troupes emerged in Fuoshan and Guangzhou, performing songs in the banghuang style, which encompassed bangzi⁸² and erhuang⁸³ tunes. It is worth noting that these troupes predominantly utilized the Mandarin language for their performances. Towards the conclusion of the Qing period, there emerged a notable trend among singers who commenced vocalizing in Cantonese, a linguistic variant predominantly spoken in the Guangdong province of China. This shift in linguistic preference garnered significant acclaim and widespread popularity among the audience. Cantonese Opera remains a prominent kind of theatrical performance, persistently staged in various locations like Guangzhou, Foshan, Hong Kong, and among overseas Chinese communities.

The development of Cantonese opera was facilitated by the integration of several artistic elements, including Kun opera, Yiyang style, Pihuang style, and the clapper opera. As a consequence of this amalgamation, the pihuang singing style emerged as the prevailing musical form. Cantonese pihuang employs a lyrical structure akin to that of Beijing opera, while retaining a distinctively southern orchestration.

⁸¹ Siu, Wang-Ngai, and Peter Lovrick. *Chinese Opera: Images and Stories*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997: 24.

⁸² The origins of Bangzi qiang may be traced back to the central region of Shaanxi, the eastern area of Gansu, and the southern section of Shanxi. The librettos utilized in Bangzi performances encompassed the shangxiaju framework, which encompasses the utilization of couplets that maintain both rhyme and semantic coherence, with opening and ending lines being linked together.

⁸³ Erhuang tunes are typically distinguished by a tranquil and composed demeanor, exhibiting a concentrated and earnest manifestation of emotional expression.

Si Chuan Opera—川劇

Si Chuan province, located in the mid-western region of China, is renowned for its abundant natural resources and high agricultural productivity. Historically, the location was often regarded as remote and challenging to access. The region was characterized by tough mountain trails that connected to the north, while rivers facilitated connectivity to the southeast. Despite the geographical isolation, Si Chuan opera has grown as a unique art form by incorporating elements from five distinct regional traditions: Gaoqiang, Kunshan styles, huqin (the two stringed fiddle instrument of Pihuang tunes), tanxi (clapper tunes from Si Chuan), and dengxi (lantern festival tunes). The dengxi (lantern opera) that was performed in Si Chuan was the only one of its kind in the region. The lantern opera refers to a style of folk theatre that was formerly enacted by peasants and village shamans at festive occasions.⁸⁴ The theatrical performances of dengxi (lantern opera) were characterized by brevity and simplicity, necessitating the involvement of a just trio of actors. The primary attribute of their work was the utilization of spoken discourse in the common language, as opposed to employing singing. The conversation was accompanied by musical interludes provided by a duo of musicians utilizing a small drum, a gong, and a fiddle.

The yiyang musical style originating from southeastern China was introduced to the region of Si Chuan during the mid-seventeenth century. The melodies were solely accompanied by percussion instruments. Therefore, the vocal technique takes significant domains in the performance. The other noteworthy characteristic of Yiyang, which has become a distinctive hallmark of Si Chuan opera, is the presence of a supporting chorus.

⁸⁴ Siu, Wang-Ngai, and Peter Lovrick. *Chinese Opera: Images and Stories*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997: 18.

The chorus (all female or all male choir) was positioned prominently inside the audience's line of sight, engaging in vocal performance that provided a commentary on the unfolding drama. Additionally, it has the potential to assume control of a character's vocal role, so requiring the actor to just convey the actions through pantomime.

Si Chuan opera comprises five main roles: xiaosheng, xusheng, dan, jing, and chou. Each role has a well-structured performance program. Notably, the performances of sheng, dan, and chou stand out due to their unique characteristics. The performers of these roles demonstrate exceptional skill in employing acrobatics and dramatic techniques, thereby excelling in the creation of theatrical expressions and performance techniques.

Prior to a theatrical presentation, performers of Si Chuan opera engage in the practice of adorning their countenances with a diverse array of pigments, thereby manifesting the distinct identities, physical attributes, and personality features of the *dramatis personae*. In the historical context of Si Chuan Opera, it was customary for actors to personally adorn their own faces as opposed to the employment of dedicated full-time face painters. To captivate the audience, actors may creatively depict their facial features while adhering to the fundamental traits of the characters in the theatrical production. Hence, the distinctive and varied characteristics exhibited in the facial adornment of Si Chuan Opera are exceptionally uncommon within the realm of regional theatrical performances.

Face-changing is a prominent technique employed in Si Chuan Opera, serving the purpose of elucidating the internal psyche and fluctuations of emotions experienced by the characters within the theatrical performance. This technique effectively transforms

intangible and imperceptible abstract sentiments and psychological states into tangible and perceptible visual representations, specifically through the art of face painting. In the context of Si Chuan Opera, the dynamic nature of the plot and the evolving inner world of the characters necessitate corresponding alterations in facial expressions. The technique of facial transformation in theatrical performances, namely in Si Chuan Opera, was developed and pioneered by artists who introduced the innovative practices of face altering, face pulling, and eye wiping. These techniques are employed within the realm of theatrical performance, with the intention of remaining imperceptible to the audience, to create a powerful dramatic impact through sudden transformations of the character's facial expression.

The prevailing method for altering facial appearance is through the use of powdered substances. The act of face pulling involves the depiction of a face on a delicate silk fabric, which is subsequently removed in a rapid and skillful manner, layer by layer, during the course of the performance. Rubbing the eyes is a technique employed to effect partial alterations to the facial appearance, wherein the performer expeditiously darkens the region surrounding the eyes by applying black pine smoke to their fingers prior to application.

Qinqiang Opera—秦腔

Qinqiang Opera, sometimes refers to as "Bang Bang" or "Shaanxi Bang Bang," is a venerable kind of drama that dates back to the Western Zhou Dynasty. Its origins can be traced to the region in Baoji City, Shaanxi Province. The genre underwent maturation in the Qin dynasty. During ancient times, the region including Shaanxi and Gansu was under the governance of the state of Qin, hence earning the appellation of "Qinqiang". The performance was often referred to as "Bang Bang" due to the prevalent use of wood

clappers in early Qin opera renditions. Following the establishment of Qinqiang, its influence permeated throughout the nation. Due to its well-developed and comprehensive performance system, it exerted varying degrees of impact on regional opera styles, ultimately serving as a direct precursor to the Bangzi⁸⁵ style. The performance techniques employed in Qinqiang are characterized by their simplicity, ruggedness, and audacity. They are known for their extensive use of exaggeration, which imparts a vibrant and lively quality to the performances. Additionally, Qinqiang showcases a wide range of acrobatic skills, further enhancing its artistic richness.

Qinqiang, as a regional cultural phenomenon, prominently showcases a distinctive form of vocal expression that encompasses singing and recitation. This art form is rooted in the Shaanxi dialect and incorporates elements from classical Chinese poetry, lyrics, and songs from the Han and Tang dynasties. The fusion of linguistic and musical attributes in Qinqiang gives rise to a unique vocal style characterized by high-pitched, impassioned tones, forceful vocal projection, and a solid, unwavering tonal quality. The lyrical language rhythm of Qinqiang is notably abundant, and the lyrics adhere to a specific structure. The sentences within the lyrics exhibit variations in length, ranging from long to short, in accordance with the requirements of conveying the ideological content during performance. However, their sentence structures may be primarily categorized as seven-word sentences, five-word sentences, and prose sentences. In academic writing, several types of sentences are frequently employed, including

⁸⁵ The origins of Bangzi qiang may be traced back to the central region of Shaanxi, the eastern area of Gansu, and the southern section of Shanxi. The librettos utilized in Bangzi performances encompassed the shangxiaju structure, characterized by the presence of opening and closing lines that are coupled together in a manner that maintains both rhyme and semantic coherence.

compound sentences, sentences consisting of seven words, sentences consisting of five words, as well as prose sentences. Frequently, opera lyrics are structured with a combination of cross sentences and seven-character sentences, resulting in a composition that resembles an unrhymed poem or song in its overall organization.

The vocal styles are characterized by a division into two categories: the bitter tone and the joyful tone. The bitter tone is distinguished by its utilization of the harsh tone accent, which effectively embodies the profound, melancholy, and impassioned qualities associated with this genre. This particular tonal accent is well-suited for expressing emotions of regret, nostalgia, and sadness. The joyful tone exhibits a vibrant and buoyant quality, characterized by its forceful and commanding nature, effectively conveying sentiments of excitement and brightness. Qinqiang opera exhibits a wide and resonant nature, characterized by a vertical orientation and a thick, profound style. It evokes a sense of sadness and intensity, while also conveying a passionate quality. Simultaneously, it possesses a lingering quality, delicacy, and softness, as well as a light and lively aspect. These attributes combine to create a tragic and gentle aesthetic, resulting in a lovely and melodious sound that is widely appreciated by the general populace.

CHAPTER 3: THE INTRODUCTION AND RISE IN POPULARITY OF THE PIANO IN CHINA

The introduction of western keyboard instruments in China may be traced back to the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries. The introduction of early keyboard instruments in China can be attributed to the cultural convergence that took place in China which was highly connected to the court. The piano's earliest documentation may be traced back to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit missionary hailing from Italy, introduced a harpsichord to a church located in Zhaoqing, a city situated in the Guangdong province, during the year 1583. As his influence continued to expand, Ricci received an invitation from the Wanli Emperor, the fourteenth ruler of the Ming dynasty, to visit Beijing in 1600. As part of the tribute offered during this visit, Ricci presented a clavichord. The Wanli Emperor was impressed by the sound of the clavichord and asked a group of four eunuchs to learn to play the instrument. Diego de Pantoja (1571-1618), a Spanish Jesuit and missionary who accompanied Matthew Ricci during the years, composed *Eight Songs for a Western stringed Instrument—西琴曲艺八章* for the group, while Ricci wrote the lyrics that were printed both in Chinese and Italian.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Xu, Shuangshuang. "Reflections on the timing of the introduction of the piano to China -- The connection between the harpcichord and the modern piano." [关于钢琴传入中国时间的思考——兼说“古钢琴”与现代钢琴的关联] *Journal of Literature and History* 06(2012):70-72.

In 1639, the Italian Catholic missionary Francesco Sambiasi (1582-1649) presented a clavichord as one of the gifts⁸⁷ to the Chongzhen emperor (1611-1644), who was the seventeenth and last Emperor of the Ming dynasty. In the following year, the missionary and astronomer Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1591-1666) restored the clavichord given by Ricci and wrote a keyboard instruction book in Chinese, which was unfortunately lost.⁸⁸

The emperor Kangxi (1654-1722), the third emperor of Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), was open minded and interested in learning Europeans' knowledge of astronomy, calendars, cartography, weaponry, and music instruments. As a music lover who learned to play harpsichord, Kangxi appointed the missionaries Ferdinand Verbiest (1623-1688) and Tomas Pereira (1645-1708) as his music teachers. To complement his study, Kangxi directed Pereira to edit *Lü Lü Zuan Yao*, the first music theory book in Chinese introducing western music theory. This book systematically introduced the European music system, including notation, time signatures, harmonization, etc.⁸⁹

The keyboard did not hold the interest of the Chinese court for a long period of time. Even though the emperor Qianlong (1711-1799), the fifth emperor of Qing dynasty, repaired the western instruments that were found in the treasure house from Kangxi's period, he soon lost interest in them. Eventually, European music officially fell out of

⁸⁷ Jin, Shi. "The Origin and Development of Keyboard Musical Instruments (Part XI) The Historical Traceability of the Introduction of the Old Piano to China." [键盘乐器的起源与发展(之十一) 古钢琴传入中国之历史溯源(上)] *Music Life*. No. 11 (2014):72.

⁸⁸ Lindorff, Joyce. "Missionaries, Keyboards and Musical Exchange in the Ming and Qing Courts." *Early Music* 32, no. 3 (2004): 403–14.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3519339>.

⁸⁹ Li, Qin. *A Study of the Development of Piano Music Culture in China and the West* [中西方钢琴音乐文化发展研究]. Beijing: China Book Publishing House (2014): 87.

favor at the court and did not spread out of the Forbidden city, the residence of the Qing court, due to the political policy of seclusion and the business isolation of the maritime ban in the late Qianlong period.

The introduction of the modern piano to China occurred subsequent to the Anglo-Chinese War in 1840. This event marked a significant shift in the dynamics of cultural exchange between the East and the West, as it led to a departure from the previous reliance on missionaries as the primary means of communication. Consequently, Western culture began to permeate China through a broader range of channels.

Historical documentation indicates that the introduction of the modern piano occurred subsequent to the ratification of the Treaty of Nanjing, which was a bilateral agreement between China and Britain, in the year 1842.⁹⁰ Motivated by the belief that a substantial market for pianos would emerge if the average Chinese household possessed a piano, a British piano manufacturer undertook the shipment of a considerable quantity of instruments to China. However, it is evident that the perceived existence of a piano market was not reflective of the actual market conditions.

Finally, the piano gained significant popularity in China during the transition from the 19th to the 20th century, coinciding with the European Romantic era. During this time period, educational institutions affiliated with religious establishments and piano schools were prevalent in China. Notably, the early 20th century witnessed the advent of the "School Music Songs (学堂乐歌),"⁹¹ which marked the inception of modern music in

⁹⁰ Li, Qin. *A Study of the Development of Piano Music Culture in China and the West* [中西方钢琴音乐文化发展研究]. Beijing: China Book Publishing House (2014): 88.

⁹¹ School Music Songs refer to compositions created specifically for music or singing classes in the new-style schools during the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic period. The compositions primarily consisted of two formats: "creating lyrics for existing songs"

China. This novel musical genre diverged significantly from traditional Chinese music, thus signifying a departure from established musical conventions. The advent of this novel musical genre marked the beginnings of contemporary music in China, owing to its stark departure from the conventions of traditional Chinese music. The introduction of novel tonalities and music theory posed challenges for traditional Chinese instruments in terms of accompaniment. Consequently, the piano emerged as a suitable alternative and subsequently gained widespread popularity.

During the early twentieth century, as the piano gained popularity among the Chinese population, Chinese people from all classes and parts of society began to develop an appreciation for piano music. Consequently, they embarked on a journey of acquiring proficiency in the techniques of composing piano music in the western style, and afterwards ventured into the realm of creating original piano compositions that incorporated Chinese traditional music elements.

Numerous scholarly works have been dedicated to examining the genesis and evolution of piano culture, as well as the defining features of piano music composition across different historical periods in China. Notably, Dr. Bian's dissertation titled "The Formation and Development of Chinese Piano Music Culture" (1996)⁹² stands out as a prominent contribution in this field. Meng's research delves into the multifaceted aspects of China's piano music culture, delineating its formation through six distinct phases. This

or "creating songs for existing lyrics." The majority of the melodies were sourced from Japan, Europe, and the United States, while a small number were derived from traditional Chinese folk tunes. In the latter case, Chinese composers would subsequently provide Chinese lyrics for these compositions.

⁹² Bian, Meng. *The Formation and Development of Chinese Piano Music Culture* [中国钢琴音乐文化的形成与发展]. Huayue Press, 1996.

study examines the origin of the introduction of the piano, the establishment of professional music education institutions and their roles in piano education during specific time periods in Chinese history. These periods include the years spanning from 1919 to 1937, which witnessed the creation of such institutions, as well as the eight-year war of resistance against Japan and the three-year war of liberation from 1937 to 1949. Additionally, the study explores the seventeen-year development of piano art during the early years of the founding of the People's Republic of China, as well as the period during the "Cultural Revolution" (1966-1976) and the time after the "Cultural Revolution" (after 1976). Each phase is thoroughly examined in terms of piano instruction, piano performance, and piano music production.

Keyboard instruments and the piano, as artistic mediums, have been introduced to China throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties and into the modern era. Their utilization for expressing Chinese style necessitates a developmental trajectory, encompassing investigation and eventual maturation. The creation of Chinese piano music serves as a reflection of this evolutionary process. The initial Chinese piano compositions, despite their brevity, simplistic melodies, straightforward structures, and limited tonal range, represented the earliest endeavors to amalgamate Chinese and European musical elements. Early Chinese compositions for piano imitating the European tradition predominantly employed conventional harmonies and did not incorporate intricate performance techniques. These works were influenced by the practice of "filling in the words according to the song"⁹³ observed in school music lessons. Furthermore, they were

⁹³ The forementioned "School Music Songs" consisted of two formats: "existing songs with lyrics creation" or "song selections based on composed lyrics."

characterized by a period of artistic development that involved study, imitation, and even direct emulation of western compositional techniques. Certain selected Chinese melodies were adapted to incorporate European harmonies, and in some cases, foreign influences about compositional traditions were observed, facilitating the incorporation of Chinese and Western musical components.

Yuanren Zhao (1892-1982), a notable Chinese linguist, made significant contributions to the development of Chinese piano music in the early twentieth century. The initial musical compositions of Mr. Zhao did not pertain to the piano, but rather to the organ. The composition titled "The Flower Eight Panels and the Waves of the Xiangjiang River – 花八板与湘江娘,"⁹⁴ was his earliest known work in the field. This composition, originating in 1913, draws inspiration from the ancient folk melodies of China. Its inaugural performance took place in May 1914 at Cornell University in the United States. It marked the advent of the Enlightenment age in the creation of keyboard music within China.

The first piano composition of Zhao Yuanren, titled "Peace March – 和平进行曲," was published in the inaugural edition of Science Magazine in 1915.⁹⁵ This composition holds the distinction of being the first piano work by a Chinese composer to be formally published in China. Furthermore, it represents the pioneering effort of a Chinese composer in modern Chinese history, as it is the first piano piece for which a score is readily accessible.

⁹⁴ Li, Qin. A Study of the Development of Piano Music Culture in China and the West [中西方钢琴音乐文化发展研究]. Beijing: China Book Publishing House (2014): 90.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

The period spanning the 1920s and 1930s in the twentieth century witnessed a concerted effort within China to explore and cultivate various musical developments. This era also played a significant role in shaping the creation of piano compositions that embodied a distinct Chinese style. The prevailing features of piano composition during this era are the prevalence of European compositional techniques incorporates by aspects of Chinese national and folk music. Furthermore, in terms of structural composition, the influence of European piano music has not yet been entirely eradicated. The 1930s constituted a significant epoch in the historical trajectory of Chinese piano music. During that period, a significant influx of Chinese style piano compositions of a particular caliber emerged as a result of the "Call for Chinese Style Piano Pieces" prize competition conducted by Erpin Qi (1899-1977).⁹⁶ Furthermore, apart from his involvement in the prize competition, Mr. Qi personally composed piano pieces that incorporated a Chinese music style, such as *Five Concert Etudes in Chinese Styles* throughout the years 1934 to 1936 using folk melodies and imitating Chinese traditional instruments. This collection of compositions represents the oldest known examples of piano exercises in the Chinese style. The distinctiveness and artistic merit of this collection resides in its utilization of genuine folk melodies and the emulation of traditional Chinese instruments.

In the meantime, a collection of piano compositions emerged to complement art songs during 1920s and 1930s. The word "art song" has its origins in Europe and

⁹⁶ Erpin Qi, Russian composer, pianist, music educator, was originally named Alexander Tcherepnin. The name "Erpin Qi" was given to Mr. Qi after he came to China. Arriving in Shanghai in 1934, he met Dr. Xiao Youmei, the principal of the National College of New Music, and was hired as an honorary professor at the National Institute of Music. He trained outstanding composers and music educators such as Luting He, Shande Ding, and Xiaolin Tan, and provided selfless guidance and assistance to his students.

primarily denotes musical compositions including solo vocal performances accompanied by piano. The aforementioned musical composition can be characterized as a sophisticated artistic expression, wherein the elements of melody, lyrics, and piano accompaniment seamlessly converge to produce an integrated whole.

Within the realm of art songs, it is essential to recognize that the piano accompaniment holds a significant role, not merely as a supplementary element to the vocal performance, but rather as an indispensable component of the musical concept and artistic manifestation of the composition in conjunction with the act of singing. The musical structure of piano accompaniment in art songs exhibits a notable degree of independence.

The role of piano accompaniment in art songs has a distinct significance in terms of both musical structure and creative expression. Chinese art songs have their origins in the School Musical Songs and emerged during the early twentieth century, as a period of notable prosperity emerged. As a result, the art songs produced throughout the 1920s and 1930s exhibited a notable freshness in tonality, refinement in structure, aesthetic beauty in melodic composition, vividness in musical imagery, and were distinguished by their distinct ethnic influences and a profound reflection of the prevailing zeitgeist.

China experienced a sequence of armed conflicts from 1937 to 1949. During this particular era, the primary emphasis of the burgeoning music culture in China revolved around the production of artistic works that aimed to incite and mobilize large-scale social movements, as well as to facilitate widespread participation in communal singing activities. The piano compositions predominantly consisted of small and medium-sized works. The limited quantity of these compositions can be attributed to the fact that half of

the country was under enemy occupation resulting in a stagnation of literary and musical activities in the occupied regions. Consequently, music practitioners in the unaffected areas primarily dedicated their efforts to the song and folk music movement. The number of existing piano compositions were recorded, resulting in a cumulative total of almost 30 musical pieces.⁹⁷ In the present era, the composition of piano music exhibited a fusion of national and western stylistic elements, resulting in the emergence of numerous novel genres.

The establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 not only ushered in a new era of socialist construction, but also created a more expansive environment for the development of music composition. During this particular era, composers embarked on an exploration and utilization of the diverse and vibrant resources found within folk songs originating from various regions of China. Consequently, they crafted piano compositions that not only preserved the inherent simplicity and exuberance emblematic of Chinese national music, but also exhibited sophisticated and refined artistic qualities. The initial phase of the establishment of the People's Republic of China was a fruitful era for the development of Chinese piano music during which composers significantly elevated the standards of piano music creation in China.

In the initial seventeen years following the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Chinese composers diligently and proficiently engaged in the pursuit of "nationalizing" Chinese piano music and integrating Chinese musical elements with Western techniques. This endeavor resulted in the creation of a substantial body of

⁹⁷ Li, Qin. *A Study of the Development of Piano Music Culture in China and the West* [中西方钢琴音乐文化发展研究]. Beijing: China Book Publishing House (2014): 107.

exceptional compositions that possess a discernible nationalistic musical style.

Simultaneously, the emergence of new institutions facilitated the quick development of young composers, while also fostering a thriving environment for piano instruction and performance. The early surge in piano music development in China throughout the 1950s and 1960s can be attributed to a combination of favorable events.

The Cultural Revolution, spanning a decade (1966-1976), is widely regarded as a profoundly somber and tragic period in the annals of Chinese music. During this time, it was overshadowed by an onslaught of unjustifiable critique directed towards exceptional Chinese and foreign musicians and performers and their works. The concepts of "criticism" and "total denial" are two distinct approaches that can be employed when evaluating the music compositions. Additionally, there was a notable emphasis on promoting the "Model Opera or Revolutionary Opera—样板戏", which was characterized by excessive politic-promotion and lack of integrity.

The ten-year Cultural Revolution has had a profound and detrimental impact on China's music industry. Nevertheless, the realm of piano music composition remained far from dormant, as Chinese musicians persevered through many sorts of adversity. The successful preservation and progressive advancement of China's piano industry can be attributed to the courageous and wise engagements of individuals who adeptly navigated and contended with prevailing authorities. However, the Cultural Revolution period was the pinnacle of piano arrangement compositions. During this particular era, piano arrangement works can be classified into three primary categories.

The initial category consisted of piano music that was derived from the music of the "Model Operas", characterized by overt political themes, a focus on depiction and

narrative, and a reliance on external rendering. This type of music placed less emphasis on the portrayal of inner emotions, neglected the principles of instrumental art creation and artistic style, and possessed limited artistic merit.

The second category pertains to Chinese traditional instrumental music. These compositions have been derived from traditional instrumental music, such as string instruments (Erhu and Pipa) and wind instruments (Suona). In the process of adaptation, the composers diligently uphold the fundamental creative principles of instrumental music, while also inheriting the distinctive characteristics of traditional melodies. They engage in a profound exploration and expression of the ideological substance embedded within instrumental music, skillfully transforming it into piano compositions that exhibit exceptional performance qualities.

The third classification pertains to piano compositions that are either derived from folk tunes or original compositions inspired by such melodies. The piano adaptations discussed in this analysis primarily adhere to the fundamental structure of the original songs. Consequently, the creative freedom of the composers is considerably limited. Furthermore, these adaptations exhibit varied degrees of artistic merit, often reflecting the influence of the "Cultural Revolution" era. While the piano compositions in question predominantly consist of remixes and arrangements, their overall quality falls short of their potential due to a lack of proficiency in harnessing the piano's musical language and fully using its musical capabilities and inherent strengths.

Following the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution, numerous musicians and composers who had endured persecution and suppression during this period were afforded a renewed sense of vitality and the freedom to engage in unrestricted creative

pursuits. Piano music in China has entered a new phase of growth and advancement. Through this time period, the production of piano music was marked by several distinct features. Firstly, there was a notable emphasis on the establishment of a "Chinese style" as the guiding principle for piano compositions. Additionally, composers adopted a mindset centered around the pursuit of differentiation, novelty, and diversification. Lastly, there was a noticeable expansion and diversification of genres within piano music. Compositions started to focus on the diversification of genres, as well as the utilization of contemporary techniques in piano performance and notation.

In the book *A Study of the Development of Piano Music Culture in China and the West*, Li summarized that the piano compositions during this particular era predominantly encompass five distinct classifications.⁹⁸ Firstly, piano works that draw inspiration from traditional folk music, with a particular focus on the incorporation of sound elements that contribute to the expression of national identity. Secondly, artistic creations inspired by traditional Chinese music. The composition predominantly draws upon national tonalities and employs vibrant modal harmonies. Thirdly, piano works that have been developed with new techniques, including atonality, twelve-tone system, and creative composing approaches. Fourthly, piano compositions characterized by a substantial organizational framework, exemplified as piano concertos. Fifthly, piano duo compositions illustrating the "Chinese style".

Over the course of a century, Chinese composers have engaged in multifaceted research and produced diverse genres of piano compositions, contributing to the

⁹⁸ Li, Qin. *A Study of the Development of Piano Music Culture in China and the West* [中西方钢琴音乐文化发展研究]. Beijing: China Book Publishing House (2014): 124-125.

development of Chinese piano music. The initial category pertains to the creation of piano transcriptions. Transcription is a prominent approach utilized in the development of music. The term "musical transcription" pertains to the process of transplanting an original musical composition onto different instruments or transforming it into a different type of instrumental music. It also encompasses the artistic manipulation, elaboration, and arrangement of folk songs and other melodies into instrumental compositions. The piano is widely recognized and appreciated as a popular musical instrument. Due to its expansive tone range and diverse color palette, the piano possesses the capacity to effectively interpret a wide array of musical genres. Consequently, it is frequently employed in the context of arrangements, wherein the original composition or instrumental piece is preserved.

Hence, the utilization of the instrument frequently facilitates the generation of novel artistic creations while retaining the inherent integrity of preexisting songs or instrumental compositions. Composers have employed various techniques, including structural integration, harmonic superposition, timbre imitation, and rhythmic reproduction, to establish a musical lexicon that embodies both the distinct characteristics of the piano and the national identity, thereby allowing the piano's musical vocabulary to convey the stylistic essence of Chinese folk music.

The correlation between Chinese literature and art with music has been apparent since the Xia and Shang periods. The development of Chinese piano music was influenced in a subtle and intricate way by Chinese culture until the twentieth century. The focus of Chinese classical poetry, calligraphy, and painting is the composers' pursuit of aesthetic importance. The inclusion of the piano, a modern musical instrument, to

convey the core of classical poetry surely enhances its relevance through the sense of hearing, resulting in a fresh creative effect.

Chinese painting prioritizes numerous fundamental features. Firstly, the emphasis is placed on conceptualization, giving priority to the notion of using the vibrant watercolor. It emphasizes the principle of organization, disregarding fixed geographical and chronological boundaries in favor of a flexible approach that enables the transcendence of these constraints. This entails rearranging objects in different time and space settings, based on the artist's own feelings and the principles that govern artistic creativity.

Calligraphy is an exceptional representation of traditional Chinese art, characterized by its development into a unique form of art that is unmatched by any other writing system in the world. The artistic sophistication of Chinese calligraphy has persisted throughout a long and significant historical development. The brushwork has a crucial role in the aesthetic structure of calligraphy, functioning as the essential component that determines its shape. It functions as a crucial link between the calligrapher and the observer, simultaneously functioning as an essential instrument for artistic expression.

Folk songs retain great importance in the field of music. The folk song literature in China encompasses a wide range of genres, forms, and subjects that mirror its history, folklore, regional characters, and cultural traditions. Using components of folk songs in piano composition is a creative way to express cultural legacy.

The opera has a long and impressive history, characterized by the integration of various artistic forms in a standardized way, thus highlighting their uniqueness within a

common structure. The impact of opera music is clearly apparent in piano pieces, particularly through the integration of operatic idioms and the imitation of operatic vocal styles. Piano compositions also replicate traditional instruments to provide an exciting acoustic experience. Chinese traditional instruments can be classified into four separate groups according to their playing techniques: aerophones, chordophones, membranophones, and idiophones.

Music and dance involve the underlying psychological, physiological, physical, rhythmic, and expressive movements of the human body. Over the course of thousands of years, the ethnic minorities in China have gained acknowledgement for their remarkable talent in the fields of vocal performance and choreography. As a result, they have developed unique standards related to these forms of art, resulting in a wide range of singing and dance techniques. Piano works that are influenced by dance music demonstrate a captivating aesthetic liveliness, distinct rhythmic patterns, and melodic motifs that mirror rural characteristics.

In conclusion, Chinese composers have extensively explored different facets of Chinese culture, encompassing literature, paintings, calligraphy, folk songs, opera, dance music, and traditional Chinese instruments. Over the course of a century, composers have produced numerous outstanding compositions by blending Chinese cultural influences with the use of the piano. These pieces, spanning from beginning to advanced levels, integrate the principles of Western compositional techniques and traditional Chinese components, and are highly appreciated by students, amateur, and professional musicians.

CHAPTER 4: THE ANALYSIS OF PIANO REPERTOIRE

The piano, being a prominent component of Western musical culture, has facilitated the intermingling and amalgamation of Chinese and Western music within the realm of piano art throughout the past century since its introduction to China. Throughout China's cultural history, the preservation and advancement of its traditional music, as well as the assimilation and incorporation of foreign music and culture, have consistently played crucial roles in the growth and success of music and culture of China. Hence, the evolution of Chinese piano music consistently assimilates the quintessence of traditional music culture. Opera music holds a prominent position in China's traditional music culture, being regarded as a valuable asset with great artistic significance. Chinese composers have intentionally included opera elements into their piano pieces. The majority of these compositions are preliminary outlines or adaptations of Chinese opera, characterized by polished and prominent melodies, precise and succinct harmonies, vibrant ethnic elements, and a greater emphasis on the practicality of piano performance. As a result, they are readily embraced by a wide range of music enthusiasts and extensively employed in educational and professional settings. However, the significant aspect of these works is in the composers' ability to skillfully utilize the language of the piano to portray the latent national spirit and flavor found within traditional music heritage.

While some types of ancient operas from millennia ago have gradually been lost and it has become challenging to locate their scores and melodies, numerous operas have

been effectively preserved and subsequently adapted by musicians and composers for the piano. Piano music in China has effectively incorporated and employed the melodic patterns and melodies of Cantonese Opera, Beijing Opera, Yu Opera, Yue Opera, Hunan Flower Drum Opera, and other operas, resulting in the creation of a substantial collection of outstanding piano music pieces. As a result, a substantial number of exceptional piano music works, encompassing both educational and more advanced pieces, have been created. In this chapter, the author handpicks a total of nine piano compositions, each of the three representing a distinct opera genre in progressive difficulty. The purpose is to offer cultural insights, analyze the challenges within the pieces, and provide pedagogical recommendations specifically tailored for early-intermediate to advanced pianists. The author has chosen to focus on the three primary genres of opera that are widely popular in northern China: Beijing Opera (Beijing area), Yu Opera (Henan province), and Qinqiang Opera (Shaanxi province).



Figure 4.1 Map that shows Beijing, Shaanxi, and Henan

Beijing Opera

Beijing Opera Excerpt from “Suite of Chinese Local Operas”

Beijing Opera Excerpt is the first movement of “Suite of Chinese Local Operas”⁹⁹ by Xiaoyu Zhu.¹⁰⁰ This lively piece combines Beijing Opera tunes and long melodic phrases in a two-part contrast polyphony. The two primary phrases and two melodic themes are derived from the interludes and vocal performances of the Xipi and Erhuang. The initial theme exhibits the melodic attributes of the Xipi style found in Beijing Opera, whereas the subsequent theme vividly portrays the essence of the Erhuang style. These two diverse musical effects need the expression of contrasting emotions and timbres, which represent a notable quality (Figure 4.2).

The composer adeptly employs the technique of counterpoint to skillfully merge these two sections, imbuing them with the essence of diatonic polyphony (Figure 4.3). The two luminous and vibrant themes are performed with staccatos, delicately touching the keys with the front of the fingers, displaying elasticity and avoiding clumsiness. The performer should also envision the desired effect and color reminiscent of the three-stringed instruments that accompany the opera.

⁹⁹ “Suite of Chinese Local Operas” won the first prize of the First-year competition of the “Collection of Chinese Piano Works for Children and Youth” in 1991.

¹⁰⁰ Xiaoyu Zhu, born in 1971, enrolled in the Wuhan Music Conservatory in 1986 to pursue a bachelor’s degree in music composition. In 1994, Zhu completed the master’s degree in music at Henan University. Currently, Zhu holds the position of Deputy Director at the Cultural Center of Huangpu District in Guangzhou. The “Opera Suite” is a composition that was created while he was residing at the Wuhan Conservatory of Music. The suite includes three pieces: “Beijing Opera Excerpt,” “Shaanxi Opera Style,” and “Henan Opera Excerpt.” This suite effectively conveys the distinctive characteristics and musical elements of local operas.



Figure 4.2 Beijing Opera Excerpt, mm. 1-10



Figure 4.3 Beijing Opera Excerpt, mm. 11-20

The first two bars begin an instrumental-like introduction in the right hand, played in a staccato manner and repeated six times. It serves as an accompaniment line imitating the Huqin.¹⁰¹ The melodic voices appear twice in succession as legato phrases is rhythmically larger and plainer, in measures 4 - 8 (left hand) and 13 - 17 (right hand). The theme introduced in the fourth measure resembles a melodic line sung by the flower

¹⁰¹A major string accompanying instrument for Beijing Opera.

face character¹⁰² in Beijing Opera. It necessitates an adaptation of the singing style, with a slightly accented volume, floating above the accompanying line. The unfolding of the slow vocal line and fierce instrumental accompaniment evokes the characteristic commonly found in Beijing Opera's Yaoban.¹⁰³ In the soprano part of the singing theme, the 13th bar presents a contrast with the bass part, like the appearance of a flower girl's solo line. The performance criteria for this section are similar to those of Beijing Opera singing. Playing the tones of Beijing Opera on the piano is enjoyable, and the use of polyphony in the piece requires voicing and balance in performance.

The mode of this piece adapted the traditional pentatonic mode, F gong. Traditional Chinese music is commonly derived from five pentatonic modes. Each mode consists of five notes, known as Gong (宫), Shang (商), Jue (角), Zhi (徵), and Yu (羽) in Chinese. Each name denotes both the pitch and the modal system. The Gong and Zhi modes bear the closest resemblance to the Western major scale. The intervals between the tonic and the other pitches result in major seconds, thirds, and sixths.

¹⁰² Flower Face is a unique character of artistic representation that is irreplaceable by any other roles. Opera actors utilize a spectrum of facial make-up known as "opera make-up" to depict the character's personality, features, and other distinguishing traits. This involves the use of different colors to create certain patterns on their faces. In general, the color red symbolizes loyalty and bravery, black symbolizes ruggedness and integrity, while white symbolizes betrayal and malevolence.

¹⁰³ "Ban" is the rhythmic pattern in Beijing opera that contributes to the beat and overall musical structure. Yaoban, a distinctive type of Ban in Beijing Opera, is sometimes referred to as fierce playing and sluggish singing. It is a unique style specific to Beijing opera. It is distinguished by the melodic component of the unstructured beat of the flexible ban, supported by a precise rhythmic component resulting in two overlapping rhythmic sections. It also incorporates certain polyphonic components. The style possesses rhythmic attributes that enable the expression of both a peaceful and leisurely atmosphere, as well as intense emotions of tension and excitement.

The Gong and Zhi modes are typically used in the Xi Pi style. The Jue and Yu modes share similarities with the Western minor scale as their tonic and other pitches create minor thirds, sixths, and sevenths. These modes are frequently seen in the Er Huang style. Shang incorporates elements from both major and minor tonalities, encompassing major seconds and minor sevenths (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4 Chinese pentatonic modes¹⁰⁴

Overall, *Beijing Opera Excerpt* is a joyful piece for early-mid intermediate players, which illustrates a strong character of Beijing opera. This one-page piece in monothematic form may be considered a Level 4 in Magrath’s system and as Intermediate in Hinson and Roberts’ system.

¹⁰⁴ Gu, Shiqi. “The Influence of Chinese Culture, Nature, and Western Music in Pi Huang (1995) and Nature No. 1 (2019), Piano Solos by Zhao Zhang.” ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2020, 23.

Table 4.1 Overview of Beijing Opera Excerpt

<i>Beijing Opera Excerpt</i> from “Suite of Chinese Local Operas”	
Publication	The first volume from the collection “100 Years of Chinese Piano Music”, Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, 2015.
Duration	40”
Tonalities	F-gong pentatonic mode
Tempo	Andantino
Technical Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voicing and balancing for the polyphonic section • The switch of melody and accompaniment between left and right hands • Different articulations in two hands
Artistic Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representing different characters in Xipi and Erhuang styles • Sound imitation of the vocal and instrumental music • Express the range of dynamics from <i>p</i> to <i>mf</i>
Levels of Difficulties	Magrath: 4 GPR: I

No. 6 Willow Catkins from “The Splendors of Beijing Op.22”

Willow Catkins is the sixth movement of “The Splendors of Beijing Op.22”¹⁰⁵ by Xiaoyu Zhu.¹⁰⁶ This piece features a robust Beijing opera melody, characterized by a pleasing vocal melody. The composition is crafted exclusively using the pentatonic scale. The melodic voice portion in the right hand is in A Yu pentatonic mode, while the bass voice part maintains a constant D tone, resulting in an overall tonality of D. The prevailing tonality in the left hand is the D Shang pentatonic mode. D and A serve as the

¹⁰⁵ The Splendors of Beijing Op.22 comprises a series of piano miniatures composed by Wenye Jiang in 1938. The composer is profoundly influenced by Chinese traditional culture, and his investigation and incorporation of Chinese musical elements are comprehensive and thorough, resulting in a distinct national style. The 10 pieces exhibit a diverse and intricate harmonic vocabulary, with the incorporation of chordal and modal elements emphasizing the pentatonic nature. The use of chromaticism and composite modes further contribute to the contemporary temperament.

¹⁰⁶ Wenye Jiang (1910-1983), born in Taiwan. In 1923, he traveled to Japan with the purpose of further his studies. Due to his passion for music, he enrolled in supplementary classes on vocal music and fundamental music theory. Subsequently, he decided to shift his focus to music. In April 1938, Jiang Wenyi was recruited to return to Beijing as a music instructor. Starting in 1950, he served as a faculty member in the Composition Department at the Central Conservatory of Music until his demise in 1983.

fundamental tones of the composition, complemented by several instances of the embellishment and grace notes. This combination has resemblance to the Beijing Opera's characteristic style of fierce playing and sluggish singing as discussed in the previous piece (Figure 4.5). The piece's harmony and tonality accurately convey the essence of the opera style.



Figure 4.5 Willow Catkins, mm 1-3

Willow Catkins is inspired by the annual occurrence of willow waddles floating in the air as summer approaches in the northern area in China. The author portrays a scene of willow catkins soaring through the sky in this piece. It consists of 19 bars and is performed as a single monothematic section. The work is characterized by its prominent rhythmic variety. To enhance the flow of the melody and enable flexible changes in rhythm, the author employed dotted lines instead of solid lines when composing the bar lines with no time signature, resulting in a more relaxed and fluid structure. The song encapsulates the exuberant imagery of willow leaves gracefully moving through the air.

The composition follows a monothematic form, including three extended phrases: the first phrase (measures 1-5), the second phrase (measures 6-12), and the third phrase (measures 13-19). The initial segment of the composition spans from the beginning of the first measure to the conclusion of the fifth measure. Within this segment, the first and second measures respectively feature the first and second motives of the entire phrase. The melodic contour in the first measure descends, however in the second measure it

ascends, effectively depicting the imagery of willow catkins swaying in the wind, fluctuating in an upward and downward motion. Grace notes and triplets are employed to convey the nimbleness and agility of the willow. In the third measure, there are various rhythmic variations, including triplets, sixteenth notes, and thirty-second notes. These rhythmic elements effectively depict the image of the willow leaves twirling and swirling in the air due to the wind.

Beginning at measure 6, the second phrase involves further rhythmic intricacy, including triplets, quintuplets, and septuplets. In measure 10, the recurring C note and in measure 12, the recurring D note illustrates a progressive intensification of the shape, indicating the growing force of the wind on the willow (Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6 Willow Catkins, mm. 4-13

Starting from measure 13, the third phrase portrays the willow's flapping once more, and the piece concludes by restating the main theme, which mirrors the opening of the composition (Figure 4.7). Given that the left-hand melody consistently plays a steady bass note of D, the right-hand melody takes precedence over the left hand. Therefore, there is no concern about the pedal causing the right-hand melody to sound unclear or

muddled. The melodies replicate the sound produced by the Jinghu¹⁰⁷ instrument by utilizing a pianistic expression.



Figure 4.7 Willow Catkins, mm. 16-19

Overall, *Willow Catkins* is a charming piece for late intermediate players, which emphasizes the shaping of melody in the right hand with rhythmic intricacy. This piece may be considered a Level 6 in Magrath’s system and Moderately Difficult in Hinson and Roberts’ system.

Table 4.2 Overview of Willow Catkins

No. 6 Willow Catkins from The Splendors of Beijing Op.22	
Publication	Volume I from the collection “A Century of Piano Solo Works by Chinese Composers”, Shanghai Music Publishing House, 2015.
Duration	1’10”
Tonalities	A-Shang pentatonic mode
Tempo	Andantino pastorale
Technical Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhythmic variety • The skill to play embellishment and grace notes • The concise control of finger muscles for soft sound
Artistic Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaping the long phrases • Sound imitation of the instrumental music • Expressing the character of willow catkins through the dynamics <i>p</i> subtly • The use of pedal
Levels of Difficulties	Magrath: 6 GPR: M-D

¹⁰⁷ Jinghu, alternatively referred to as Huqin. The instrument is a conventional stringed instrument originating from China. It serves as the primary accompaniment for Beijing opera.

Pi Huang

Composer Zhao Zhang¹⁰⁸ authored the composition *Pi Huang* in 1995, which underwent multiple revisions before its finalization in 2014. *Pi Huang* won first place in the adult category of the "Palatino Awards" First Chinese Music Composition Competition in 2007.

Pi Huang displays a profound spirit for Beijing opera. The most illuminating rationale stems from its title. The title, *Pi Huang*, is drawn from the two predominant musical styles in Beijing Opera: Xi Pi, originating from the Shaanxi Province school of singing in Northwestern China, and Er Huang, originating from the Anhui Province school of singing in Southern China. Xi Pi is typically distinguished by its rapid tempo, vibrant melody, and predominant major key tonality. The overall mood evokes a sense of exhilaration, occasionally accompanied by feelings of unease and fury. The Er Huang style is characterized by its lyrical nature, leisurely pace, utilization of minor tonality, and draws inspiration from a whimsical and romantic sensibility. Zhang skillfully combined the divergent styles of Xi Pi and Er Huang to convey a vast range of emotions and dramatic elements in *Pi Huang*.

Meanwhile, *Pi Huang* includes the concept of Yin/Yang philosophy. Zhang mentioned, the fundamental principle of the work's evolution is derived from the classic

¹⁰⁸ Zhao Zhang, born in 1964 in Kunming, Yunnan Province, commenced his piano studies at the age of 7. In 1987, he obtained a dual degree in composition and piano from the Conservatory of Music of the Central University for Nationalities. Additionally, in 1998, he completed the master's degree in the Composition Department of the Central Conservatory of Music. Currently, he has the position of professor in the School of Music of the Central University for Nationalities. His repertoire encompasses symphonic compositions, compositions for traditional instruments, chamber music, dance dramas, and piano compositions.

Chinese philosophical notion of Yin and Yang, which states that "one is born from two, two is born from three, and three is born from all things."¹⁰⁹ Everything in this dualism is a reflection of the one, resulting in two complementary agents coming together in unity. The concept of Yin/Yang encompasses the principles of existence and the inherent nature of closely interconnected yet opposing elements. In Yin/Yang philosophy, Yin is commonly associated with attributes such as darkness, coldness, femininity, and negativity, whereas Yang symbolizes qualities like brightness, heat, masculinity, and positivity. Zhang suggested that music may accommodate the coexistence of two opposing yet interconnected elements. He connected the life force of music to the philosophical concept of Yin/Yang. Individually, these two contrasting musical forms can coexist, but when combined, they contribute to an elevated level of tension and release in music.

In addition, Zhang incorporates the tradition opera style, “Ban Qiang Ti” into this piece. “Ban Qiang Ti” is a specific structural style seen in Chinese opera and opera music. It is commonly referred to as the "form variation". Through the application of specific rules of variation, the opera then develops into diverse form styles. “Ban Qiang Ti” comprises multiple sections, each drawn from a fundamental topic and serving as a platform for growth and progress. The structure bears resemblance to the Western theme and variation form and showcases itself by incorporating seamless transitions between sections and eliminating any breaks in the performance. The form structure of the piece is shown in the table below (Table 4.3).

¹⁰⁹ Li, Mingqiang. *A Century of Piano Solo Works by Chinese Composers*, Vol. VI. Shanghai: Shanghai Music Publishing House, 2015, 264.

Table 4.3 The overall structure of Pi Huang

Sections	Dao Ban	Yuan Ban	Er Liu	Liu Shui	Kuai San Yan
English Translations	Introduction	Main theme	Introductory beats	Flowing water	Fast four beats
Italian Markings	<i>Rubato</i>	<i>Largo pacatamente</i>	<i>Allegro innocente</i>	<i>Allegro zeffiroso</i>	<i>Spirito</i>
Measures	1-7	8-25	26-51	52-67	68-88
Time signature	No time signature	2/4	2/4	2/4	4/8
Tempo	Rubato	Largo	Allegretto	Allegro	Vivace
Tonalities	E-flat gong	E-flat gong	B-flat zhi	A shang	E-flat gong
Opera styles	Introduction	Xi Pi	Xi Pi	Xi Pi	Xi Pi

Sections	Man Ban	Kuai Ban	Yao Ban	Duo Ban	Wei Sheng
English Translations	Slow	Fast	Rocking	Agitated	Coda
Italian Markings	<i>Lento a capriccio</i>	<i>Allegro decisivo</i>	<i>Vivace angoscioso</i>	<i>Presto sdegnoso</i>	<i>Andante brillante</i>
Measures	89-103	104-135	136-177	178-259	260-274
Time signature	2/4, 3/2, 5/2, 6/2, 2/2	2/4	No time signature	1/4, 4/4	2/4
Tempo	Lento	Allegro	Vivace	Presto	Andante
Tonalities	G-flat gong	A zhi	E flat zhi	D zhi	E gong
Opera styles	Er Huang	Xi Pi	Xi Pi	Xi Pi	Xi Pi

Zhang does not cite a particular melody from Beijing opera in Pi Huang. Instead, the piece is built upon fundamental melodic motives. Zhang states that the melody, harmony, and other features of the piece are permeated by the three tones G, B-flat, and C, which are extracted from the Yuan Ban (main theme section) and serve as the fundamental motives of the composition.¹¹⁰ The motive consists of three tones that

¹¹⁰ Li, Mingqiang. *A Century of Piano Solo Works by Chinese Composers, Vol. VI*. Shanghai: Shanghai Music Publishing House, 2015, 264.

represent minor third and major second intervals, which are the two primary intervals of the pentatonic scale. These tones do not represent specific pitches, but the interval relationship. Thematic motifs can be replicated in either an ascending or descending manner. The thematic motif permeates the melodic and harmonic progressions in diverse manifestations, serving as the central impetus of the composition and recurring theme, directing the entirety of the piece. It serves as the central element of the composition and directs the progression of the entire work.

Similar with *Beijing Opera Excerpt* and *Willow Catkins*, Pi Huang also shows the Beijing opera manner through the “fierce playing and sluggish singing” skill and the imitation of the sound of the accompanying instruments. In Er Liu Section (Figure 4.8), the grace notes imitate the sliding sound of Huqin, while the left-hand repeated B-flat imitate the beats of Bangu.¹¹¹



Figure 4.8 Pi Huang, mm. 26-35

In Kuai Ban (fast section, Figure 4.9) and Duo Ban (agitated section, Figure 4.10), the chords with accent markings echo the gong and drum sound in Beijing opera.

¹¹¹ Bangu, a percussion instrument, usually serves the conducting instrument that gives the fundamental beats of the music in Chinese opera bands.



Figure 4.9 Pi Huang, mm. 115-25

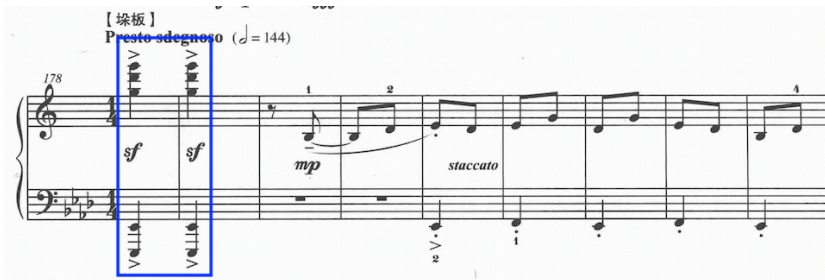


Figure 4.10 Pi Huang, mm. 178-86

In Yao Ban (rocking section, Figure 4.11), the sustained notes in the melodic line imitate the sluggish singing style in Beijing Opera, while the repeated eighth notes in the lower voice portion imitate the precise percussion rhythm of the Bangu.

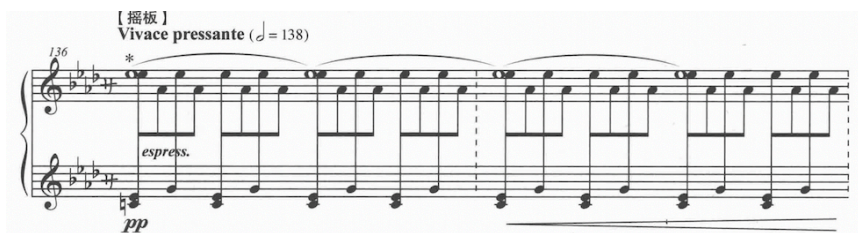


Figure 4.11 Pi Huang, mm. 136-37

Understanding the form and structure helps performers to express the different characters. Zhang uses the programmatic titles combined with distinctive compositional techniques. Through imitating the sounds produced by the accompanying instruments in Beijing opera, he creates an acoustic impression that mirrors the distinctive

characteristics of this operatic genre. This piece may be considered a Level 10 in Magrath’s system and Difficult in Hinson and Roberts’ system.

Table 4.4 Overview of Pi Huang

<i>Pi Huang</i>	
Publication	The first volume from the collection “100 Years of Chinese Piano Music”, Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, 2015.
Duration	6’10”
Tonalities	See table 4.13
Tempo	See table 4.13
Technical Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast running passages • Irregular accented weak beats • Irregular and changing time signatures • Mordent and grace notes
Artistic Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contrasting characters and musical forms in different sections • Sound imitation of the vocal and traditional instruments • The feel of timing and pulse • The use of pedal
Levels of Difficulties	Magrath: 10 GPR: D

Yu Opera

Henan Labeled Tune

Henan Labeled Tune is composed by Qifang Li¹¹² in 1969. The melody of the tune is derived from Yu (Henan province) local opera, and the composition is distinguished by a substantial use of repetitive notes and accent markings, showcasing the distinct features of the Henan dialect. This effectively portrays the straightforward and courageous nature of the Henan people.

¹¹² Qifang Li, born in 1937, received education at Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1949. In 1956, Li was chosen by the government to pursue studies at the Warsaw Conservatory of Music. Li became a soloist of the Central Orchestra in 1962 in China. In 1972, he commenced his career as a professor at the Central Conservatory of Music.

Regional and topographical factors have contributed to the development of various local languages, which in turn have greatly influenced Chinese piano music composition. The pitch, speed, and delineation of intonation have all played a crucial role in the music, exerting a direct and profound impact. The opening section of the piece employs creative techniques to clearly and imaginatively convey the distinctive features of the Henan local dialect, allowing the listener to grasp the origin of the music style. In *Henan Labeled Tune*, the opening section mimics the melodic quality of opera singing, allowing the listener to experience the distinct tonal characteristics of the Henan dialect. (Figure 4.12).



Figure 4.12 Henan Labeled Tune, mm. 1-4

The use of major and minor seconds is prevalent in Yu opera. Li applies major and minor intervals to create a humorous and joyful character (Figure 4.13 and 4.14).

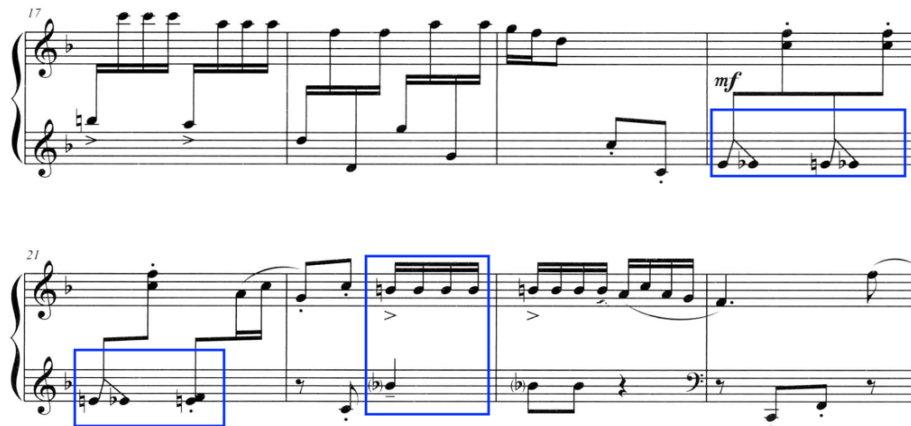


Figure 4.13 Henan Labeled Tune, mm. 17-24

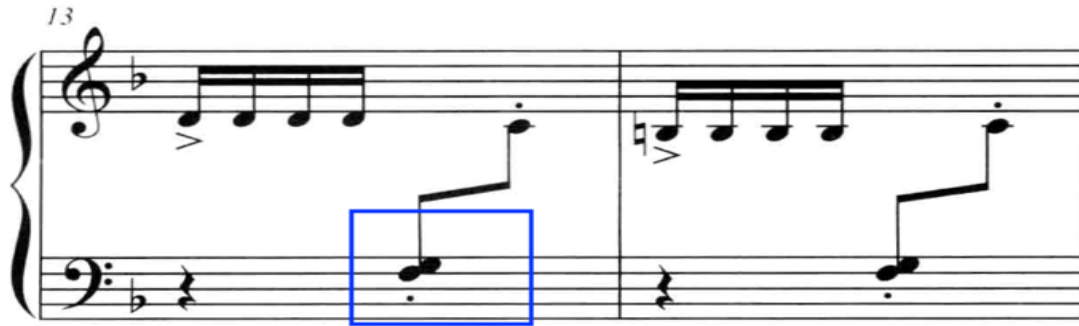


Figure 4.14 Henan Labeled Tune, mm. 13-14

Li adapts “Er Ba Ban” that is frequently employed in Yu Opera in this piece. The rhythm in Er Ba Ban consists of a repeated pattern of strong-weak two beats. In this piece, the time signature is 2/4, representing the pattern of strong-weak beats.

In addition, Er Ba Ban's upper and lower rhymes consist of eight boards (eight bars) each, thereby earning its name "Er ba Ban". As a result of ongoing evolution and invention in singing styles, the traditional two-eighths Ban is no longer being strict. There is no large interlude separating the upper and lower rhymes, but usually a small section of percussion instruments in conjunction with the entrances. In *Henan Labeled Tune*, the structure is clearly showing the feature of Er Ba with some minor revisions. The first five measures are the introduction. Then, the upper Ban states the melody in seven measures; the lower ban follows another seven measures. After two measures of interlude, the upper ban fully restates, and the adapted lower ban follows with a small coda.

Overall, *Henan Labeled Tune* is suitable for intermediate players with strong rhythmic pulse and humorous character. This piece may be considered a Level 5 in Magrath’s system and Intermediate in Hinson and Roberts’ system.

Table 4.5 Overview of Henan Labeled Tune

<i>Henan Labeled Tune</i>	
Publication	The third volume, Book 1 from the collection “100 Years of Chinese Piano Music”, Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, 2015.
Duration	50”
Tonalities	F major
Tempo	Moderato Gioioso
Technical Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The repeated 32nd notes • The repeated notes divided playing by two hands • The canon in upper Ban
Artistic Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accent markings • Shape the melody lines • The excitement creating by the touch
Levels of Difficulties	Magrath: 5 GPR: I

Henan Tunes

Henan Tunes was composed by Yi Chen¹¹³ in 1985. Chen combines Chinese and Western compositional approaches, while also preserving the unique attributes of Yu opera (Henan province). The title implies that this composition is related to Henan music and features a tune centered around a specific theme. The theme melody is derived from the song "Who says a woman is not as good as a man" from the famous Yu opera, Hua Mulan.

Figure 4.15 shows the numbered music notation of the introduction and the first two phrases of the song, which is a notation system commonly used in China. The numbers 1 to 7 correspond to the musical notes, specifically the scale degrees. They consistently align with the diatonic major scale. For note length aspects, the plain number corresponds to a quarter note. Each underscore symbolizes a reduction of note duration

¹¹³ Yi Chen, born in 1953, Chinese American composer and a member of the U.S. National Academy of Arts and Sciences.

by half: one underscore denotes an eighth note, two underscores denotes a sixteenth note, and so forth. Dashes following a note serve to extend its duration, with each dash equivalent to the length of a quarter note. Adding a dot after a plain or underlined note extends its length by 50%, while adding two dots expands it by 75%. The underline and its joining are comparable to the quantity of flags and beaming in standard notation. Dotted notes are also included.

Figure 4.15 Numbered music notation of "Who says a woman is not as good as a man"

Adding dots above or below a musical note alters its pitch to different octaves. The quantity of dots corresponds to the quantity of octaves. Regarding the rest, the numeral "0" symbolizes the absence of sound in music. The guidelines for length are akin to those of the note, with the exception that it is common to reiterate "0" instead of using dashes for rests that are longer than a quarter rest. Table 4.6 shows the guideline of the numbered music notation.

In *Henan Tunes*, the melody is restated multiple times to enhance the listener's acquaintance with the tune (Figure 4.16). Simultaneously, the western compositional technique is employed to craft ornamental embellishments, while the polyphonic technique is utilized in the B section to enhance the liveliness and playfulness of the melody, as well as to accentuate the tune. The polyphonic middle section enhances the

liveliness and playfulness of the song, while also accentuating the distinct features of Yu opera.

Table 4.6 Guideline of the numbered music notation

Musical Notes	Note: C D E F G A B		
	Solfege: do re mi fa sol la si		
	Notation: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
Note Length	Whole 1---	Half 1-	Quarter 1
	Eighth <u>1</u>	Sixteenth <u>1</u>	Dotted quarter 1•
	Double dotted 1••	Dotted half 1 --	Quarter rest 0
Octaves	1		
	• One octave lower		
	•		
	1 One octave higher		



Figure 4.16 Henan Tunes, mm.1-4

The composition is in ternary form characterized by a lively and brisk overall melody. The musical style evokes a rustic essence commonly associated with Yu opera music. The composition is primarily organized into three sections, A (measures 1-14), B (measures 15-30), and A1 (measures 31-41). The tonality is predominantly oriented upon the D-gong mode. The author's incorporation of additional notes into the D-gong system enhances the musical style by simulating the transition between parallel major and minor keys.

The use of second intervals also appears in this piece. The juxtaposition of the two distinct diatonic intervals creates a stark contrast, resulting in a dissonant acoustic effect. This quality aligns well with the qualities of Yu opera, which arose from operatic tunes and ditties. The major second intervals possess a more luminous and ethereal quality compared to the minor second intervals, which are characterized by a harsher and less vibrant sound. Comparatively, the major second intervals are more frequently employed in Yu opera music. Furthermore, there are also different harmonies where second intervals are overlaid above a fourth or sixth, which can be quite effective for conveying ethnic character and style (Figure 4.17 and 4.18).



Figure 4.17 Henan Tunes, mm. 15-16



Figure 4.18 Henan Tunes, mm. 19-20

Overall, *Henan Tunes* affords early advanced students the opportunity to explore an exemplary Yu opera style in ternary form. In addition to the irregular accent markings, students must navigate embellishments, shifting meter, and complexed rhythms. This piece may be considered a Level 7 in Magrath’s system and Moderately Difficult in Hinson and Roberts’ system.

Table 4.7 Overview of Henan Tunes

<i>Henan Tunes</i>	
Publication	The third volume, Book 1 from the collection “100 Years of Chinese Piano Music”, Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, 2015.
Duration	1’20”
Tonalities	G gong pentatonic mode
Tempo	Allegretto scherzando
Technical Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irregular accent markings on weak beats • Grace notes and embellishments • Fugal part in B section • Shifting meter
Artistic Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide range of dynamics • Contrasting characters and moods • The expression of short phrases • Balancing between hands
Levels of Difficulties	Magrath: 7 GPR: MD

Hundreds of Birds Singing to the Phoenix

Hundreds of Birds Singing to the Phoenix is a representative work composed by Jianzhong Wang¹¹⁴ in 1973. The piece incorporates and advances the distinctive national style elements of Chinese traditional music, as well as the Yu opera style. Wang replicates the vibrant and authentic melodies of birdsong by using pianistic techniques, enhancing the music's vitality and rendering it more enjoyable to the listener.

¹¹⁴ Wang Jianzhong, a prominent figure in China's music scene, is a highly renowned pianist, composer, and music educator. He was born in September 1933 in Shanghai.

Hundreds of Birds Singing to the Phoenix is a traditional suona¹¹⁵ composition that has gained widespread popularity in Henan Province and neighboring regions. According to legend, the phoenix (Feng Huang) is considered the king of all birds, with the female being specifically referred to as Feng and the male as Huang. During the arrival of spring, the location where the phoenix undergoes its feather transformation becomes a sacred site where birds from all orientations congregate and pay homage. The song portrays the melodic sounds of numerous birds, capturing the lively and joyful ambiance of the rural landscape, as well as the hopeful and cheery nature of the hardworking individuals.

The composition primarily draws on the melody of the main actress’s vocal part titled “Zhou Fenglian Sitting in the Palanquin” (Figure 4.19) from a famous Yu opera, “Tai Hua Jiao.” Originally performed with the suona as the primary instrument, the work maintains the pentatonic modulation of the E zhi pentatonic mode, which is widely employed in Yu Opera. The original melody of the composition is directly cited from the original work (Figure 4.20). The piano composition begins by directly including the original melody from the opera. This effectively captures the exuberant and vibrant aspects of the Yu opera, showcasing the opera's distinctive musical attributes.

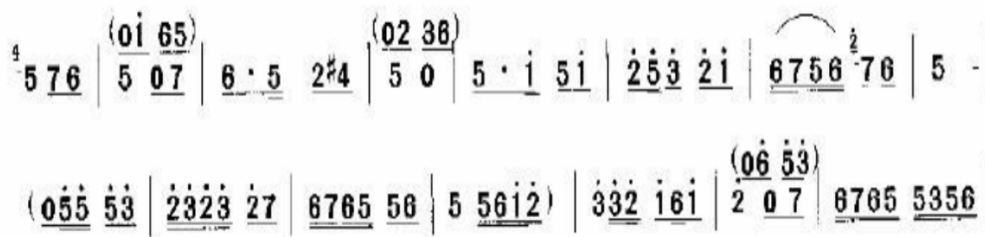


Figure 4.19 Numbered music notation of “Zhou Fenglian Sitting in the Palanquin”

¹¹⁵ Suona, also called laba, is a traditional double-reeded Chinese instrument.



Figure 4.20 Hundreds of Birds Singing to the Phoenix, mm. 1-10

The composition employs a significant number of ethnic chords in fourths and fifths to enhance the underlying appeal of the melody and to enhance the music with a more diverse range of local styles. Wang incorporates several minor seconds that are derived from the slurring and florid tonguing techniques of the suona instrument (Figure 4.21). This not only showcases the original style of the piece, but also emphasizes the timbre of the piano, reflecting the distinctive characteristics of nationalized piano music.



Figure 4.21 Hundreds of Birds Singing to the Phoenix, mm. 19-28

Overall, *Hundreds of Birds Singing to the Phoenix* provides advanced students the opportunity to explore a rondo form with introduction and coda in Yu opera style. In addition to the technical challenges, such as consecutive octaves and embellishments, students must navigate embellishments, voicing and balance, and complex rhythms. This piece may be considered a Level 10 in Magrath’s system and Difficult in Hinson and Roberts’ system.

Table 4.8 Overview of Hundreds of Birds Singing to the Phoenix

<i>Hundreds of Birds Singing to the Phoenix</i>	
Publication	The third volume, Book 2 from the collection “100 Years of Chinese Piano Music”, Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, 2015.
Duration	6’10”
Tonalities	E zhi pentatonic mode
Tempo	Moderato-Allegro Vivace-Prestissimo
Technical Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consecutive octaves • Grace notes and trills • Fast running 32nd notes • Chords in wide range of intervals and leaps
Artistic Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide range of dynamics • Contrasting characters and moods • Lyrical melodies • Voicing and balancing in the thick texture
Levels of Difficulties	Magrath: 10 GPR: D

Qinqiang Opera

Shaanxi Opera Style

Shaanxi Opera Style is the second piece of “Suite of Chinese Local Operas”¹¹⁶ by Xiaoyu Zhu.¹¹⁷ This piece has a smooth and brisk character that draws its theme from the traditional Qinqiang vocal style. Following four chords, the melody starts on the left

¹¹⁶ See footnote 99 in chapter 4.

¹¹⁷ See footnote 100 in chapter 4.

hand, and soon the second voice joins on the right hand, creating a polyphonic effect (Figure 4.22).



Figure 4.22 Shaanxi Opera Style, mm.27-38

Qinqiang is one of the oldest theaters in Northwest China, and it is considered one of the prominent examples of Chinese traditional music culture, characterized by its exceptional artistic and aesthetic qualities. Qinqiang music exhibits simplicity, ruggedness, audacity, and a heightened ambiance, setting it apart with its unique specific traits amidst several opera genres. Piano compositions including aspects of Qinqiang music utilize the artistic manner of Qinqiang singing. They imitate Qinqiang melodies, rhythms, timbres, and other characteristics, while showcasing the captivating allure of classic Chinese opera through the distinct instrumental language of the piano.

The early-intermediate piece, *Shaanxi Opera Style*, features a stepwise lyrical melody with occasional leaps in fourth intervals. The melody alternates between hands and requires careful phrasing (Figure 4.23). This piece may be considered a Level 3 in Magrath's system and Intermediate in Hinson and Roberts' system.



Figure 4.23 Shaanxi Opera Style, mm.45-56

Table 4.9 Overview of Shaanxi Opera Style

<i>Shaanxi Opera Style</i> from “Suite of Chinese Local Operas”	
Publication	The first volume from the collection “100 Years of Chinese Piano Music”, Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, 2015.
Duration	40”
Tonalities	C-zhi pentatonic mode
Tempo	Andantino
Technical Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shape the melody for lyricism • Intervals of fourth
Artistic Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melody shifting between hands • Express the range of dynamics from <i>p</i> to <i>f</i>
Levels of Difficulties	Magrath: 3 GPR: I

Melody of Yinyong

Melody of Yinyong, composed by Chun Long,¹¹⁸ is selected from his collection “Contemporary Piano Compositions for Children in Style of Traditional Chinese Opera and Quyi.” This collection is a compilation of piano compositions that draw inspiration from the characteristics of traditional opera, totaling 50 pieces in 24 types of opera. The

¹¹⁸ Chun Long, composer and piano educator, whose major works include “Contemporary Piano Compositions for Children in Style of Traditional Chinese Opera and Quyi.” This collection was specifically written for children and published in 2004.

author selects various musical elements from numerous operas and operatic songs and utilizes western composition theory to craft the music. Each composition incorporates the musical components of a specific opera, seamlessly blends with the musical and technical attributes of children and young musicians, selects innovative subjects, and conveys intricate musical imagery.

Yinyong is one of the vocal styles of Qinqiang opera. The melodic contour frequently exhibits leaps and prolongations near the conclusion of the sentence, and is commonly performed using a blend of natural and falsetto vocal registers.¹¹⁹ This composition aims to convey the audacity of the Qinqiang opera via piano performance. The composition is in ternary form (ABA). The melodic phrases consisting of 16th notes possess a gentle, exquisite, and melodious quality, combined with broken chord accompaniment in left hand (Figure 4.24).



Figure 4.24 Melody of Yinyong, mm. 1-2

In measures 3 and 4, the left hand plays a polyphonic pattern that is the reverse of the melody played by the right hand. The left-hand melody in measure 5 should be

¹¹⁹ Chun long, *Contemporary Piano Compositions for Children in Style of Traditional Chinese Opera and Quyi*. Beijing: China Federation of Literary and Art Circles Publishing House, 2004,123.

executed with fluidity and elegance. The accompaniment should execute the broken chord patterns with a delicate and subdued touch (Figure 4.25).



Figure 4.25 Melody of Yinyong, mm. 3-5

Commencing at measure 9, the complex rhythms present a different character, while being mindful of the distinction between articulated staccato and legato playing. The transitional sections in measures 14 and 15 have contrary motion with a crescendo in both hands. With the modulation to G major, the piece ends with a reduced tempo and diminished intensity, culminating in a feeble arpeggio chord.

Overall, *Melody of Yinyong* introduces the broken- chord-style accompaniment patterns in an expanded hand position, and lyrical melody in a long phrase. This two-page piece in ABA form with lyrical sections and an agitated middle section, different articulations between hands, makes this piece accessible to a student nearing the late-intermediate learning stage. This piece may be considered a Level 7 in Magrath’s system and Intermediate in Hinson and Roberts’ system.

Table 4.10 Overview of Melody of Yinyong

<i>Melody of Yinyong</i>	
Publication	Contemporary Piano Compositions for Children in Style of Traditional Chinese Opera and Quyi; China Federation of Literary and Art Circles Publishing House, 2004.
Duration	1'40"
Tonalities	C major to G major
Tempo	Moderato con moto affetta
Technical Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded broken chords • Consecutive left-hand staccatos
Artistic Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing of the melody and accompaniment • Express the range of dynamics from <i>ppp</i> to <i>f</i> • Tempo changes
Levels of Difficulties	Magrath: 7 GPR: I

Shaanxi Opera Theme Sonata—After Reading “the Most Touching Grieved Duo-E”

Shaanxi Opera Theme Sonata—After Reading “the Most Touching Grieved Duo-E” is a piano composition composed by Yuyan Rao¹²⁰ between in 1959. It is considered one of the composer's notable works that actively investigates and incorporates the traditional music elements from the Shaanxi (Qin) region. The title is based on the renowned Yuan period play called "Dou-E’s Grievance," authored by Hanqing Gan, a playwright from the same era. The play centers around Dou E, the main character, who endures a millennium of injustice.¹²¹ It exhibits the playwright's empathy and benevolence towards the impoverished laborers of that era, along with his condemnation of the oppressive feudal society. In this piece, Rao utilized the conventional Western

¹²⁰ Rao Yuyan (1933-2010) was a distinguished Chinese composer, music educator, and expert in polyphonic music. He was a faculty member of the Composition Department of Xi'an Conservatory of Music. Rao dedicated his life to uncovering the indigenous folk music of Shaanxi and produced a substantial body of exceptional musical compositions.

¹²¹ See footnote 64 in chapter 2.

sonata form, incorporating the distinctive pentatonic modes. Additionally, the composer drew inspiration from the melodies found in the renowned Qinqiang opera (Table 4.11).

Table 4.11 Overall structure of Shaanxi Opera Theme Sonata

Introduction	Exposition	Development	Connection	Recapitulation
1-59	60-244	245-491	491-544	545-683
Allegro furioso Largo	Andante Allegretto Moderato Allegretto leggiero Allegro drammatico Allargando	Presto agitato Allargando triste Allegro energico Allegretto leggiero Allegro con fuoco Allegretto dolente Allegro agitato Presto agitato Allargando e stretto	Largo Allegro furioso Allargando stretto	Allegro risoluto

The Qinqiang opera voice distinguishes itself from other forms of opera by its distinct utilization of two contrasting tones: the “joyful tone” (Huanyin) and the “bitter tone (Kuyin).” The “joyful tone” prominently features the third, fifth, and sixth notes in a scale, conveying a sense of optimism and progress. It is primarily used to depict a joyful and energetic mood, filled with passion. On the other hand, the "bitter tone" accentuates the fourth and seventh notes, primarily conveying a sense of sadness and grief. Additionally, it can evoke profound and gloomy moods, as well as a determined and upright impression of opera music. These two kinds of opera songs with diverse emotions enable the Qinqiang to communicate different thoughts and emotions and to construct a range of characters.

This piece has two themes derived from the Qin Opera Songs “Killing Daji” and “Opening the Cabinet Box.” The first theme of the exposition uses the Qinqiang bitter tune “Killing Daji” as the melody (Figure 4.26). The main theme is in measures 60-72,

and the melody is melancholic and sorrowful, with a gentle turn and low resonance (Figure 4.27).

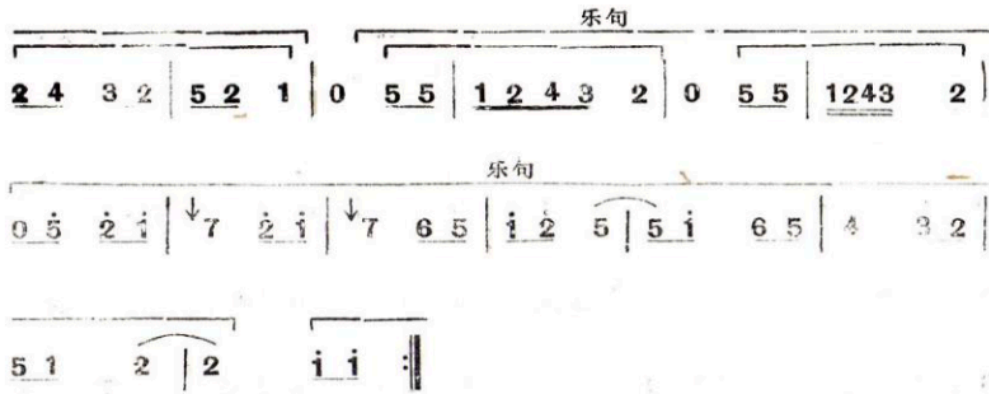


Figure 4.26 Numbered music notation of “Killing Daji”



Figure 4.27 Shaanxi Opera Theme Sonata, mm. 60-77

The second theme is derived from the tune of the song “Open the Cabinet” (Figure 4.28). The second theme is present in measures 159-175 and is in the B-zhi mode, which is characteristic of the melodic nature of the joyful tone (Figure 4.29). The piece's tonality primarily relies on the B-zhi mode, adhering to the prevalent practice in Qin Opera composing.

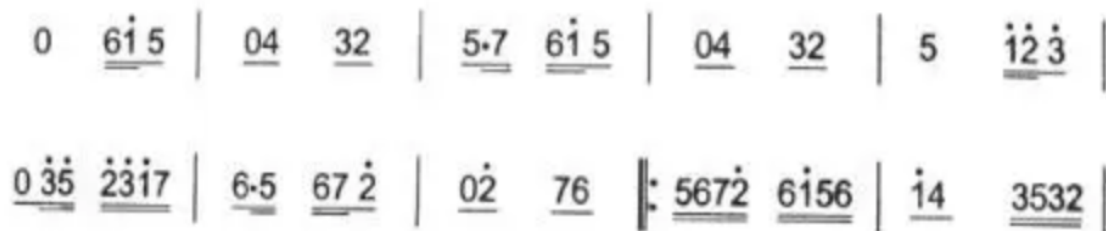


Figure 4.28 Numbered music notation of “Open the Cabinet”



Figure 4.29 Shaanxi Opera Theme Sonata, mm. 159-66

The joyful and bitter tones are used in the portrayal of different characters, and together they promote the development of the Qinqiang's drama and music. Rao firmly grasps this feature in this composition, using the “bitter tone” of “Killing Daji” as the main theme of the sonata, and using the “joyful tone” of “Opening the Cabinet Box” as the secondary theme. Throughout the layout of the work, the alternating fusion and cyclical development of the “joyful” and “bitter” tones are always maintained, and the strong dramatic contrasts between the two themes are used to promote the development of the music.

Rao has extensively explored the changing patterns of the Qinqiang's thematic tones. By carefully crafting polyphonic voices and distinct vocal lines, he has added depth and complexity to the music (Figure 4.30, 4.31, and 4.32). This technique

highlights the local elements within the overall composition. The result is a more nuanced and complete musical expression, effectively conveying the character of the story.



Figure 4.30 Shaanxi Opera Theme Sonata, mm. 60-77



Figure 4.31 Shaanxi Opera Theme Sonata, mm. 122-128



Figure 4.32 Shaanxi Opera Theme Sonata, mm. 303-314

Overall, in *Shaanxi Opera Theme Sonata—After Reading “the Most Touching Grieved Duo-E,”* students can both explore a Qinqiang opera-based sonata and polyphonic textures, as well as encounter metric and technical challenges of changing

meter, complexed rhythms, chords with wide range, and consecutive octave passages.

Due to the length and technique required, this piece may be considered an “over-Level 10” in Magrath’s system and Difficult in Hinson and Roberts’ system.

Table 4.12 Overview of Shaanxi Opera Theme Sonata

<i>Shaanxi Opera Theme Sonata—After Reading “the Most Touching Grieved Duo-E”</i>	
Publication	Rao Yuyan Selected Works For The Piano, Shanghai Music Publishing House, 2013.
Duration	17’30”
Tonalities	B zhi pentatonic mode
Tempo	See Table 4.29
Technical Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consecutive octaves • long trills • complexed rhythms • Chords in wide range of intervals and leaps • Fugal sections
Artistic Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide range of dynamics from <i>pp</i> to <i>ffff</i> • Changing meters • Voicing skills • Thematic development • The use of pedal
Levels of Difficulties	Magrath: 10+ GPR: D

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY, AND CONCLUSION

Summary

Chinese opera is a multifaceted art form that combines various types of arts. It is known for its ability to blend different elements, its visual appeal, its ability to create virtual experiences, and its structured nature. Chinese opera is considered the most distinctive and representative art form of traditional Chinese music culture, and it holds great significance as a valuable artistic treasure of the Chinese nation. Chinese opera is a venerable and comprehensive form of traditional national art that encompasses literature, dance, music, and visual arts. Over the course of more than eight centuries, a diverse range of opera styles has emerged. Opera music has been a significant component of opera since ancient times. Records of opera music in China date back to the Qin and Han dynasties. Over time, it became intertwined with dynasties of Sui and Tang miscellaneous operas, and later evolved into Zaju operas during the Northern Song Dynasty. Subsequently, it reached a mature stage during the Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties, resulting in opera music with profound meanings that incorporated the distinctive features of successive dramas.

Through the intermingling and convergence of Chinese and Western cultures, the piano, originating from Western musical traditions, has undergone a challenging journey spanning over a century, propelled by the relentless efforts of many generations of

Chinese artists. Chinese composers have been actively incorporating diverse elements of traditional music from various regions of China into their piano compositions as part of the nationalization process of Chinese piano music.

In the realm of Chinese piano music composition, composers and pianists have been diligently pursuing an ideal fusion of structure and substance. They employ the piano as an exotic instrument to convey the essence of Chinese musical style, so encapsulating the national character inside piano compositions. Through the examinations of nine piano compositions inspired by northern Chinese operas, the analysis reveals that artists primarily integrate operatic aspects by employing traditional tonality, form and structure, melodic references, and imitation of accompanying instruments.

The tonality and mode exhibit distinct styles and qualities of harmonic language. Chinese piano music has been dedicated to establishing a distinct Chinese national identity for over a century. The majority of piano compositions incorporating opera elements utilize the Chinese pentatonic mode. Composers daringly endeavor to align the pentatonic melody with harmony by incorporating unconventional chords that deviate from the Western triadic tradition, such as fourth and fifth chords, as well as diatonic chords. This approach creates a Chinese-style harmony that significantly diminishes the functionality of traditional Western harmony, while enhancing the richness and vibrancy of the overall harmonic structure. Moreover, this approach harmoniously complements the pentatonic nature of the melody.

Chinese opera music is characterized by two prevalent patterns: the “ban-qiang-ti variation” and the “labeled-tune combination.” These structures have significantly

impacted the composition of Chinese piano music. The ban-qiang-ti variation” can be categorized into many varieties, namely one-eye ban (consisting of one strong beat followed by one weak beat), three-eyed ban (consisting of one strong beat followed by three weak beats) and ban without eyes (consisting of just strong beats). By organizing the different ban in a specific arrangement, an opera-like framework is created. The organization of the different ban in a certain pattern result in the formation of a distinct style of opera singing, usually including the tempo and meter changes. The second category, known as “labeled-tune combination,” typically consists of multiple fixed melodies with distinct characteristics. Each tune is preceded by a predetermined name, referred to as a "Qupai." This practice is observed in Kun Opera as well as in the historical Song and Yuan "Zaju" operas. The labeled tune combination typically comprises one or two labeled tunes within a cycle, and the music created in this framework is more majestic, capable of depicting both the characters and the plot of the opera.

The direct references of vocal and instrumental melodies also have a substantial role in piano compositions. Singing serves as the primary means of immediately conveying the emotions and depicting the characters in opera music. Additionally, it plays a crucial role in defining the distinctive attributes of a particular opera style. The predominant style of singing is primarily solo, but there are occasional duets (used for responsive purposes) and unison singing (employed for large-scale situations). These contrasting forms of singing offer distinct artistic effects in terms of loudness, timbre, and musical character.

Additionally, the instrumental accompaniment in opera music serves a crucial role by initiating, sustaining, assisting, and supporting the singing and overall performance. The function of accompaniment music is to initiate, convey, assist, and bolster. In the context of a play, the instrumental section is responsible for initiating the singing and setting the tone and rhythm for the actors, serving as a bridge between the singing portions of the play, and helping to transition between different sections. Moreover, it assists the singers in expressing their emotions, filling in the musical gaps in the singing and recitation, and ensuring the richness in musicality. Furthermore, the instrumental accompaniment of opera is intricately linked to dance and martial arts, as it governs the overall melodic tempo and enhances the dramatic ambiance. In piano compositions, composers frequently incorporate well-known vocal or instrumental accompaniment parts as the central theme of the piece, and present it directly in the form of the programmatic music.

The piano is a highly effective means of imitating Chinese traditional instruments. Chinese opera ensembles consist of several musical instruments, including string instruments like jinghu and banhu, wind instruments like suona, and percussion instruments like gong and bangu. Composers imitate the diverse instrumental sounds of the opera orchestra by examining the rhythms, registers, articulations, and textures of the piano, resulting in a remarkable and vibrant auditory experience.

The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive and informative resource on Chinese piano literature that incorporates opera elements to aid teachers in the education. It includes a history of the history of Chinese opera, the cultural insights, analysis of pieces and pedagogical suggestions. The pieces listed in progressive

difficulties provide teachers to prepare early-intermediate to advanced students who are interested in exotic compositions. This resource aims to assist teachers in implementing pedagogy based on well-informed practices with their students, and to assist students in acquiring the skills and knowledge required to proficiently perform piano works that integrate Chinese operatic elements.

This study examines stylistic and pedagogical analysis of piano compositions that incorporates three of the most emblematic northern operas, Beijing Opera, Yu Opera, and Qinqiang Opera. During research, several gaps were filled, which include giving two leveling systems for piano literature, listing pieces in progressive difficulties for early-intermediate to advanced players, cultural insight and history background of the opera development.

Suggestions for further study

1. An analysis of piano works that incorporates opera elements derived from southern China, such as Cantonese opera, Yue opera, and Sichuan Opera
2. A comprehensive research of all Chinese opera-related piano works, including annotations for all levels
3. A detailed research focusing on a specific opera type, listing all the related piano works with leveling systems
4. A comparative research for western and Chinese piano compositions that influence by opera elements

Conclusion

Currently, piano instructors possess the capacity to effortlessly incorporate music from non-Western cultures into their lessons. The operatic pieces integrated in

performance provide a compelling portrayal of Chinese culture, offering students a chance to immerse themselves in a diverse musical journey. Students can encounter both the technical and musical difficulties of these compositions within situations that are suitable for their skill level. Additionally, they can also enjoy the pleasure of learning at every point of their studies. Therefore, it is desired that teachers will continue seeking to keep discovering pieces containing Chinese operatic components to offer their pupils a diverse and inclusive experience in the learning process.

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APPENDIX A: LIST OF PIECES SELECTED IN CHAPTER 4

The composers, titles, and collections (if applicable) of the compositions discussed in Chapter 4 are detailed in the subsequent enumeration. The repertoire is presented in a progressive order of complexity.

Beijing Opera

- Zhu, Xiaoyu, Beijing Opera Excerpt from “Suite of Chinese Local Operas,” *100 Years of Chinese Piano Music, Volume 1*
- Jiang, Wenye, No. 6 Willow Catkins from “The Splendors of Beijing Op.22,” *A Century of Piano Solo Works by Chinese Composers, Volume 1*
- Zhang, Zhao, Pi Huang, *100 Years of Chinese Piano Music, Volume 1*

Yu Opera

- Li, Qifang, Henan Labeled Tune, *100 Years of Chinese Piano Music, Volume 3, Book 1*
- Chen, Yi, Henan Tunes, *100 Years of Chinese Piano Music, Volume 3, Book 1*
- Wang, Jianzhong, Hundreds of Birds Singing to the Phoenix, *100 Years of Chinese Piano Music, Volume 3, Book 2*

Qinqiang Opera

- Zhu, Xiaoyu, Shaanxi Opera Style from “Suite of Chinese Local Operas,” *100 Years of Chinese Piano Music, Volume 1*

- Chun, Long, Melody of Yinyong, *Contemporary Piano Compositions for Children in Style of Traditional Chinese Opera and Quyi*
- Rao, Yuyan, Shaanxi Opera Theme Sonata—After Reading “the Most Touching Grieved Duo-E,” *Rao Yuyan Selected Works For The Piano*