

The North Suite

A Recording Project of Commissioned Work for Solo Cello by Yunfei Li

by

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## ABSTRACT

This recording project aims to enrich the expanding repertoire of contemporary compositions for the cello, particularly those designed for solo cello. *The North Suite* consists of three movements: The Crescent Moon at Midnight, Silkroad, and Shaanxi. Each movement represents different regions with its indigenous music style. Composer Yunfei utilizes extended techniques to evoke the nuances of Chinese folk music skillfully transposed onto the cello. The recording project encompasses two primary components: a recording of the work and a comprehensive written document. This document provides readers with a historical overview, contextual background, and in-depth analysis of each movement. In addition, the original score will be included in the end. By undertaking this recording project, I aim to contribute to the contemporary cello repertoire and foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the cultural diversity inherent in music. Through the fusion of tradition and innovation, I aspire to create an immersive musical experience that resonates with audiences worldwide.

## DEDICATION

To my Mom, Dad, Elder Brother,

Thanks for your immersive and unconditional support and love!

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Words cannot express my gratitude to my Professor Tom Landschoot for his exceptional mentorship, and his invaluable support throughout this journey. His guidance has been instrumental in shaping my academic and personal growth. I also could not have undertaken this journey without my defense committee Professor Solis, and Prof. Rotaru who generously provided knowledge and expertise. I am honored to have you as members of my committee.

Furthermore, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Prof. Yi Chen who introduced me to one of her outstanding students, Yunfei Li. Yunfei's gracious sharing of her fantastic original work with me has been invaluable. I am deeply grateful for her collaboration in composing this solo work for me and for her significant contribution to the cello repertoire. The opportunity to connect with Professor Yi Chen and Yunfei has been truly appreciated.

Lastly, I wish to acknowledge President's Professor Ian Moulton from the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts for generously dedicating his time to proofread my dissertation. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my dear colleague, Jane Soh, for her assistance in proofreading my paper. I sincerely appreciate both of your time and support.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND BIOGRAPHY OF YUNFEI LI

#### **Introduction:**

I've always yearned to perform a never-been-played contemporary piece for cello by a female composer because I have been focused on mastering more traditional and well-known cello repertoire before branching out to explore contemporary works by lesser-known composers. Another reason is that as awareness grows about the importance of promoting works by underrepresented composers, including women, my interest in performing pieces by female composers has also increased. I aim to contribute to greater gender diversity in classical music programming by showcasing the compositions of women composers. Choosing this recording project not only fulfills a graduation requirement but also presents an ideal opportunity for me to commission a female composer to create a contemporary solo cello piece. Therefore, the goal of doing so is to support female composers and contemporary music, in addition to helping to broaden the cello repertoire.

In the evolution of the cello, it was most frequently used as an accompaniment in the late 17th and early 18th centuries<sup>1</sup>. While Beethoven composed five cello sonatas, Boccherini composed eleven cello concertos, and Haydn produced his two well-known cello concertos, J.S Bach left future generations with his heritage of six cello solo suites. Cello compositions were less prolific than those of the more popular musical instruments

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Bonta, Suzanne Wijsman, Margaret Campbell, Barry Kornfeld, and Anthony Barnett. "Violoncello." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 7 Feb. 2023. <https://doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.44041>.

like the piano or violin. Since the Romantic era, which lasted from the 19th century onward, the cello has gained popularity as a solo instrument.<sup>2</sup> Repertoire since that time includes the cello concertos by Dvorak, Schumann, Elgar, and Tchaikovsky's rococo variation, among others. The composers tried to use advanced techniques to investigate the instrument's full potential. The cello repertoire has reached its peak maturity and popularity in the 20th century. For the cello, a broad range of genres has produced works such as Kodaly's solo sonata, Cassadó's solo cello suite, Legiti's solo sonata, Barber's cello concerto, and many more. Even though there are an increasing number of cello compositions from previous eras, there are fewer female composers represented in the list of cello works than there are male composers.

The history of female cello compositions can be traced back to around 1815 when German female composer Helene Liebmann<sup>3</sup> wrote the first cello work, *Grand Sonata, op. 11, for piano and cello*. The first solo cello suites written by female composers were not published until 2003. Among the female composers in history, Francesca Caccini was the first female opera composer during the Baroque era, and Fanny Mendelssohn and Clara Schumann significantly contributed to classical music in Romantic era.<sup>4</sup> However, despite their contributions, female composers have been overlooked and underrepresented in classical music in the past centuries due to the issues of gender bias,

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "Cello Works by Women Composers," CelloBello, March 8, 2022, <https://www.cellobello.org/cello-works-by-women-composers/>.

<sup>4</sup> "The Best Female Composers of All Time," Classical Music, accessed March 26, 2024, <https://www.classical-music.com/composers/most-famous-female-composers/>.

social expectations, and limited opportunities for education and recognition.<sup>5</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, female composers have continued to gain recognition, though the progress of equality in classical music composition remains an ongoing challenge. Female composers' import in classical music is undeniable, and their works inspire and delight audiences worldwide.

I based my idea on three conditions: solo cello, new music, and music written by a female composer. I was lucky to have found a great young rising composer, Yunfei Li. She is also a DMA student, currently studying under the tutelage of Prof. Yi Chen, one of the 20th-century leading, well-known female composers at UMKC. After discussing my intention with the composer, we decided that we both wanted to have a piece representing the north of China because the composer and I were both born and grew up in northern China. With this idea in, the composer named this piece *the North Suite*. This composition consists of three movements. The music involves applying Western compositional techniques to indigenous music from three regions or cultures. The composer names each movement after her hometown and mine. Except for the extra movement, which is neither of our hometowns but has a special connection with my hometown Xi'an, Shaanxi, during the Silk Road period. It is also located in the north of China. Upon my request, the composer added this movement into the structure of the three movements suite. The audience will experience a wide range of cultural differences.

### **Biography of Yunfei Li**

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<sup>5</sup> The recognition of female composers Matthew Scott ..., accessed March 26, 2024, <https://digitalshowcase.lynchburg.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=agora>.

Yunfei Li<sup>6</sup> is a Chinese female composer and violinist based in Kansas City, MO. She started to study violin at the age of 6. She went to preparatory school at Shenyang Conservatory of Music, where she developed her interest in composition. With the continuation of her music studies, her teacher referred her to study at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. Since then, she began to learn composition, majoring in electronic music production, which taught her a wide range of genres such as writing pop music, world music, film music, etc. She has won a composition prize at the MUSICACOUSTICA-Beijing International Electronic Music Composition Competition.

After graduating in China, she decided to pursue a higher degree in traditional composition, and she wanted to create new music with a solid systematical foundation. Yunfei's music style is expansive. Not only is she inspired by modern music styles such as pop music, film music, and electroacoustic music, which she was influenced by through her undergraduate studies, but she is also inspired by the sounds of nature. Her music explores new sounds on the instrument as well as music software. By learning traditional composition techniques, she can express her desired sound and present any form of music. Yunfei received her master's degree at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and studied with Mark Engebretson, Alejandro Ruty, and Lisa Bielawa. During her master's studies, she received numerous awards, including the Denver International Electronic Music Composition Competition. Never giving up on learning, Yunfei advanced her studies and continued her passion for music composition. Currently, she is a doctoral candidate in music composition at the University of Missouri-Kansas

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<sup>6</sup> "About." COMPOSER. Accessed March 26, 2024. <https://www.yunfeilimusic.com/about>.

City. Chen Yi, Zhou Long, Yotam Haber, and Paul Rudy are her mentors and teachers. Prof. Chen Yi<sup>7</sup> is widely recognized as one of the leading composers of the 20th century. She was a recipient of the Charles Ives Living Award, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Chinese National Composition Competition, fellowships from the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and American Academy of Arts and Letters, grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and many other organizations. Her works were performed by numerous prestigious orchestras, such as the Seattle Symphony Orchestra and Cleveland Orchestra, and her cello concerto was written for the famous cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Chen Yi's music greatly impacted many Chinese composers. Her music has its originality that incorporates the elements of Chinese folk music by utilizing Western compositional techniques.

During Yingfei's studies in the States, her music was performed in many places, including national and international festivals and conferences. Venues include the New Hong Kong Philharmonia, the University of Michigan Wind Ensemble, the Manhattan School of Music, and the Greensboro Symphony Orchestra. News & Record in North Carolina, KCUR 89.3, and Johnson County Library in Kansas have also featured her music.

Her recent commissioned piece, *Five Elements* (2021), was made by grant funding from the UMKC Woman's Council and the support of 42 consortium members across North America. It was premiered by the University of Missouri-Kansas City

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<sup>7</sup> "Chen Yi Biography," *musicianguide*, n.d., <https://musicianguide.com/biographies/1608004338/Chen-Yi.html>.

Conservatory Wind Symphony in 2021. The part of the program notes is shown below from Yunfei Li<sup>8</sup>:

Dating back to over 5,000 years ago, the I Ching tells readers the stories of nature's patterns through time. If we take a moment to observe the connections between Fire, Earth, Metal, Water, and Wood, we can begin to understand the importance of those Five Elements. Within the Five Elements theory, one thing is clear: these five fundamental materials shape the universal framework of our world. Even more importantly, the Five Elements are constantly in motion and counterbalance. Earth captures Water, which extinguishes Fire; Fire molds and manipulates Metal, which cuts through Wood. Naturally, wood plants root in the earth, and the cycle continues. These cycles can take many shapes: Wood can feed Fire, while Fire prepares the Earth. Earth cultivates Metal, and Metal holds Water, which nourishes Wood. At times, when one or more elements grow stronger than the other, the cycle is tripped, and the balance is lost. What does one do to regain it?

The composer's *Five Elements Theory* reflects her concern for natural resources, including climate change, pollution, and living and environmental sustainability. She states that there is tension between nature and humans. Yunfei metaphorically expressed the idea of the five elements theory as the balance between humans and nature regarding sustainable living. *Five elements* were ingeniously devised using pitch sets, pentatonic scales, the circle of fifths, and juxtaposed rhythms.<sup>9</sup>

At present, Yunfei has been invited as an artist resident at Uncross Foundation. She has many commission requests.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Andypease, "Five Elements by Yunfei Li," wind band literature, n.d., <https://windliterature.org/2022/05/15/five-elements-by-yunfei-li/>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> "About," COMPOSER, accessed March 26, 2024, <https://www.yunfeilimusic.com/about>.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CRESCENT MOON AT MIDNIGHT

#### **A Brief History of Northeast Folksong**

As a general geographical concept, the Northeast region primarily refers to the eastern part of the three northeastern provinces (Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning) and the eastern part of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, where there are significant populations of Manchu, Korean, Mongolian, and other ethnicities. Through long-term lifestyle integration and cultural exchange, a multi-ethnic fusion has shaped the distinctive cultural characteristics of Northeast China. The customs, history, and ethnic diversity of the region heavily influence northeastern folk music.<sup>11</sup>

The countryside of Northeast China is known for its rural folk music traditions, which often revolve around agricultural and pastoral life. Farmers and herders create songs and instrumental music that reflect their daily routines, traditions, and stories. Rural folk songs played a crucial role in the culture and have been handed down verbally from one generation to the next.<sup>12</sup> Many Han Chinese immigrants arrived in the region known as *Chuang Guandong*<sup>13</sup> during the late 18th century through early 20th century, to seek a way out of poverty and a better life. In addition, since the founding of the People's Republic of China, a significant number of socialist builders have entered

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<sup>11</sup> Liu Jieping. "On a Artist Creation Characterisitcs and Singing Characteristics of Northeast Folk Songs" *赤峰学院学报(汉文哲学社会科学版)* 44.04(2023):42-45.  
doi:10.13398/j.cnki.issn1673-2596.2023.04.020. (All translations from Chinese are my own unless otherwise indicated.)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Laurent Chircop-Reyes. "What It Takes To Be A Caravaneer? The Art of Moving Across Loess and Steppes (18th-20th)." *GIS ASIE* (2021).

the northeast to build old industrial bases and develop the northern Great Northern Wilderness,<sup>14</sup> which was a vast, sparsely populated, and underdeveloped region in the northeastern part of China, primarily in Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Inner Mongolia, historically known for its inhospitable and harsh conditions. This region has been the focus of various development and reclamation efforts in China's history, especially during the mid-20th century when it was targeted for large-scale agricultural development.<sup>15</sup> Influenced by the vast expanse of the Northeastern region, its sparse population, language, lifestyle, customs and human relationships, social history, the characteristics of the people in the Northeast reflect a hearty and unrestrained temperament; this intrinsic aspect of human nature is well displayed in the rural folk songs which are imbued with regional solid flavors. Lively and exuberant melodies characterize them, but they also have a humorous and witty quality.<sup>16</sup>

Rural folk music is generally in the minor mode. The minor third interval is often used, with a typical 2/4-time or 4/4-time signature, sung in a high pitch with a bright sound. It has a vigorous melody with a regular rhythm. Lyrics are improvisatory, with material drawn from nature and daily life, which brings a vivid imagery into the music.

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<sup>14</sup> Tin, Tina, and River Yang. "Tracing the contours of wilderness in the Chinese mind." *International Journal of Wilderness* 22, no. 2 (2016): 35-40.

<sup>15</sup> Jieping Liu. "On a Artist Creation Characterisitcs and Singing Characteristics of Northeast Folk Songs" *赤峰学院学报(汉文哲学社会科学版)* 44.04(2023):42-45.  
doi:10.13398/j.cnki.issn1673-2596.2023.04.020.

<sup>16</sup> 陈智. "东北民歌中蕴含的色彩元素分析." *艺术研究* .04(2022):96-98.  
doi:10.13944/j.cnki.ysyj.2022.0214.

The music is an apt portrayal of the cheerful, pleasant, and full-of-life demeanor of the northeastern people.<sup>17</sup>

One such representative work is “*the crescent moon at midnight* (月牙五更).”

This historic and ancient folk song is characterized by simple, lively, and unrestrained melodies, possessing a strong sense of populism and a straightforward, easily accessible quality—something not often the case in musical art.<sup>18</sup> In ancient Chinese times, *Geng* meant a specific time of the day; according to the article “A Chinese time ontology for the Semantic Web,” the authors explain that the *Five Geng* divisions started from 7 pm to 5 am. Each *Geng* is two hours long. The table shows as below:<sup>19</sup>

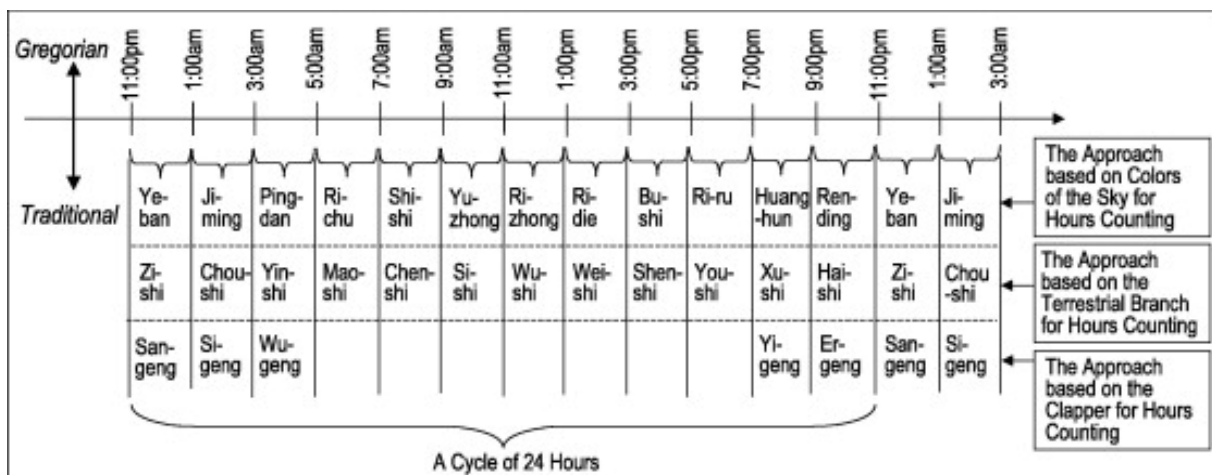


Figure 1: “Hour’s Representation”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> 滕瑶. “浅析东北民歌的音乐特点.” *北方音乐*. 03(2011):26. doi:CNKI:SUN:BYYY.0.2011-03-021.

<sup>18</sup> 陈曦. “《月牙五更》纵横谈.” *剧作家*. 01(2009):110. doi:CNKI:SUN:JUZZ.0.2009-01-052.

<sup>19</sup> Chunxia Zhang, Cungen Cao, Yuefei Sui, and Xindong Wu. “A Chinese time ontology for the Semantic Web.” *Knowledge-Based Systems* 24, no. 7 (2011): 1057-1074.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

In music ‘*the crescent moon at midnight*,’ however, *Wu Geng* (五更), does not refer to a time within a single day as people commonly understand. The composer utilizes the *Wu Geng* form in different content themes. *Wu Geng* is a traditional Chinese poetic form characterized by its specific structure, tonal patterns, and content themes. *Wu Geng* poems often consist of five lines and follow rhythmic and tonal patterns, each with a specific number of characters. This style is known for its conciseness and ability to convey deep meanings with limited words.<sup>21</sup>

Here are the original lyrics of 月牙五更. In each *Geng* (更) of the lyrics, the singer typically narrates the moon's position and stories related to the moon. Lyrics may vary across the different versions of this song but usually include descriptions of the moon rising or setting, as well as stories or characters associated with the moon, often used to express people's love and admiration for the beautiful night and the moon. Different regions and performers may freely adapt and interpret the content and lyrics of this song.

“一更啊里呀啊月牙没出来呀啊  
貂蝉美女呀啊走下楼来呀  
双膝跪在地土尘埃呀啊  
烧烧香那个拜拜月呀啊  
为的我们那个恩哪恩哪哎了我说恩和爱呀啊  
二更啊里呀啊月牙出在正东啊  
南堂报号啊名叫高琼啊  
呦收下贤妻名叫刘凤英啊  
刘小姐呀啊为高郎啊

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<sup>21</sup> 魏运亨."中国民族舞坛的新葩——《月牙五更》." *瞭望周刊*.04(1992):31-32.  
doi:CNKI:SUN:LWZZ.0.1992-04-019.

才得那个相啊相啊哎了我说相思病啊  
 三更啊里呀啊月牙出在正南啊  
 韩湘子出家呀啊就在终南山啊  
 呦手里托着小小的花篮啊  
 三渡着这个林英女儿  
 夫妻我们那个得呀啊得呀啊哎了我说得相见啊  
 四更啊里呀啊月牙出在正西啊  
 马国母被困啊就在禅宇啊  
 呦救驾多亏大将伍子胥呀啊  
 伍子胥呀啊保幼主啊  
 闯出那个禅哪啊禅哪啊爱了我说禅宇寺呀啊  
 五更啊里呀啊月牙出在正北啊  
 张廷秀私访啊名叫回杯呀啊  
 呦王二小姐雨泪双催呀啊  
 二小姐呀啊为廷秀啊  
 落下那个伤啊伤啊哎了我说伤心泪呀啊”<sup>22</sup>

The characters of the Wu Geng Form in red are translated below, as shown in the table:

一更啊里呀啊月牙没出来呀啊	1 <sup>st</sup> geng, the crescent moon hasn't appeared yet
二更啊里呀啊月牙出在正东啊	2 <sup>nd</sup> geng, the crescent moon rises in the east,
三更啊里呀啊月牙出在正南啊	3 <sup>rd</sup> geng, the crescent moon appears in the southern sky
四更啊里呀啊月牙出在正西啊	4 <sup>th</sup> geng, the crescent moon appears in the western sky

<sup>22</sup> “月牙五更.” 百度百科. Accessed March 26, 2024.

[https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%9C%88%E7%89%99%E4%BA%94%E6%9B%B4/122022?fromModule=lemma-qiyi\\_sense-lemma](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%9C%88%E7%89%99%E4%BA%94%E6%9B%B4/122022?fromModule=lemma-qiyi_sense-lemma).

五更啊里呀啊月牙出在正北啊	5 <sup>th</sup> geng, the crescent moon appears in the northern
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Table 1: Translation of Wu Geng Form

The Èrhú (二胡) accompanies many songs, and in some cases, the melodies of these songs have been adapted into solo pieces for certain ethnic musical instruments. Èrhú-playing features various techniques, including slides and glissandos, which enhance the artistic ornamentation and expression when combined with singing.<sup>23</sup> This vocal folksong has also been adapted as standard repertoire for musical instruments such as Ban Hú (板胡) as well as the Èrhú. By imitating human speech tones and singing styles, this type of glissando technique can turn what was originally a song, into an instrumental piece with rich musical expressions and smoother melodic lines, resulting in a more emotionally charged work. This music is even more vivid and aesthetically pleasing.

Here is an example of Ban Hu version is shown below. The following table gives the explanations of the Chinese Numbered Music Notation.

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<sup>23</sup> 陈智."东北民歌中蕴含的色彩元素分析." *艺术研究* .04(2022):96-98.  
doi:10.13944/j.cnki.ysyj.2022.0214.

# 月 牙 五 更

高音板胡独奏

东 北 民 歌  
刘 明 源 改 编  
李 恒 配 伴 奏

1=G (5 2 弦)

中速稍快

2/4 1. 1̇ 6̇ 1̇ 6̇ 1̇ | 2 2 2 3 | 5 5 6 5 3 5 | 2 2 2 3 | 5 5 5 7 | 5 5 5 5 | 3 5 6 1̇ 6 5 3 5 |

2 2 2 5 | 5 5 6 1 7 6 1 | 2 2 2 3 | 5 5 - | 5 5 1̇ | 3 6 6 5 3 5 | 2 3 2 3 |

0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 3 3 5 6 | 3. 5 3 | 2. 3 5 6 |

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

3. 5 3 2 1 6 | 3 2 1 | 2. 5 | 3 2 3 6 5 | 3 3 5 3 | 2. 1 2 3 5 6 | 3 5 3 2 1 6 |

1 6 | 2 5 6 1 | 2 1 6 1 2 0 | 6 5 | 1 6 1 3 | 2 7 | 6 1 |

3 2 1 | 2 7 6 6 | 0 5 3 2 | 3 2 1 2 | 1 1 6 | 3 6 3 5 | 2 7 6 |

5 - | 7 6 1 3 5 | 5 0 0 | 1 7 | 1 6 | 3 7 | 7 5 6 1 3 5 |

6 6 6 1 3 | 2 3 2 7 6 1 5 6 | 1 1 6 1 6 1 | 2 2 3 | 5 3 5 6 | 3. 5 3 2 1 6 | 3 2 3 5 7 6 |

5 5 - | 5 5 - | 5 5 - | 5 1 6 1 6 1 | 2. 5 2 5 2 3 | 5. 3 5 3 5 6 | 5 5 |

5 5 3 5 6 | 5 5 6 1 2 | 5 3 5 3 2 | 1 1 6 1 | 2 2 2 5 | 1 1 6 1 | 2. 3 2 5 |

5 6 1 2 | 0 | 6 1 | 2 2 2 5 | 6 1 | 2 5 3 2 5 |

2. 6 | 5. 6 5 2 | 1 3 2 | 1 1 6 1 5 6 | 1 1 1 | 0 2 2 2 2 | 1 6 5 |

2 5 5 5 | 5 5 5 5 | 1 5 5 5 | 3 1 1 1 | 1 6 5 6 5 6 | 1 2 5 | 6 1 2 3 5 3 2 3 |

5 5 5 6 2 | 1 1 6 | 5 6 5 5 | 0 1 6 6 3 | 2 2 1 6 | 5 5 4 5 6 |

5 0 0 | 1 6 5 6 1 6 1 2 | 5 5 5 5 | 5 5 5 5 | 4 4 4 4 | 2 2 2 2 |

Yueqixuexi.COM

Figure 2: Ban Hu Version of Chinese Numbered Music Notation.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> M.yueqixuexi.com. “高音板胡曲谱《月牙五更》简谱.” 高音板胡曲谱《月牙五更》简谱-板胡曲谱 - 乐器学习网. Accessed March 26, 2024.  
<https://m.yueqixuexi.com/banhu/qupu/20170415172082.html>.

The following is an explanation of Chinese Numbered Music Notation:

月牙五更 Chinese numbered music notation	Explanation
1=G	G is considered as do
1,2,3,4,5,6,7	do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si, the range is in central C
Number "0"	Rest
Dot on top of the number, ex: <b>ī</b> ;	One octave higher, Ex.: C5
Dot on the bottom of the number, ex: <b>6̣</b>	One octave lower, Ex.: A3
Rhythmic notation: <b><u>2 3</u></b> ; <b><u>6 5 3 5</u></b>	The lines are marked underneath the number. Single-line marks 8 <sup>th</sup> notes, double- line marks 16 <sup>th</sup> notes.
: $\overset{♩=64}{\underline{3} \overset{\frown}{\underline{3}} \underline{5} \underline{6} \overset{\frown}{\underline{6}}}$   3. $\underline{5} \underline{3}$   $\underline{2} \overset{\frown}{\underline{3}} \underline{5} \underline{6} \overset{\frown}{\underline{6}}$	The arrows mark glissandos, which clearly shows that typical glissandos typically appear on the intervals of 3rds or 6ths.
3. $\underline{5} \underline{3}$   $\underline{2} \overset{\frown}{\underline{3}} \underline{5} \underline{6} \overset{\frown}{\underline{6}}$	The left bar has a dotted quarter, the right bar has a dotted 8 <sup>th</sup> , similar to western music notation

Table 2: Chinese Numbered Music Notation

Northeastern folk songs and ‘Errenzhuan (二人转)’<sup>25</sup> are essential components of the music culture in the Northeastern region. Errenzhuan is a specific form of performance or entertainment, combining elements from Northeastern folk songs, traditional Opera, rap, and YangGe (a popular Chinese folk dance). Also known as ‘bèng bèng xì (蹦蹦戏)’, Errenzhuan is a lively and invigorating form of local drama<sup>26</sup> often performed as a duet (figure 3), with performers (a male and a female) wearing distinctive costumes such as holding folded fans and red square handkerchiefs, singing, dancing, and using comedic and exaggerated gestures while narrating a story. Its singing style is spirited and robust, and lyrics are often humorous and entertaining. This form of entertainment draws from various artistic traditions to infuse vitality into performances, its purpose being to dispel fatigue, providing a fresh and lively experience for the audience.

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<sup>25</sup> “二人转,” 抖音百科, accessed March 26, 2024, [https://www.baik.com/wikiid/7187018565118132281?from=wiki\\_content&prd=innerlink&view\\_id=4b888vi7fj3im8](https://www.baik.com/wikiid/7187018565118132281?from=wiki_content&prd=innerlink&view_id=4b888vi7fj3im8).

<sup>26</sup> 陈曦."《月牙五更》纵横谈." *剧作家*.01(2009):110. doi:CNKI:SUN:JUZZJ.0.2009-01-052.



Figure 3: Erranzhuan, featuring by Famous Chinese Artists Zuying Song and Benshan Zhao (from left to right)<sup>27</sup>

Yunfei, the composer wishes to incorporate elements from these two most representative Northeastern art forms into her first movement, adopting the banhu style by having the cello imitate it.

### Analysis

The first movement, “The Crescent Moon at Midnight,” consists of an introduction followed by the A-B-C section. The duration of this movement is 4’34’’. It starts in 2/4 meter in c minor (mm.1-mm.46) and ends with C major in 4/4 meter(mm.47-end).

The Introduction spans beginning to mm.26. Yunfei borrows the main musical idea from the folk song *The Crescent Moon at midnight* to open this movement. She keeps similar rhythmic figures(mm.3-mm.4) and melodic sequences (mm.1-mm.6) from the original song (See Figure 3) in the introduction. Northeastern music style comes with

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<sup>27</sup> “表演类项目（国内篇）--辽宁东北二人转\_玉子。”\_玉子, August 30, 2018. [https://www.sohu.com/a/250933746\\_100016484](https://www.sohu.com/a/250933746_100016484).

ascending glissandos, descending glissandos, wide interval jumps, and other embellishments, rhythmically starting on the weak beat of the phrase, further accentuating the regional characteristics of Northeastern folk songs. In Ex. 2.1., the music starts rhythmically on the weak beat of the phrase with a grace note, which is considered the main note, rather than downbeat of C. This has the effect of sounding like speech, as if the performer is speaking, while actually singing. As the music progresses, the melodic sequence is repeated and undergoes variation in terms of expanded phrases and through the use of different embellishments. (mm.6 and mm.13 etc.)

The image displays a musical score for Ban Hu, featuring numbered notation and various musical symbols. The score is organized into six systems, each with two staves. The notation includes notes represented by numbers 0-7, with various ornaments such as trills (tr), grace notes (grace), and slurs. The score includes tempo markings: "渐慢" (ritardando) at the beginning, "慢起渐快" (ritardando then accelerando) in the fifth system, and a tempo of 64 in the first system. The notation is complex, with many notes and ornaments, and includes a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 2/4.

Figure 4: Ban Hu Version of Chinese Numbered Music Notation.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> M.yueqixuexi.com. “高音板胡曲谱《月牙五更》简谱.” 高音板胡曲谱《月牙五更》简谱-板胡曲谱 - 乐器学习网. Accessed March 26, 2024.

<https://m.yueqixuexi.com/banhu/qupu/20170415172082.html>.

**Adagio, graceful**

Violoncello *mf*

Ex. 2.1. Yunfei Li: *The North Suite, Crescent Moon at the Midnight*, mm. 1-28.

Also, northeastern folk songs have a unique charm because of the musical modes they use, with the most distinctive feature being the use of upward and downward slides (glissandos). The language spoken in the Northeastern region often features a tendency for downward glides in pronunciation, and this characteristic is reflected in the prevalence of glissandos in Northeastern folk songs. In the expression of music, glissandos mostly occur in intervals of a third, a sixth, and occasionally even an octave. In the ban hu version, there are a certain number of glissandos, though mostly are on the 3rds, and occasionally on the 6ths. The red line is marked under the number follows: C-A; G-E; C-A; D-B; C-E; C-E; C-A. (see figure 3) Yunfei also carries the glissandos into this introduction based on the same melodic structure as well as the entire movement (see Ex.2.1)

In section A, mm 27- mm.46 before letter B, the meter changes to 4/4 meter, and many grace notes are stylistically applied in a new musical idea, creating a narrative singing sound. From Rehearsal A (not to be confused with section A), the 16<sup>th</sup> notes, dotted 32nd notes, and triplet rhythmic pattern create a dancing effect, which imitates the dance part of the performance from Erranzhuang.

In section B, mm47 -mm.66, still in 4/4 meter, but the key has changed to C major. This section is marked *expressive* with a faster tempo, taking on the drive and energy of a moment of pure dance. The rhythm with the glissando on mm.47 cannot physically be played in time, but it has the effect of driving momentum forward. From mm. 53-56, doubling the base note while making a huge leap increases the intensity of the music, the strong and rhythmic musical expression here generally being associated with martial arts contests but within the style of Errenzhuang.

In section C, mm.67-77, marked *Peaceful* with a slow tempo. Yunfei uses the same motif with recurring musical figures to establish the theme, such as grace notes on weak beats, and adding new material in the form of harmonics, which introduces a sense of serenity to the music. The dynamic marks of *fp* with crescendos on *ff* within the last three measures bring the tension to an abrupt end with the 8<sup>th</sup> note on *fff* that effectively captures the dramatic essence of Northeastern folk songs.

## CHAPTER 3

### SILKROAD

#### A Brief History of Xinjiang Music

The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is in the far western part of China. It is China's largest provincial-level administrative division and spans a vast and diverse geographical area. Xinjiang shares international borders with eight countries, including Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. This region is characterized by its ethnic and cultural diversity, with a significant population of Uyghur Muslims, as well as other ethnic groups such as Han Chinese, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and others.<sup>29</sup>



Figure 5: A Map of the Xinjiang region<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> “Xinjiang,” Encyclopædia Britannica, March 25, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Xinjiang>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

In history, Xinjiang region was an important passage of the ancient Silk Road, which was a historical network of trade routes that connected the East and West, facilitating the exchange of goods, ideas, and cultures. The diverse regions include China, Central Asia, India, the Middle East, and others.<sup>31</sup> Being situated at the crossroads of these regions, Xinjiang inevitably bears the influence of European, Arabic, and Chinese cultures. Each region had unique musical traditions and cultural characteristics. Various regional music elements influenced each other, resulting in the fusion of new musical forms.<sup>32</sup>

Xinjiang music is mainly characterized by three distinct musical modal systems: Chinese, European, and Persian-Arabic. These three major systems profoundly influence the development of Xinjiang's music, resulting in a diversified Xinjiang music culture.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> 张礼仁, and 车翔. "浅析新疆民歌及其特色." *人民论坛* .33(2015):42-43. doi: 10.16619/j.cnki.rmlt.2015.33.132.

Music System	Chinese	Persian-Arabic	European
Vocal Style	Chinese melisma*	Persian melisma*	Western melisma
Modes/interval/function	Five tones	Building blocks of tetrachords /nonfunctional harmony	Building blocks of tetrachords /functional harmony
Tempo	散板 (free tempo) */regular and irregular recurring pattern of strong and weak beats	散板 (free tempo)/complex meter/ regular rhythmic pattern	Regular recurring pattern of strong and weak beats
Texture	monophonic	Monophonic but homophonic on the regular rhythmic pattern	homophonic

Table 3: The Comparison of Three Music System<sup>33</sup>

According to 徐健顺, “腔” is translated as Chinese melisma, emphasizing ‘matching tones with characters,’ meaning that the pitch contour of the melodic line should correspond to the tonal contours of the Chinese characters or lyrics. He states that musical tones should correspond to the linguistic intonation in language. This implies that emphasized words should be sung with higher pitches, question sentences should end with a rising intonation, sentences expressing emotions or feelings should generally have

<sup>33</sup> 杜亚雄."新疆古代居民的种族特征和现代民间音乐的风格特点." *音乐研究*.02(1995). doi:CNKI:SUN:MUSI.0.1995-02-006.

a descending melody, and so forth.<sup>34</sup> In European languages, there is no inherent tonal quality to the pronunciation of words, unlike in languages with lexical tones, such as Chinese. Therefore, in Western music, the melisma, or the embellishment of a single syllable over multiple pitches, does not necessarily correspond to the pronunciation or intonation of the lyrics.<sup>35</sup> Persian melisma, also known as "Tahrir" in Persian music, refers to the vocal ornamentation technique used in Persian traditional music. It involves the embellishment of a single syllable over multiple pitches, allowing the singer to add expressiveness, ornamentation, and depth to the melody. Persian melisma is characterized by its intricate and elaborate nature, often featuring rapid melodic runs, trills, and glissandos. It plays a significant role in Persian vocal performances, enhancing the emotional and aesthetic qualities of the music.<sup>36</sup> In addition to the explanation of 散板 (the table above), it also entails a Cadenza-like tempo. It is similar to "Senza misura", meaning without measure, or "ad libitum" meaning at one's pleasure or freely.

The article “浅析新疆民歌的风格特” states that Xinjiang folk songs can generally be divided into two main categories: The first category includes lyrical and narrative folk songs, which comprise mostly love songs, songs about daily life, work songs, and historical songs. These are typically performed solo or accompanied by instruments. The second category consists of dance songs, primarily used as music for

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<sup>34</sup> 徐健顺. *普通话吟诵教程*. 广西师范大学出版社, 2018.

<sup>35</sup> Richard L Crocker. "Melisma." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 29 Mar. 2024. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000018332>.

<sup>36</sup> Jean During, "The Persian Tahrir as Glottal Technique and Melismatic Form," HAL Open Science, n.d., <https://hal.science/hal-04385596/document>.

dancing. They are characterized by clear rhythms, lively melodies, and strong infectious energy, often prompting bouts of spontaneous dancing from listeners.<sup>37</sup>

According to 艾热提·麦苏木, the author summarizes four expression techniques in Xinjiang music styles through melody, rhythm, modes, and structure. He states that the melody exhibits a lot of variation and fluctuation, with significant use of imitation, repetition, and echo as the melody develops, turning it to transform into musical phrases. For the melodic aspect, most of these melodies possess structural integrity and symmetry. He also points out a wide variety of rhythms in the Xinjiang style, which emphasizes the accentuation of strong beats, incorporating various rhythmic patterns, including both fixed and compound meters, as well as the use of dotted rhythms and triplets. This further creates effective dynamic contrasts. The third aspect is that the mode is primarily based on tetrachords, with building blocks composed of a sequence of minor seconds. He mentions that under the influence of the Iranian system, modes, scales, and tonalities often undergo changes within a single piece of music, coexisting and creating sharp contrasts. Under the influence of the European system of modes, the main modes are typically in natural minors and harmonic minors, and there are often occurrences of modes such as the Dorian and the Mixolydian modes. Under the influence of the Mongolian system of modes, scales primarily consist of fourth and fifth intervals. The last aspect he writes is that the formal structure typically follows an exposition-development-recapitulation pattern in Western music. However, in Xinjiang music compositions, the *maqam* form, a traditional form of music that integrates folk songs,

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<sup>37</sup> 杨懿娟."浅析新疆民歌的风格特点." *大舞台*.10(2014):161-162.  
doi:10.15947/j.cnki.dwt.2014.10.083.

singing, dancing, and musical instruments, is commonly used. It is a large-scale classical suite with a unique tuning system.<sup>38</sup>

As the article describes, Xinjiang is a region where 46 ethnic minorities coexist, with the Uyghur and Kazakh ethnic groups' music being the most representative in terms of showcasing characteristics of Xinjiang folk music. The author states that Uyghur folk songs typically utilize the three musical systems mentioned previously. The rhythms and beats can generally be divided into two types: simple meter and compound meter. 4/4 and 2/4 are commonly used while other meters such as 1/4, 3/4, and 3/8 are less commonly used. Compound meters such as 5/8, 7/8, and 9/8 are considered common characteristics.<sup>39</sup> A typical musical style is characterized by a short syncopation followed by two eighth notes. Dotted rhythms are also commonly found in Uyghur songs and dance music accompaniment. Such songs exhibit strong rhythmic qualities and carry a sense of "danceability," reflecting the passionate and lively nature of Xinjiang's ethnic minorities, who are known for their enthusiasm for singing and dancing.<sup>40</sup> In Uyghur folk songs, it is common to encounter modulations of the fourth and fifth degrees and shifts to distant keys. The interval of a fifth holds significant importance in Uyghur music. Since the Uyghur language lacks a system akin to the "four tones", Uyghur folk songs primarily rely on the rhythmic variations of lyrics for musical tone guidance. In Uyghur language,

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<sup>38</sup> 艾热提·麦苏木."新疆少数民族音乐风格的对比探析." *大众文艺*.16(2016):36. doi:CNKI:SUN:DZLU.0.2016-16-077.

<sup>39</sup> 张礼仁, and 车翔."浅析新疆民歌及其特色." *人民论坛*.33(2015):42-43. doi:10.16619/j.cnki.rmlt.2015.33.132.

<sup>40</sup> 徐建成."节奏在新疆音乐风格中的重要位置." *现代妇女(下旬)*.04(2013):124. doi:CNKI:SUN:XDFN.0.2013-04-071.

the stress of multi-syllabic words often falls on the final syllable. Therefore, melodies and rhythms in Uyghur folk songs naturally start on a weak beat or syncopation.<sup>41</sup>

The Kazakh ethnic group adopt a composite musical system, incorporating elements from Chinese and European musical traditions, but primarily rely on the European musical system. Kazakh songs commonly feature 2/4 and 3/4 meters, often employing compound meters. In 3/4-time signatures, the second beat is intentionally lengthened, creating a rhythmic pattern where the first part of a measure is often shorter than the latter part. Additionally, there is a variation in emphasis on beats, resulting in syncopated accents such as strong-strong or strong-strong weak beats.<sup>42</sup> Kazakh folk songs typically adopt the pentatonic scale from Chinese music and the diatonic system from European music, including natural major and minor scales, Dorian, and Mixolydian modes.<sup>43</sup>

Generally, rhythmic patterns in Xinjiang folk music are predominantly characterized by syncopation and dotted rhythms. Another notable rhythmic characteristic is the sudden appearance of dotted rhythms or triplets within relatively calm melodic passages. Such rhythms lend a dynamic exuberance, creating a sense of lingering and deep yearning, evoking a feeling of vastness and boundlessness.<sup>44</sup> The

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<sup>41</sup> 王君."风情浓郁的新疆民歌." *晋中师范高等专科学校学报* .01(2001):31-33.  
doi:CNKI:SUN:JGZK.0.2001-01-013.

<sup>42</sup> 张礼仁, and 车翔."浅析新疆民歌及其特色." *人民论坛* .33(2015):42-43. doi:  
10.16619/j.cnki.rmlt.2015.33.132.

<sup>43</sup> 王君."风情浓郁的新疆民歌." *晋中师范高等专科学校学报* .01(2001):31-33.  
doi:CNKI:SUN:JGZK.0.2001-01-013.

<sup>44</sup> 徐建成."节奏在新疆音乐风格中的重要位置." *现代妇女(下旬)* .04(2013):124.  
doi:CNKI:SUN:XDFN.0.2013-04-071.

author 张礼仁 specifies, "The uniqueness of Xinjiang folk songs lies in their distinctive melodies, particularly semitone intervals, known as the 'augmented second', which are highly recognizable compositional techniques".<sup>45</sup> The author 杨懿娟 explains that Xinjiang folk songs often exhibit a melodic structure characterized by intricate melodies with sudden changes in pitch range and dynamic variation. They feature dramatic rises and falls as well as moments of delicate and graceful transitions. This contrast creates a vivid and evocative expression of ethnic emotions, with a rich regional flavor. The melody often utilizes large intervals of the fifth, sixth, and seventh degrees to lead into the higher registers. Subsequently, additional tones are gradually in the descending order, creating an overall downward trend in the melody. There are partial melodic rises within this descent, resulting in slight upward tendencies within certain music segments.<sup>46</sup>

### **Analysis**

This movement is in 4/4 meter. Though in the key of C Major, the characteristic of 'augmented second' or 'minor thirds' interval of Xinjiang folk music appears throughout the entire movement as a motif. An eleven-minute-long movement, extended techniques are used throughout the entire suite (See Table 4). The composer follows the following structure: free section, fast section, slow section, free section, and coda. This is a typical multi-sectional form in which the composer borrows the idea of the Xinjiang *maqam* of instruments playing, human singing, and dancing, demonstrated by the cello in

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<sup>45</sup> 张礼仁, and 车翔."浅析新疆民歌及其特色." *人民论坛* .33(2015):42-43. doi: 10.16619/j.cnki.rmlt.2015.33.132.

<sup>46</sup> 杨懿娟."浅析新疆民歌的风格特点." *大舞台* .10(2014):161-162. doi:10.15947/j.cnki.dwt.2014.10.083.

this work. This movement requires extended techniques which show off the performer’s musical ability. The movement is structured with a long, free-phrase introduction through section A, followed by a dance-like section B, a ‘walking’ section C, a short free section from mm 146 to mm162, and a coda in section D until the end.








	Measures	Example
Glissando	m. 15	
Wide vibrato with ‘scooping’ effect	mm. 106-107	
Lefthand pizzicato	m.93	
Fast quintuplets and sextuplets	m.57	
Chromatic scales	mm. 61-62	
Wide vibrato played with strings half-pressed	mm.44	
Double stopped tremolos with glissando	mm.150-151	

Table 4 Examples of extended techniques in “Silk Road.”

From the beginning through Section A, phrases are presented freely but still taking care to stay in tempo. The introduction opens with the whole note of B flat and C sharp with the augmented second interval motif. The whole note length duration aptly starts the cello's simulation of the playing style of the Xinjiang flute Bili,<sup>47</sup> a double reed woodwind pipe. The Bili is made of wood, with eight finger holes on the top. Sound is produced by blowing across a reed inserted into the mouthpiece.



Figure 6: Bili<sup>48</sup>

By applying compositional techniques such as glissando and the rhythmic figure of triplets and sextuplets, these together embody the musical characteristics of Xinjiang. The effect calls to mind boundless desert landscapes.

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<sup>47</sup> “箎箎,” 百度百科, accessed March 28, 2024, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E7%AD%9A%E7%AF%A5/2854793>.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is for Violoncello, starting with a grace note and a tempo marking of 112. It includes a triplet of eighth notes and a fermata. The bottom staff is for Vc., starting at measure 9, with a piano (p) marking followed by a sextuplet of eighth notes and a sextuplet of sixteenth notes, marked forte (f).

Ex. 3.1. Yunfei Li: *The North Suite, Silkroad*, mm. 1-11.

In section A, marked *sneaky*, the composer constructs the melody primarily around second intervals, with augmented second and minor second intervals serving as melodic progressions. Fundamental notes used are A flat, B, and C. The pizzicato and the use of augmented seconds (See Ex. 3.2.), especially when executed with a quick change from regular notes to the special effect of having notes played with the string pressed only halfway down on the fingerboard with a wide vibrato (See Ex. 3.3.), evokes a sense of mystery in the desert. The combination of different rhythmic patterns, such as the fast phrases of quintuplets and sextuplets, alongside the use of chromatic scales, creates contrasts in rhythm, timbre, and beat, fully showcasing the rhythmic vitality of Xinjiang music. When combined with the cello's timbre, the effect is similar to that of the Xinjiang instrument Rawap. The Rawap is described as follows, “It is often made of wood, has a unique appearance with a slender upper body and a curved top, while the bottom features a hemispherical resonating chamber. The instrument's face is typically covered with donkey, sheep, or python skin, and it usually has 5-7 strings. The melody is typically played on the outermost string, while the remaining strings are resonance strings. The

Rawap produces a clear, pure tone with strong expressiveness”.<sup>49</sup> Large intervals of descending fourths, fifths, and sixths and accents on the weak beat, and a fermata at the end slowly brings the introduction section to a close.



Figure 7: Rawap<sup>50</sup>

Ex. 3.2. Yunfei Li: *The North Suite, Silkroad*, mm. 29-38

<sup>49</sup> “维吾尔民族乐器---热瓦甫,” 维吾尔民族乐器-热瓦甫 | Ilham Tohti Institute, accessed March 26, 2024,

<https://uyghurbiz.org/%E7%BB%B4%E5%90%BE%E5%B0%94%E6%B0%91%E6%97%8F%E4%B9%90%E5%99%A8-%E7%83%AD%E7%93%A6%E7%94%AB/>.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

Ex. 3.3. Yunfei Li: *The North Suite, Silkroad*, mm.44

The dance-like section is introduced in section B. The alternating use of quintuplets and sextuplets, along with the abundant utilization of quintuplet rhythmic patterns and triplets later in this section (See Ex. 3.4.), further exemplifies the style of Xinjiang dance. The diverse range of rhythmic patterns and irregular beats alludes to the lively scene of people singing and dancing. The tempo, rhythmic pattern, and playing techniques are all extremely rich, bringing musical emotion to a peak.

Ex. 3.4. Yunfei Li: *The North Suite, Silkroad*, mm.68-7

The ritardando of the figure of the triplet and the base note C (See Ex. 3.5.) leads to section C, where the composer marks such as ‘Walking’, which suggests that the

footsteps of travelers were her inspiration for this moment. The G here is the walking-bass note. Later, the left-hand pizzicato takes over this walking-base note while the melody begins, with a ‘scooping’ effect after the last note of each phrase. The big vibrato (See Ex.3.6.) is applied to imitate the Rawap playing the glissando. The overall effect brings one to imagine the leisurely passage of a camel caravan winding their way through the desert, gradually fading into the distant yellow sand.

Ex. 3.5. Yunfei Li: *The North Suite, Silkroad*, mm 80-84

Ex. 3.6. Yunfei Li: *The North Suite, Silkroad*, mm.93-107

The dancing occurs when the motif of sextuplets returns on mm.140. The grace notes and pizzicato create a delightful dance-like effect. The composition ultimately returns to a free section. It is as if the travelers embarked on their journey once again, venturing back into the desert. In the coda, Yunfei breaks away from traditional rhythmic patterns by incorporating various types of ornamentation, creating a lively and jubilant atmosphere.

## CHAPTER 4

### SHAANXI

#### **A Brief History of Shaanxi Music**

Shaanxi province<sup>51</sup> is in northwestern China is renowned for its historical and cultural significance. Famous landmarks and historical and cultural sites include the Terracotta Army (See Figure 8), Huaqing Palace, the ancient city walls of Xi'an (See Figure 9), and the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda, etc. The province served as the starting point of the ancient Silk Road, facilitating trade and cultural exchange between the East and the West. Today, it continues to preserve a rich and diverse folk culture, such as the folk songs of northern Shaanxi and Qin Opera. Xi'an, as a capital city, has been 13 imperial dynasties, from the Western Zhou Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty, and has a history spanning nearly two thousand years. It holds the record in China for having been a capital city for the longest duration of time.



Figure 8: Terracotta Army<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> “History of the Shaanxi,” Encyclopædia Britannica, accessed March 29, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Shaanxi/History>.

<sup>52</sup> “兵马俑--征服世界的军队.” BBC 英伦网. Accessed March 26, 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/ukchina/simp/vert-cul-39872393>.



Figure 9: the Ancient City Wall<sup>53</sup>

The Tang Dynasty was one of ancient Chinese history's most prosperous eras, characterized by relatively stable politics, a flourishing economy, and a harmonious society. Music and culture also began to prosper and develop significantly during the Tang Dynasty (See Figure 10). The Tang Dynasty Suite (Daqu) refers to a musical form prevalent during the Tang Dynasty, serving as one of the main formats for musical performance in the imperial court as well as social gatherings.<sup>54</sup> Daqu typically comprised various elements such as singing, dancing, and instrumentals.

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<sup>53</sup> “【续写丝路新篇章】西安城墙：古老的外表年轻的心 拥抱时代是认真的，”\_新闻频道\_央视网(cctv.com), accessed March 26, 2024, <https://news.cctv.com/2021/09/26/ARTIFZBdFRay5DELU18hDslA210926.shtml>.

<sup>54</sup> Alan R Thrasher, Joseph S.C. Lam, Jonathan P.J. Stock, Colin Mackerras, Francesca Rebollo-Sborgi, Frank Kouwenhoven, A. Schimmelpenninck, Stephen Jones, Han Mei, Wu Ben, Helen Rees, Sabine Trebinjac, and Joanna C. Lee. "China, People's Republic of." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 24 Mar. 2024. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000043141>

Dancing played a significant role in the Tang Dynasty Suite, its lovely melodies graceful dance movements making it an indispensable part of high society banquets and celebrations during this era. Tang Daqu also bore influences from Indian, Buddhist and Taoist cultures culminating in an ethereal, elegant style that became the hallmark of Tang Dynasty Dance.<sup>55</sup>



Figure 10: Daqu<sup>56</sup>

The instruments such as the zheng zither, di, and pipa are widely used in Tang court music. It was a golden age for the development of the Guzheng, with significant artistic achievements in the performance, creation, and dissemination of Guzheng works.<sup>57</sup> The Guzheng (See Figure 11) is a musical instrument with multiple strings and bridges. The pitch of the Guzheng is altered by adjusting the strings using tuning pins

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<sup>55</sup> 罗立章."唐代乐舞大曲之诗、舞、乐的艺术特征探微." *兰台世界* .27(2015):162-163.  
doi:10.16565/j.cnki.1006-7744.2015.27.104.

<sup>56</sup> 唐玄宗的《霓裳羽衣曲》，曲谱和舞蹈已佚失千年..., accessed March 26, 2024,  
<https://kknews.cc/n/y3xzzmg.html>.

<sup>57</sup> 代昕."古筝艺术在唐代与明清时期发展的比较." *北方音乐* 38.23(2018):3+5.  
doi:CNKI:SUN:BYYY.0.2018-23-006.

located on the bridges and tuning pegs on the tuning heads.<sup>58</sup> The Guzheng of the Tang Dynasty, would have had either twelve or thirteen strings, a slender and elongated form, with a curved soundboard and a flat bottom.<sup>59</sup> Another instrument, the Di (See Figure 11), or the transverse flute, was known as the 横笛, or the 'horizontal flute'. The traditional horizontal flute closely resembled the modern six-hole flute. Constructed from two bamboo sections connected together, it featured a blow hole, a membrane hole, and six tone holes, all of which were elliptical in shape. Affixing a reed membrane onto the membrane hole to serve as its diaphragm allowed the flute to produce deep, resonant low tones, solid mid-range tones, and rounded high tones.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Han Mei. "Zheng." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 25 Mar. 2024. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000046543>.

<sup>59</sup> 代昕."古筝艺术在唐代与明清时期发展的比较." *北方音乐* 38.23(2018):3+5. doi:CNKI:SUN:BYYY.0.2018-23-006.

<sup>60</sup> Thrasher, Alan R. "Di." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 24 Mar. 2024. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000045368>.



Figure 11: Guzheng<sup>61</sup>



Figure 12: Di<sup>62</sup>

Yunfei was inspired by Tang dynasty music. She chose the Di as the dominant instrument, let the cello imitate it, and applied other musical elements from Tang Daqu throughout this movement. In addition to that, Yunfei combined Tang Daqu with Qin Opera, which is another important component of Shaanxi folk music.

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<sup>61</sup> M.yueqixuexi.com. “十三弦古筝的调音方法.” 十三弦古筝怎么调音-十三弦古筝的调音方法-古筝选购维护 - 乐器学习网. Accessed March 26, 2024.  
<https://m.yueqixuexi.com/guzheng/20190709213254.html>.

<sup>62</sup> 中国竹笛四大名家-乐器文化-丝竹知音\_民族乐器学习网, accessed March 26, 2024,  
<http://www.54606.cn/m/article/yueqiwenhua/10619.html>.

According to *论秦腔与竹笛音乐的发展*, the author states that in Qin Opera, the most frequently used primary tone is the *Zhi Yin* (the 5<sup>th</sup> degree of the scale), followed closely by the *Gong Yin* (the 1<sup>st</sup> degree of the scale), creating a distinctive quality in Qin Opera tonality which can be categorized into joyful tones and sorrowful tones. Tunes were written using either of these two different emotional colors according to the needs of the plot and the characters themselves. He explains that the "sorrowful tone" is particularly effective in highlighting the artistic style of Qin Opera. The vocal melody features broad ranges and significant leaps, which are employed to express the emotions of sadness and sorrow within the plot. Its mournful, deep, and impassioned flavor lends a unique charm that rarely fails to captivate. Another trait the author mentions is that in Qin Opera, the pitches of F, F#, B, and Bb does not adhere to the principles of western Circle of Fifths, namely pure intonation, or equal temperament. Instead, Qin Opera may employ certain unique tuning systems to create its distinctive musical style and effect. This could involve the use of microtonal adjustments or other tuning methods, resulting in intervals that differ from traditional tuning systems, thus forming the unique sonic characteristics of Qin Opera. He also specifies that the pitch F tends to be sharper than that of standard equal temperament tuning, while pitch B tends to be flatter. The melody often features significant rises and falls, with frequent leaps of fourths and fifths. Utilizing horizontal fourth intervals creates a distinct style, while employing vertical fourth intervals adds to the unique charm of the Qin Opera Style and its sound.<sup>63</sup>

**Analysis:**

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<sup>63</sup> 孙玥. *论秦腔与竹笛音乐的发展*. 2015. 东北大学, MA thesis

The last movement is six minutes and six seconds long in C major. It is in A-B-A form. The A section covers from the beginning to mm.32. B section goes from rehearsal A to mm.65. Rehearsal C comes towards the end as the recap of A section. The entire movement suggests two instruments playing, accompanying a Tang Daqu-style dance-like section represented by the cello which imitates the Daqu dance style most convincingly. The composer also borrows elements of Qin Opera music, creating a unique modern Shaanxi-style sound. The A section is more like an unmetred cadenza-like section. The Di (transverse flute) is the main instrument in this movement. Yunfei uses harmonics to mimic the sound of a flute. Tremolos also reflect the trill of the flute. (See Ex. 4.1.) The composer also makes use of extended techniques, such as ricochet bowing combined with harmonics and 8<sup>th</sup>-note values gradually shortening to 16<sup>th</sup>-note values, in order to recreate the staccato sound of the flute. (See Ex. 4.2.) The pizzicato mimics the sound of the Zheng zither. (See Ex. 4.3.)



Ex. 4.1. Yunfei Li: *The North Suite, Shaanxi*, mm. 1-11.



Ex. 4.2. Yunfei Li: *The North Suite, Shaanxi*, mm. 16



Ex. 4.3. Yunfei Li: *The North Suite, Shaanxi*, mm. 18-21

The composer uses many fourths and fifths intervals, especially within the motif below, which borrows the typical Qin Opera elements. (See Ex. 4.4.) The last pizzicato of section A leads to the dance-like section. Yunfei uses main rhythmic patterns consisting of sextuplets, quintuplets, and triplets. The even, coherent rhythms of these runs and large interval jumps in the melody depict the leisurely and carefree nature of Tang Dynasty dancers, characterized by agile and light movements, embodying grace and elegance.



Ex. 4.4. Yunfei Li: *The North Suite, Shaanxi*, mm. 19

The final section begins on Rehearsal C, where the A form returns as a recapitulation, carrying the same motifs as the beginning section. Qin Opera motif figures reappear. Notably, there is a left-hand pizzicato on pitch C, (See Ex. 4.5.) The resulting sound is rich and profound, the sense of enjoyment it brings lingering long after the music reaches its end.

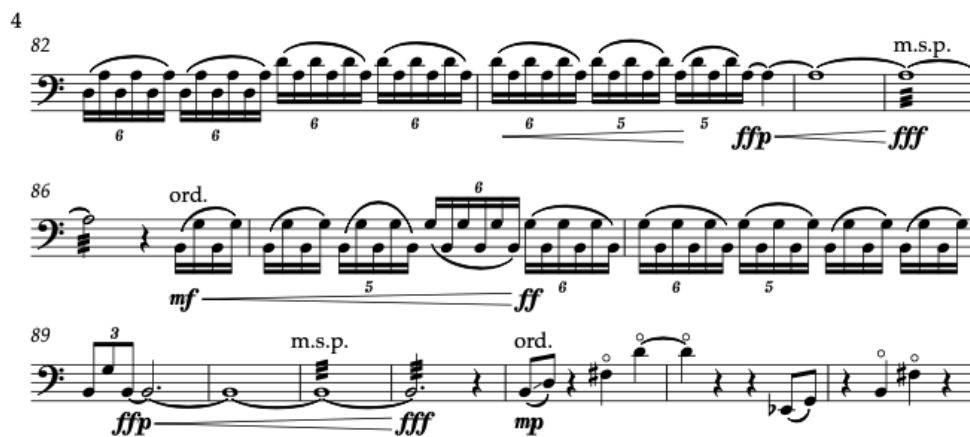


Ex. 4.5. Yunfei Li: *The North Suite, Shaanxi*, mm. 67

The glissando creates a poetic, ethereal atmosphere recalling the gentle, graceful movements of dancers (See Ex. 4.6.). The pattern of sextuplets with tremolos creates the impression of dance-like twirling, and the dancers exit the stage, leaving the audience to dwell on the sound of the flute as the music draws to a close. (See Ex. 4.7.)



Ex. 4.6. Yunfei Li: *The North Suite, Shaanxi*, mm. 73-76



Ex. 4.7. Yunfei Li: *The North Suite, Shaanxi*, mm. 82-92

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

"The North Suite" is a significant solo cello composition, skillfully intertwining the essence of Chinese and Western musical elements to cultivate a three-movement contemporary masterpiece. This composition reflects diverse indigenous music styles originating from composer Yunfei's and my hometowns, enriched further by the distinctive charm of the Xinjiang Uygur region, which imparts an exotic flavor to the piece, drawing inspiration from the cultural tapestry of North China. This is our motivation to start this piece through the medium of the cello. I hope for more modern cello compositions while encouraging women composers to showcase their talents. Ultimately, I believe that music is a universal language that should be celebrated and shared across cultural boundaries. I hope that "The North Suite" serves as a testament to the diversity and inclusivity inherent in the world of music, inviting listeners to embark on a rewarding journey of musical exploration and appreciation.

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APPENDIX A  
PERMISSION LETTER

I give permission for Xue Chen to include my musical scores as a part of her research project document, "A Recording Project of commissioned work for Solo Cello Work *The North Suite*."

Yunfei Li

4/5/2024

Print Name

Date

The North Suite

Score Title



Signature

APPENDIX B

SCORE

Yunfei Li

**The North Suite**  
for solo cello  
2021

Program notes:

*The North Suite* is a cello solo piece composed in 2021-2022. The three different regions in China took the inspiration for this piece. The piece has three movements: the first is based on a folk song - *The Crescent Moon at Mid-night*, which originates from the northeast of China. The second movement is based on the story of the Silk Road. I adopted the mid-eastern music elements into this movement. The idea of the third movement is from folk tune musical features in Shanxi province, such as indirect melody, resounding and free, expressive emotion, etc.

*The North Suite:*

I: The Crescent Moon at Mid-night

II: Silk Road

III: Shaanxi

Duration: ca.20 minutes.

Solo cello

# The North Suite

*The Crescent Moon at Mid-night*

Yunfei Li

**Adagio, graceful**

Violoncello

*mf*

8

17

24

29

31

34

37

Copyright © 2021 Yunfei Li | BMI

40 *mp* *f*

44 *mp* *f* *ff* *mf* *ff*

47 **B** Expressive  $\text{♩} = 86$  *f*

49 *f*

52 *f*

54 *f*

55 *f*

56 *f*





2

Emotionally

Vc. 39 *ff* *p* *fff*

Vc. 41

Vc. 43 Big vib. *ff*

Vc. 45 *mp* *f*

Vc. 51 *mf* *mp*

Vc. 56 **B** *p* *pp* *f*

Vc. 59

Vc. 61

Vc. 63



4

93 Vc. *L.H. pizz.* *f* *3*

98 Vc. *3*

103 Vc. *Big vib.* *3*

108 Vc. *5*

113 Vc. *5* *+* *+* *+*

117 Vc.

122 Vc. *5*

126 Vc. *6* *5*

129 Vc.

133 Vc. 

137 Vc. 

139 Vc. 

141 Vc. 

143 Vc. 

145 Vc.   
*mp*

147 Vc.   
*mp* *f*

150 Vc.   
*mp* *ff* *mp* *ff*

154 Vc. 

6

156 Vc. *mp*

158 Vc.

161 Vc.

165 Vc. **D** Energetic *f* *fp*

170 Vc. *ff* *mf*

175 Vc. *mp*

179 Vc. *f* *mf* *f* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr*

184 Vc. *ff* *5* *5*

186 Vc. L.H. pizz. *fff* *mf* *mp*

# The North Suite

Shaanxi

Violoncello

Freely

*mp*

6

*mf*

12

*mp*

17

pizz. arco *mf*

20

pizz. arco

24

*f*

26

29



54 3

55

56

57 *pp* *fff*

59 *mp*

63 *p* *f* *ff* L.H. pizz

68 *arco* L.H. pizz *arco* *ff*

73 *mp*

78 *mf*

4

82 *m.s.p.*  
*ffp* *fff*

86 *ord.*  
*mf* *ff*

89 *m.s.p.* *ord.*  
*ffp* *fff* *mp*

96 *pp*

Detailed description: This musical score is for a bass clef instrument. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff (measures 82-85) features a continuous sixteenth-note pattern with sixteenth rests, marked *ffp* and *fff*, and includes fingerings 6, 5, and 5. The second staff (measures 86-88) continues the sixteenth-note pattern, marked *mf* and *ff*, with fingerings 5, 6, 6, and 5. The third staff (measures 89-95) shows a change in texture, with a triplet of eighth notes marked *ffp* and *fff*, followed by a melodic line marked *ord.* and *mp*. The fourth staff (measures 96-98) features a sparse, rhythmic pattern of eighth notes marked *pp*.