

A Recording Project and Performance Guide of Five Award-Winning Chinese Piano

Works Composed After 2020

by

Chenbaixue Yang

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Baruch Meir, Co-Chair
Hannah Creviston, Co-Chair
Jody Rockmaker

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to support and promote piano compositions by emerging Chinese composers. The status of Chinese piano compositions will also be discussed and two prestigious composition competitions, “The First HsingHai Cup Composition Competition 2022” and “The WanYe Cup Composition Competition — New Piano Works in Chinese Style 2021” will be used as references.

Five contemporary composers, all born after 1990 and hereby referred to as the “new generation”, and their prizewinning piano works have been selected for this research. All five pieces share a common characteristic in that they utilize Western tonal systems or compositional methods of developing musical material, but still maintain Chinese cultural elements. They were selected because each work conveys representative characteristics of Chinese life in distinct ways. This paper contains information about each composer, as well as a discussion about the value of cultural fusion contained in each work. My goal is to fill a void in recorded resources while also providing a descriptive analysis of each work in terms of form, musical style, and material derived from Chinese culture. Performance guides of the selected piano works cover musical expression of borrowed Chinese traditional materials, technical points, and explanations of articulations and notations derived from other musical vocabularies.

DEDICATION

To my beloved grandfather Mr. Yulin Yang

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the chair of the National Piano Society of China, Prof. Ying Wu, who has long devoted himself to piano education and the promotion of Chinese piano works. It is he who inspired and encouraged me to draw attention to the piano music from my motherland. It is a fascination and pride to contribute to cultural exchange and integration through this research.

The whole family influenced me with their musical tastes and innate musical abilities, especially my beloved grandfather, Mr. Yulin Yang. He was originally a naval telegrapher operator, but devoted his life to the study of musical saw performance and pedagogy. Additionally, he was a Latin dancer and teacher and inspired me with his zeal and pure love towards music. His spirit will always remain in my heart.

During my over 20 years journey of piano learning. I was led and supported, and now it still is, by every teacher I met. Mentioned here or not, I would like to thank I would like to express my heartfelt thanks Ms. Qing Xie, Mr. Binnon Fu, Prof. Yixin Liu, Dr. Xiao Chen, Dr. Xiang Huang and Dr. David Westfall, who generously taught me without reservation during my first stage of music learning.

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CHAPTER 1

FIVE AWARD-WINNING CHINESE PIANO WORKS FROM THE NEW GENERATION

A Bridge to the Global Stage

Chinese piano repertoire has been evolving since the publication of Yuanren Zhao's *The March of Peace* in 1915.¹ Although some scholars have tried to bring more Chinese composers and compositions to the public eye, Chinese piano works have nonetheless remained relatively undiscovered. While the Western world seeks piano works from under-represented composers, these compositions provide new possibilities for broadening the classical music repertoire. There are few recordings and limited research available in the United States on the piano music of the younger generations of Chinese composers. Under such circumstances, young composers need more effective ways and broader platforms to introduce their works to the public. Five selected award-winning piano works composed by composers born after 1990 will be explored in this research paper, hereby referred to as the “New Generation”.

“The First HsingHai Cup Competition 2022” and “The WanYe Cup Composition Competition — New Piano Works in Chinese Style 2021” are two prestigious Chinese composition competitions that have inspired and promoted many good works. Showing cultural pride is very important in China, so the goal of both competitions is to collect piano works that are representative of the cultural elements. They were founded with the intent to motivate and support young Chinese composers while also commemorating

¹ “The March of Peace” was the first officially published Chinese piano piece.

Chinese composers of the past. The success of both the HsingHai Cup and the WanYe Cup has greatly boosted the development of Chinese solo piano works. The influence of these two competitions is reflected in the wide range of represented regions and the large number of participants: 135 compositions worldwide competed in the WanYe Cup, and 195 works were submitted to the HsingHai Cup.² The judges were all well-respected Chinese composers and pianists, such as Danwen Wei (outstanding pianist, professor at Central Conservatory of China), Wanghua Chu (respected Chinese composer), Ying Wu (Professor at the Central Conservatory of Music and President of the Piano Society of the China Musicians' Association) and Zhao Zhang (esteemed composer and Professor at the Central University for Nationalities' School of Music). The HsingHai Cup Competition, the only national competition approved by the Ministry of Education in China, also includes a piano competition. The winning compositions are assigned to the competitors in the final round, meaning these pieces immediately have opportunities to be performed, heard, recorded and evaluated, as well as published.

Such competitions are a great way to uncover advanced Chinese piano works and composers. For example, the composition competition launched by Alexander Tcherepnin in 1934 brought awareness to Luting He and his piece *The Cowherd's Flute*. Then, in 1985, Chen Yi won the 4th National Music Competition with her piano work *DuoYe*.³ These competitions also reveal the overall level of Chinese piano repertoire. The famous Chinese composer, pianist, and educator, Shande Ding, who was the first pianist

² Suling Liu, "The name card of contemporary Chinese piano works to the world stage -- Postscript to the 19th 'Xinghai Cup' National Piano Competition and the first China Piano Composition Competition," *Musical Instrument Magazine* 10, (2022): 4.

³ Chen Ji, "The Competition is a Medium to Stimulate the Composition of Chinese Piano Works", *Music Weekly*. (August 3, 2022): A04.

in the history of Chinese music to record and give solo recitals, commented on the Compositions and Performance Competition of Chinese Style Piano Works 1987:

“The discussion and controversy of Chinese style is quite heated. Most of the judges think that Chinese style cannot be limited to pentatonic systems and melodies, and only relies on Chinese folk melodies and simple traditional materials combined with European compositional skills of different periods, such a Chinese style is incomplete. The style should be a well-unified figure, including the artistic image and creative skills of the work should have Chinese temperament, artistic conception, and the spirit of the time. This requires the works to be innovative not only in the melodies but also in the artistic image, musical vocabulary, and creative skills with the Chinese style, temperament, artistic conception, and spirit of The Times.”⁴

The artistic value of Chinese piano works is constantly scrutinized in these competitions, and so, composers refine their work to better express their vision for Chinese piano music. Although competitions have their limitations, as they may encourage composers to write within very specific guidelines and timelines, rather than giving them artistic freedom and genuineness, they provide an important platform for relatively unknown composers to showcase their work, promoting the development of Chinese music and playing an important role in the internationalization of Chinese culture.

A General Introduction to the Selected Works and the Composers

I have chosen five award-winning pieces by Chinese composers: *The Impression of Nanzha* by Lu Yuchen, *Xia* by Wang Yihan, *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera* by Xu Haoting, “*Tuo Yi (Memories of Shantou) – Hero’s Song and Dance*” by Zhao Wei, and *Enduri* by Zhao Yiru.⁵

⁴ Shande Ding, “On the Composition and Performance Competition of Chinese Style Piano Works,” *Music Lovers* 1 (January 1988): 2.

⁵ Names of the composers are stated in Chinese tradition: last name first, then first name.

Lu Yuchen (b. 2001) is pursuing a master's degree in composition at Nanjing University of the Arts. His piano work *The Impression of Nanzha* was awarded third prize in the WanYe Cup 2021 competition. This work was composed in the spring of 2021 and was inspired by the folk song *The Twelve Boats of Nanzha*. Nanzha is a small valley in Jiangsu Province, famous for its melodic folk songs, which are a prominent component of the region's cultural heritage. Before Yuchen started his musical studies, he was training for chemistry competitions at his high school. In his early years as a composer, he was self-taught until he was admitted to the Nanjing University of Arts in 2017. In 2021 and 2022, he participated in compositional programming for the Jiangsu propaganda video shown at the China Pavilion of the Dubai World Exposition.⁶

Wang Yihan (b. 2001) is an undergraduate student studying composition at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, China. Her piano work *Xia* was awarded second prize in the First HsingHai Cup Composition Competition 2022. Yihan has been influenced by romantic ideals of liberty and is strongly influenced by literature. This work reflects her appreciation of the chivalrous spirit of ancient China. Yihan showed great musical talent at a young age and was also interested in writing prose. Composing music has proven to be the perfect combination of her two passions.

Xu Haoting (b. 2007) is the youngest composer included in this research paper. His piano work *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera* won third prize in the First HsingHai Cup Composition Competition 2022. He is now studying at the Affiliated Middle School of the China Conservatory of Music in Beijing, China, with an emphasis

⁶ Chen Cong, "Good News|| Lu Yuchen, a member of the Musicians Association of our city, won the second prize of Jiangsu Digital Music Works Collection and Selection in 2022," Xuzhou Federation of Literature and Art, Jiangsu Province. Accessed February 4, 2024. <http://www.xzwyw.com/article/Detail/11267>

on music theory and composition. Influenced by his father, who is himself a composer of Chinese traditional opera, he has been fond of music and Chinese opera since his childhood. He showed musical talent early in life and started to learn piano at three years old.

Zhao Wei (b. 1999) is currently an undergraduate student studying composition at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, China. His piano work “Memory of Shantou – Hero’s Song and Dance” from his musical collection *The Memory of Shantou*, won the Merit Award in the WanYe Cup 2021. Tuo, Wei Zhao’s hometown, is an alternative name for Shantou, a city in Guangdong. The entire work is inspired by the Teoswa culture which has deeply influenced Shantou.

Zhao Yiru (b. 2001) is an undergraduate student studying composition at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, China. He has won more than twenty awards, including the Youngest Composer Award at the Italian Golden Lake Composition Competition and the Chamber Music Group Grand Prize of the AMIGDALA Composition Competition. His piano work *Enduri* won first prize in the First HsingHai Cup Composition Competition 2022 and *The Impression of the Gong* won second prize in the WanYe Cup 2021. *Enduri* represents the ancestral awe of nature. This work was inspired by the religious dance and folk music of the fishing and hunting ethnic groups in Northern China, especially the Manchu group.⁷

Early Chinese piano works such as *The March of Peace* and *The Cowherd’s Flute* borrow Chinese folk melodies more directly, are simpler in musical structure, and use

⁷ Chen Ji, “Rooted in the Cultural Characteristics of Their Hometown, the Two Award-Winning Works Show the Perspective of Young People,” *Music Weekly*, (August 26, 2022), <https://ie.bjd.com.cn/bjrbbeijinghao/contentShare/6079619ae4b0ae1bb0032577/AP63086e15e4b0f80526940f3b.html>.

more traditional tonal systems from both the Chinese and Western world. Since the Chinese Economic Reform in the late twentieth century, musicians have had contact with Western culture. At the same time, due to the traumatic effect of the Cultural Revolution, the influence of traditional Chinese culture was weakened. The younger generation's compositional styles are much more inspired by contemporary music trends and show a strong tendency toward atonal, pantonal, and prepared-piano music with more advanced compositional techniques. Finding a balance between nationalism and contemporary Western compositional trends leads to a diversity of musical styles and innovative music. Due to its timbral capabilities, the piano is an excellent vessel for this further development of music.

The diverse possibilities of such cultural fusions are shown clearly in the five selected pieces. Each piece engages these different cultural elements, informed not only by traditional music but also each composer's personal understanding of Chinese philosophy. Chinese culture is rich, expansive, and profound, with a long musical history that provides a wealth of musical material and possibilities for the composition of contemporary piano music. Additionally, combining elements from the East and the West will both appeal to and broaden the horizons of both Chinese and Western audiences.

CHAPTER 2

ENDURI

Overview of *Enduri*

The concept of *Enduri* is derived from the Manchu ethnic culture and related Shamanic cultures that have radiated out to the three great northeastern provinces of China: the Liao Ning, Hei Long Jiang, and Ji Lin provinces. *Enduri* means “god” in the Manchu language. It is not a representational figure like the Greek and Roman gods or the God of the Abrahamic faith but rather a deified faith in nature, on which human society depends for everything. In order to express the music with the appropriate spirit, one needs to have a general understanding of Manchu culture and the ritual activities of Shamanism.

Enduri has an arch structure with two themes and a fugue section and can be generally divided into a ternary form. Both A and B subsections can be divided into smaller-scale ternary forms with an exposition, transition and recapitulation.

Intro 1–46	A 47–119	B 120–45	C 146–65	B' 166–82	A' 183–231	Coda 232–56
	Theme I: 47–73 Dvlp: 74–90 Trans: 91–101 Recap: 102–19	Theme II: 120–30 Trans: 131–34 Theme II': 135–45	Fugue	Theme II Variant	Theme I: 183–96 Trans: 197–223 Theme I': 224–31	

Table 2.1: Zhao Yiru, *Enduri*, formal structure

The Rhythm, Melodies and Sound

The Manchu people have lived in the land of China since ancient times. As a nomadic group, the traditional skill of mounted hunting has influenced their folk music style, imbuing it with a constrained and valiant characteristic.⁸ Manchu folk songs usually have a strong sense of rhythmic pulse with drums and bells often used as accompanying instruments. Additionally, because of the influence of the Altaic language family where the accent of a verb usually falls on the last syllable, the typical rhythmic pattern in Manchu folk music is “short at the front and long at the back”.⁹ The “Great Three Beats” 老三点 (Figure 2.1) is the simplest and most common rhythmic pattern and we see it at the beginning of *Enduri* (Figure 2.2).¹⁰



Figure 2.1: Rhythmic Pattern of The “Great Three Beats”

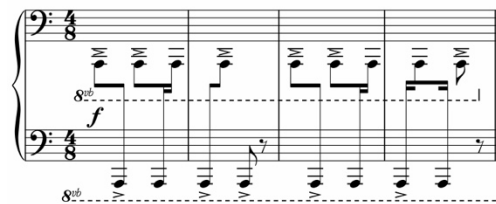


Figure 2.2: Zhao Yiru, *Enduri*, mm. 1-4_Yiru Zhao, *Enduri* (Beijing: Central Conservatory of Music Press, 2022)

Other variant patterns, such as “Five Beats” and “Seven Beats,” are also used in this piece. A Manchu folk song is usually filled with repetitive rhythmic patterns, making

⁸ "满族," Wikipedia, last modified May 14, 2024, <https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E6%BB%A1%E6%97%8F>

⁹ Binna Zhang, “A Brief Introduction to the Characteristics of Manchu Folk Songs,” *Manzu Minority Research* 111 (February 2013): 118

¹⁰ Yiru Zhao, *Enduri* (Beijing: Central Conservatory of Music Press, 2022)

the musical style simple and direct. Zhao Yiru clearly understands and tries to retain this essential Manchu characteristic but also attempts to create more tension and vitality through irregular rhythmic patterns that combine beats in both odd and even numbers. The repetitive rhythmic patterns in Theme 1 (Figure 2.3) and Section B' (Figure 2.4) are



Figure 2.3: Zhao Yiru, *Enduri*, m. 52, L.H



Figure 2.4: Zhao Yiru, *Enduri*, m. 168, L.H part

two clear examples, the latter being derived from the “Five Beats”.

This characteristic repetition does not only apply to rhythmic patterns but also to the development of melodic lines. Melodic lines in Manchu folk music do not have many twists and turns but are more direct and regular. Manchu music is commonly derived from Chinese pentatonic scales and modes and then developed in sequences of three adjacent tones that cycle through a particular mode.¹¹ There are fewer melodic jumps in

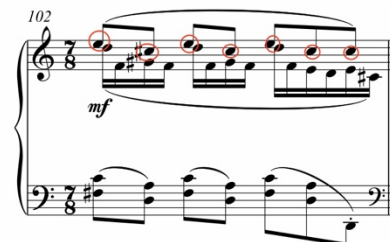


Figure 2.5: Zhao Yiru, *Enduri*, m. 102

¹¹ Binna Zhang, “A Brief Introduction to the Characteristics of Manchu Folk Songs,” *Manzu Minority Research* 111 (February 2013): 116.



Figure 2.6: Zhao Yiru, *Enduri*, mm. 120-123

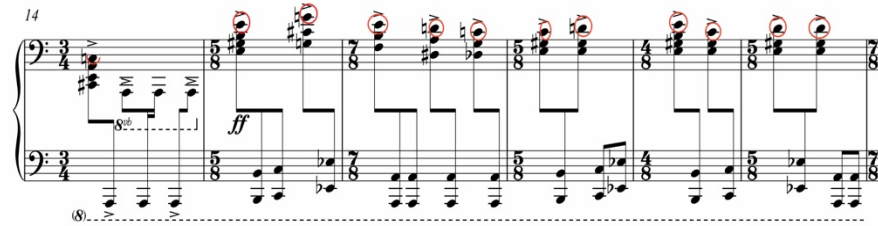


Figure 2.7: Zhao Yiru, *Enduri*, mm. 14-19

Manchu folk music and we see this in Theme I and Theme II of *Enduri* (Figures 2.5 and 2.6, circled in red), as well as in its introduction (Figure 2.7) and coda.

Even when a phrase ascends to a decorative high note, it immediately turns back to the tonic key (Figure 2.8, circled in red). In order to add harmonic and melodic intrigue



Figure 2.8: Zhao Yiru, *Enduri*, m. 109 (in treble clef)

to the piece, the composer uses polytonality and abrupt modulations, as well as combinations of artificial and pentatonic scales.

Throughout sections A and A', we can see Zhao Yuru's use of polytonality. In m.47, (Figure 2.9) the melodies in both hands (circled in red) would be sung on the syllables *Zhi* (Sol) and *Jue* (Mi) of the Chinese pentatonic scale, but in this case, the right-hand melody refers to A major while the left-hand melody is in F major.

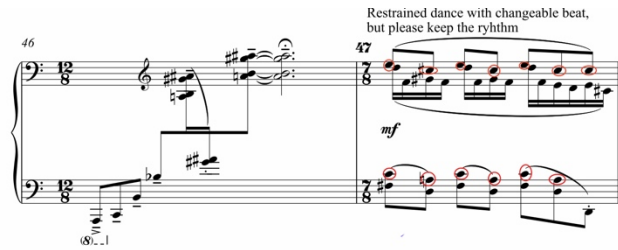


Figure 2.9: Zhao Yiru, *Enduri*, m. 46-47

Abrupt modulations are also used frequently in this piece (Figure 2.10, circled in red in the melodic line). Still using *Zhi* (Sol) and *Jue* (Mi) for the melodies of each measure, we can see the sudden changes of key from C major in m. 53 to A major in m. 54, and then again to E-flat major in m. 55, without any common tones or chords.



Figure 2.10: Zhao Yiru, *Enduri*, mm. 53-55

As part of the folk style of this work, the composer makes extensive reference to the dance music and characteristic instruments of shamanic rituals. In addition, using pitches from the extremely low and high registers of the keyboard makes this music even more dramatic. The strong, low pitches in the introduction mimic the intense beating of the drums, and the conversational figures in Theme I can represent the communication with spirits during a Shaman's ritual activities.

In the ecstatic recapitulation of Theme II in mm. 166–82, the texture of the right hand imitates the sound of *Xisha*, a traditional Manchu set of tubular bells that is worn around the Shaman's waist, which sounds when dancing (Figure 2.11). Dissonant intervals such as tritones are used to imitate the sound of *Xisha* and other percussion instruments throughout the entire work, further enhancing the Shamanic dance quality with the bell-ringing accompaniment of this music. The compositional techniques used in this piece create a mysterious and spiritual atmosphere that invites continuous contemplation from both the performer and the audience.



Figure 2.11: Picture of *Xisha Huitu*. "Traditional Chinese Waist Drum Performance." Accessed March 3, 2024. https://pic.huitu.com/pic/20200922/1137059_20200922052536790070_0.jpg.

Performance Guide for *Enduri*

The difficulty of playing this piece lies in managing its complex rhythms and bringing out the melodic lines hidden inside the unexpected harmonies. It is crucial for the performer to convey the rhythmic pulse that is derived from the Manchu folk music and Shamanic dance rituals. Although the harmonic system in this piece is complex, the melody is mostly found in the top notes. The performer must find the appropriate balance to bring out the melodic line while still maintaining the dynamics marked on the score. A firmer touch, with fingers in a nearly straight-downward position, will achieve a deeper

and more solid sound for the melodic notes; a flatter finger position with lighter weight should be applied to non-melodic notes.

The introduction mimics a strong and intense drum beat. To ensure that the melodic line can be heard clearly, the right hand should be strongly supported with the pinky taking most of the weight of the arm. Each note needs to be played emphatically and for the same length. I suggest using a metronome while practicing this section, as a steady rhythmic pulse is required; however, due to the frequent time signature changes in this section, performers should set the metronome to play the eighth note subdivision.

Theme I contains two melodic voices (Figure 2.10) each at a different dynamic level. The dynamic is marked *mezzo-forte* for the higher voice in m. 53, then changes to *mezzo-piano* in m. 54 for the lower voice, and then back to *mf* again for the higher material. It is important to create a conversational effect, with a clear contrast between the two dynamics. Any transition between these dynamics needs to be avoided, as a more direct and sudden change of dynamics is required to express the voices of two characters, a female and a male—or the Shaman and the spirit—in a dramatic way.

The challenge of learning the fugue lies in counting precisely. For ease, performers should count in small subdivisions. For example, in the theme (Figure 2.12), counting the eighth note in m. 146 and the sixteenth note in m.147 will make it easier to play the rhythmic patterns more accurately. Performers need to pay close attention to the indicated dynamic levels, as, from mm. 146-159, they change with each repetition (Figure 2.12, marked in red with letter “T”).

Lento
 赋格段, 非常神秘地
 Fugue, very mysteriously

146

Theme

p

mp

149

mf

Figure 2.12: Zhao Yiru, *Enduri*, mm. 146-151

An arpeggio-like transition is used many times throughout this piece (Figure 2.13). Similar patterns also show up in m. 101, mm. 164-165 and mm. 255-256. Each pattern should be completed with one gesture to smoothly connect the line between the hands.

Enduri tells a story about nature, God and human beings through music that is based on the cultural backgrounds of Manchu and Shamanism. Through Zhao Yiru's composition, we are able to explore the mysteries of Eastern occultism and their reverence for omniscience and connection to the universe.

accel.

73

p

Figure 2.13: Zhao Yiru, *Enduri*, m. 73

CHAPTER 3

A TEENAGER WITH THE CHARM OF BEIJING OPERA

Overview of *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera*

After the Great Cultural Revolution that took place shortly after the People's Republic of China was established, the younger generation developed new thoughts on traditional culture. According to the composer Xu Haoting's introduction, *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera* dramatizes the generational divide through the eyes of a teenager who expresses his dreams wrapped in his love for Beijing opera. The narrative follows his journey from embracing lofty aspirations to experiencing unfulfilled ambitions, and ultimately, rallying himself to move forward once more.¹² The innocence conveyed by the work resonates with the current generation of young people; however, borrowing musical elements from Beijing Opera to express such a theme is quite innovative.

A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera is in ternary form. Section A states the theme and its variations, introducing the character of the innocent teenager with his unfettered dream. The texture and structure are quite direct and simple, with modulations between each variation. In section B, the teenager loses his way and his character develops. It starts tenderly at a slow tempo before an increasingly dense accompaniment texture agitatedly pushes the excitement to its peak. We then return to the theme in section A' which retains the purity and simplicity of the original but in a lower register.

¹² Haoting Xu, Introduction to the Music, *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera* (unpublished score, 2022)

A 1–44	B 45–82	A' 83–123	Coda 124–31
Theme I: 1–17 Trans.: 18–20 Var. I: 21–30 Trans.: 31–35 Var. 2: 36–44	Trans.: 45–55 Theme II: 56–82	Theme I': 83–94 Var. 3: 95–115 Trans.: 116–23	

Table 3.1: Xu Haoting, *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera*, formal structure

The Elements Borrowed from Beijing Opera

There have been many cases of borrowing from Beijing opera in piano music. *DuoYe* by Chen Yi, *Pi-Huang* by Zhao Zhang and *Instants d'un Opéra de Pékin* by Qigang Chen are all well-known Chinese piano works that draw elements from Beijing Opera in different ways; however, dramatizing these influences in order to tell a personal story is unique. Beijing Opera has a number of unique properties that help convey specific roles, characters, genres, and performing styles, making it an exceptional art form to depict the inner lives of characters and express a variety of emotions.

The main theme in *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera* is derived from the original rhythmic patterns of *ErHuang* and its tradition. *ErHuang* is one of the main melodic patterns in Beijing Opera for which the strings of the accompanimental instrument, *Jing Hu*, are tuned to an open fifth of G and D.¹³ As the Chinese musical system is organized around relative pitches, the melodies in *ErHuang* are mostly in the key of *Zhi* (sol) and *Shang* (re). The *ErHuangYuanBan* is traditionally used as an instrumental introduction or a transition in Beijing Opera. Although the musicians can improvise in the *ErHuang* tradition, the melodies typically use similar patterns (Figure

¹³ *Jing Hu* is a traditional Chinese bowed string instrument with two strings, primarily used in Beijing opera.

3.1). It is represented in numbered musical notation which relates to relative pitches. Numbers 1–7 refer to *do* through *ti* in Western solfege. The dot marked above the number means an octave higher, while a single line marked under the number means an eighth note, a double line means a sixteenth note, and so on.

When comparing the motives of *ErHuang* (Figure 3.1, marked in red) and the theme stated in *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera* (Figure 3.2), one can see a clear resemblance.¹⁴ The theme even ends on *sol* which matches with the key of *Zhi* in the *ErHuang* melodic pattern. The melodies in *ErHuang* usually have very few jumps and more steps, which we can also hear in the music.

(一) 二黄过门(5²弦)

1. 二黄原板过门^①
 ($\frac{2}{4}$ 中速——中快 $\text{♩} = 70 - 120$)
 (1) 首起过门

① (可用【夺头】；【抽头】；【慢长锤】；“扎多乙”入)^② 0 $\underline{56}$ | $\overset{+}{1} \overset{+}{3} \underline{216}$ | $\overset{\otimes}{565} \underline{63}$

$\overset{\wedge}{2} \overset{\wedge}{5} \underline{3276}$ | $\overset{+}{5} \overset{+}{3} \underline{2161}$ | $\overset{\Delta}{5} \overset{\wedge}{2} \overset{\wedge}{3} \overset{\wedge}{6}$ | $\overset{+}{5} \overset{+}{6} \underline{5676}$ | $\overset{*}{1} \overset{\wedge}{6} \overset{\wedge}{2} \overset{\wedge}{3} \underline{216}$ | $\overset{\wedge}{5} \overset{\wedge}{6} \overset{\wedge}{5} \overset{\wedge}{6} \overset{\wedge}{1}$ |

② (可用“扎多大”；【半截夺头】“扎扎仓”入) 0 $\overset{\boxtimes}{6}$ | $\overset{\wedge}{1} \overset{\wedge}{2} \overset{\wedge}{3} \overset{\wedge}{6}$ | $\overset{\wedge}{5} \overset{\wedge}{6} \overset{\wedge}{5} \overset{\wedge}{6} \overset{\wedge}{4} \overset{\wedge}{3}$

$\overset{\wedge}{2} \overset{\wedge}{3} \overset{\wedge}{5} \underline{3276}$ | $\overset{\wedge}{5} \overset{\wedge}{3} \underline{2161}$ | $\overset{\Delta}{5} \overset{\wedge}{6} \overset{\wedge}{2} \overset{\wedge}{5} \underline{3276}$ | $\overset{\wedge}{5} \overset{\wedge}{6} \overset{\wedge}{1} \overset{\wedge}{6} \overset{\wedge}{5} \overset{\wedge}{3} \overset{\wedge}{2}$ | $\overset{*}{1} \overset{\wedge}{2} \overset{\wedge}{3} \overset{\wedge}{6}$ | $\overset{\wedge}{5} \overset{\wedge}{6} \overset{\wedge}{5} \overset{\wedge}{6} \overset{\wedge}{1}$ |

Figure 3.1: Melodic Patterns of *ErHuang* Yueqi Xuexi. "Traditional Chinese Waist Drum (Yaogu)." Accessed March 15, 2024. <https://img.yueqixuexi.com/uploads/allimg/170831/1-1FS1091A1.png>.

¹⁴ Haoting Xu, *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera* (unpublished score, 2022)

Allegro 欢快,活力四射地 ♩=136

mp

$\frac{2}{4}$ 56 | 1 2 3 6 | 5 6 5 6 |

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

Figure 3.2: Xu Haoting, *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera*, Theme Transferred to Numbered Musical Notation Haoting Xu, *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera* (unpublished score, 2022)

The rhythm in *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera* is pretty simple as it is drawn from the rhythmic material of *ErHuang* which has a very regular strong-weak pattern in 2/4 time. From the typical texture of the accompaniments in *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera* (Figure 3.3), we can see a simple and regular rhythmic pulse that matches that of the *ErHuang*.

1

2

3

Figure 3.3: Xu Haoting, *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera*, Textures of the Accompaniments

Jin-la-man-chang — slow singing with a fast accompaniment—is another typical feature of Beijing Opera. *Jin-la-man-chang* is usually used to portray strong emotions because the slow melody seems even more powerful against the flowing accompaniment.¹⁵ In *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera*, *Jin Da Man Chang* is used in the B section to express the indecisiveness of the teenager and his mood swings (Figure 3.4, line 1). It is used again in section A' (Figure 3.4, line 2) to express the



Figure 3.4: Xu Haoting, *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera*, Examples of *Jin-la-man-chang*

nervous excitement of the teenager when he finally redirects himself back onto the track of his destiny.

¹⁵ Chen-gia Tsai and Lu-ting Hsia, “Musical Features and Theatrical Uses of Jin-La-Man-Chang Rhythmic Mode in Xiqu,” *Taipei Theatre Journal* 25 (2017): 109.



Figure 3.5: Xu Haoting, *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera*, mm. 26-27

In Beijing Opera, percussion instruments are often used in the accompanying ensemble to create a ringing resonance. Xu Haoting imitates the percussive sound of the small Peking opera gong (Figure 3.5) and the Gong (Figure 3.6).

Performance Guide for *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera*

There are two main moods expressed in this piece. In A and A', the music generally remains delightful and enthusiastic, despite the emotional nuances that are symbolic of



Figure 3.6: Xu Haoting, *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera*, mm. 49-50 the development of the teenage character. The beginning of the piece is marked “Allegro 欢快，活力四射地” which means “lively, energetically”. It is important to continue this character of ease and levity throughout and to properly balance the percussive accompaniment and vivacious melodies. In addition, the steady rhythmic pulse that is derived from *ErHuang* should be maintained and long pedals should be avoided so that a clean, clear sound is maintained in the percussive accompaniment.

Section B begins with a sense of tranquility before becoming more and more enthusiastic shown by the growing density of the accompaniment (Figure 3.7). It is important not to begin this section too quickly as the left-hand accompaniment becomes much more difficult. In mm. 71–79, the fast-running thirty-second notes and occasional non-idiomatic fingerings (Figure 3.8) need to remain at a steady tempo. When the texture descends, the pianist can neither stretch their finger to reach the next note nor do a quick finger crossing. Here, the solution is to lift the wrist up and quickly relocate the hand position to the next group of notes (wrist motion marked in blue in Figure 3.8). Additionally, it is impossible for most pianists to play all three notes in the first chord of the left hand (circled in red in Figure 3.8), so the performer should play the bottom octave first and then the upper note.



Figure 3.7: Xu Haoting, *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera*,
Examples of Growing Density

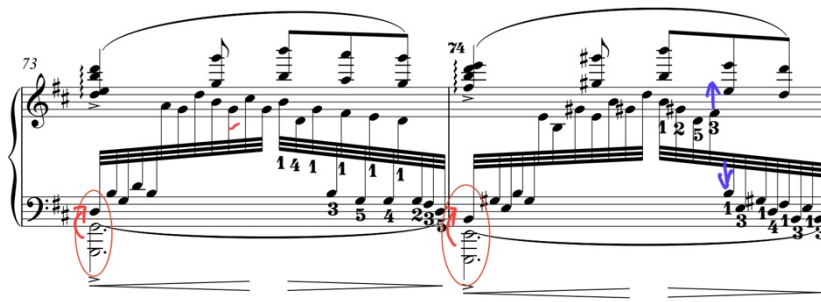


Figure 3.8: Xu Haoting, *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera*, Example of Non-idiomatic Fingerings

The final chord of Section B in m. 82 (Figure 3.9) is marked *subito piano*. A dramatic and effective way to realize this dynamic change is to release the inner notes of the chord immediately after playing and hold only the top and bottom notes (circled in red in Figure 3.9). The pedal should be depressed with the fingers and then released with the middle notes, using only the fingers to hold the top and bottom notes.



Figure 3.9: Xu Haoting, *A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera*, m.82

A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera is an attempt to bridge the generational divide between the younger generation and the charm of Beijing Opera while also connecting Chinese culture to the world.

CHAPTER 4

XIA

Overview of *Xia*

侠 (*Xia*) represents the spirit of chivalry in ancient Chinese folk warriors. It is an important element in traditional Chinese culture, as well as an indispensable theme in folk literature. The overarching concepts of *Xia* embody idealized principles that often reflect resistance to the oppression of the people in ancient Chinese feudal society. These principles include noble characteristics such as prioritizing justice over personal gain, maintaining the integrity of one's word, offering timely support and rescue in urgent situations, eliminating cruelty, ensuring peace among the masses, providing for the weak and poor, displaying generosity, and valuing independence, among others.

Wang Yihan drew inspiration for her piano work *Xia* from her understanding of these ancient ideals. *Xia* has an eclectic five-section structure, with each section based on a specific scene.

A	B	C	D	E	Coda
mm. 1–30	mm. 31–59	mm. 60–125	mm. 126–46	mm. 147–76	mm. 177–88

Table 4.1: Wang Yihan, *Xia*, formal structure

The character of each section is presented by expressive markings. Below is the chart of the translated Chinese titles and other markings in *Xia*.



(一) 乱世 ♩ = 88 急促地	(Section A) “Troubled Times” Hurriedly
(二) 云游 Andante rubato ♩ = 72 恣意徜徉地	(Section B) “Wander on the Cloud” Without restraint
(三) 剑气 ♩ = 126	(Section C) “The Might of the Sword”
(四) 隐世 Andante ♩ = 52 清雅幽静地	(Section D) “Hermit” Quietly
(五) 江湖 ♩ = 104 纵横捭阖地	(Section E) “‘Jiang Hu’ Free World” Strategically and Tactically
15 挥洒自如地 	Without restraint and freely
 踏板踩到底后逐渐抬起	Push the pedal to the bottom and then lift up gradually.

Table 4.2: Wang Yihan, *Xia*, translation of Chinese marks

Performance Guide for *Xia*

The imagery in section A is related to tumultuous crowds during periods of civil unrest. To fit with the title “Troubled Times,” and to create a feeling of tension and anxiety, the texture in section A is a fast sixteenth-note pattern that imitates the sound of footsteps (Figure 4.1). Irregular accented notes are added in higher and lower pitches which I feel represent unpredictable obstructions and crises. The rhythmic pulse needs to be steady while bringing out the accented notes. Pedaling is not needed for the staccato notes.

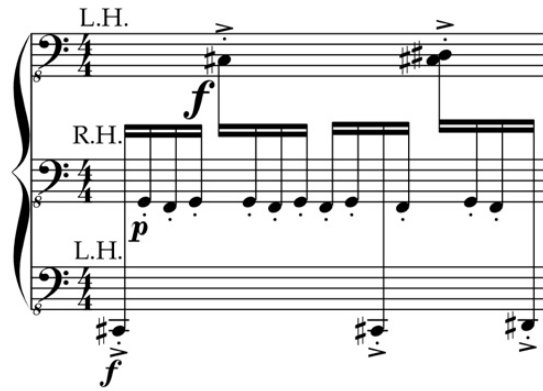


Figure 4.1: Wang Yihan, *Xia*, m. 1 Yihan Wang,
Xia (unpublished score, 2022)

In mm. 15–30, the melody is derived from an ancient piece of Chinese music called *酒狂* or *Drunken Ecstasy* in English. *Drunken Ecstasy* is about a hero with lofty ideals who lives as a hermit to avoid troubled times and indulges in wine to forget his sorrows. This song utilizes abrupt modulation to depict chaos and the sense of injustice in the hero's heart. *Drunken Ecstasy* was composed for a Chinese plucking instrument, so a mellow and percussive sound is preferred here in the piano version. Short pedaling can be used on the melodic notes for better resonance. and with the triplet texture, a swaying and leisurely mood emerges (Figure 4.2).

15 挥洒自如地

The musical score for measures 15-17 consists of two staves. The right hand plays a series of arpeggiated chords, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note bass line. A 'cresc.' marking is placed above the right hand in measure 16. The time signature is 4/16.

18

The musical score for measure 18 consists of two staves. The right hand plays a series of arpeggiated chords, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note bass line. A 'dim.' marking is placed above the right hand in measure 18. The time signature is 4/16.

Figure 4.2: Wang Yihan, *Xia*, m. 15-18

According to a conversation with Yihan, the characteristics of the music are not only expressed by the music itself but are also revealed in the appearance of the visual notation. Section B is titled “Wander on the Cloud.” Arpeggiated gestures with a general dynamic of *piano* evoke the imagery of floating clouds (Figure 4.3). The texture of this section is sparse. To convey the feeling of wandering, the performer should pay attention to the steadiness of the big beats, but use *rubato* within the subdivisions.

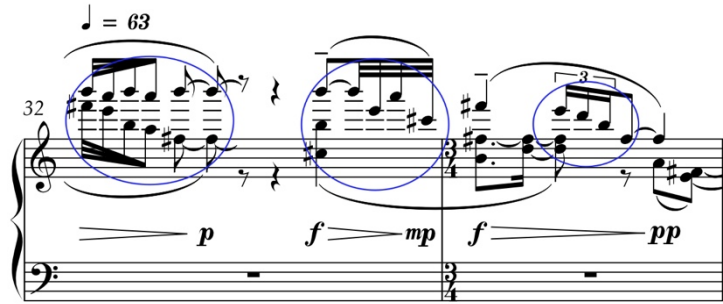


Figure 4.3: Wang Yihan, *Xia*, mm. 32-33

Titled “The Might of the Sword”, section C has a strong sense of conflict, as it describes a battle scene. Wang Yihan aimed to shape the notation in sharp clusters that appear in both higher and lower pitches depicting a swordfight (Figure 4.4). When

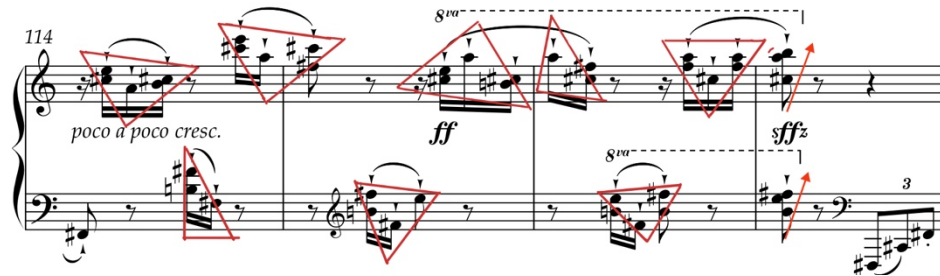


Figure 4.4: Wang Yihan, *Xia (Chivalry)*, mm. 114-117 performing these interjections, it is necessary to adopt a more aggressive approach, using short and crisp keystrokes, and emphasizing the accents marked on the score in a more exaggerated manner. “Yihan intended to apply the technique of panning or changing between audio channels through the use of alternating accents and large jumps back and



Figure 4.5: Wang Yihan, *Xia*, m. 25

forth between the low and high registers. Wang Yihan uses this technique again in section B mm. 19–20 and mm. 25–27 (Figure 4.5).

The overall atmosphere of Section D is one of soft and *legato* lines (Figure 4.6) to contrast with the battle scene. It has a much slower tempo and depicts the life of a hermit who lives alone and peacefully. The main goal when performing this section is to manage the balance between all three voices with different layers of dynamics. To realize the delicate color of this section, a performer can use a flatter hand position with firm fingertips, using more arm motion in a caressing way, until the music reaches *the piu mosso animato* in m. 136. The composer’s instructions specify that the high voice should be played as softly as possible using *portato* to create an ethereal and transparent sound. The middle voice should use *legato* to smoothly connect the notes, interacting with the high voice in a call-and-response manner similar to a canon. The bass voice should play a

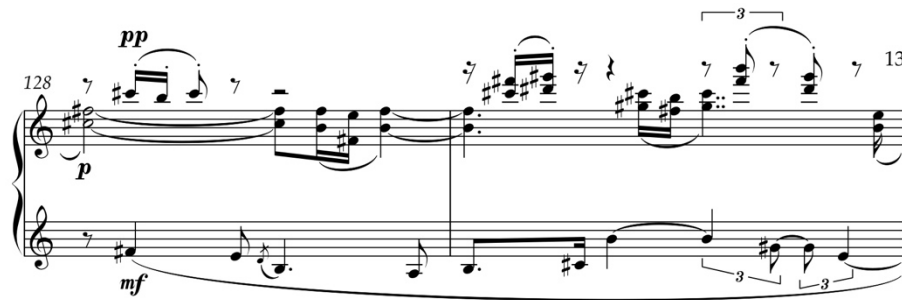


Figure 4.6: Wang Yihan, *Xia*, mm.128-129

distinct, singing melody line with an emphasis on continuity and smoothness. This approach ensures that each voice contributes to a layered and cohesive musical texture.

The music reaches its climax in Section E through a polyphonic, two-voice texture (Figure 4.7). It is titled “Jiang Hu” which means “Rivers and Lakes,” a metaphor in Chinese culture that represents the mortal world. The technical challenge in this section is

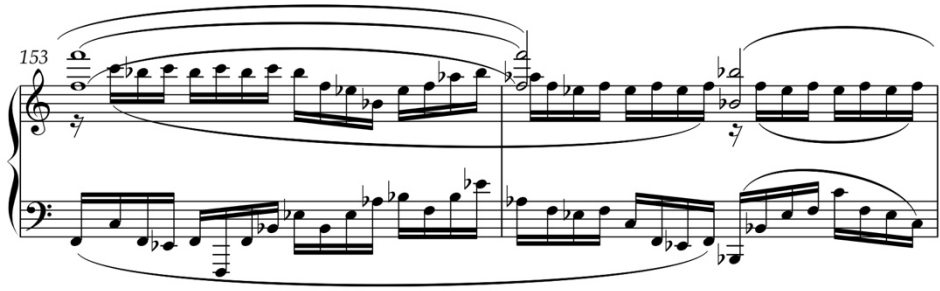


Figure 4.7: Wang Yihan, *Xia*, mm. 153-154

that the two hands need to be careful not to force the sound or lose control when phrasing in contrasting directions. Using arm gestures can help avoid mechanical playing.

In this work, composer Wang Yihan demonstrates delicate emotional expression combined with an independent and strong temperament. *Xia* is very innovative in both compositional concept and technique. The work integrates storytelling, imagery and the philosophy of the ancient Chinese folk warriors. It also places high musical and emotional demands on the performer. Both performers and listeners get a novel experience in this work.

CHAPTER 5

TUO YI (MEMORIES OF SHANTOU) – HERO’S SONG AND DANCE

Overview of Tuo Yi (Memories of Shantou) – Hero’s Song and Dance

The Teoswa culture originated and flourished in the southeast part of China, mainly in the region of Chaozhou and Shantou, two cities in the Guangdong province. Teoswa is also the Cantonese dialect of *Chao Shan*. Different traditional artistic media such as dancing music, folk music, and celebrations are derived from their ritual religious activities. Being a member of the Teoswa group, the composer expresses memories from his hometown and childhood in the solo piano collection *Tuo Yi (Memories of Shantou)*. “Tuo” is a nickname that represents this region and culture. “*Hero’s Song and Dance*”, a piece from this collection, uses typical elements from Yingge Dance and the folk music of the Great Percussion Band of Teoswa. Borrowed elements are arranged for piano while still maintaining the traditional characteristics of Teoswa culture.

Tuo Yi (Memories of Shantou) – Hero’s Song and Dance is in a ternary form with an introduction.

Intro mm. 1–12	A mm. 13–53	B mm. 54–95	A’ mm. 96–123
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Table 5.1: Zhao Wei, *Tuo Yi (Memories of Shantou) – Hero’s Song and Dance*, formal structure

The melodies in this piece are largely derived from the traditional Chinese pentatonic system. Compared with the folk music of Northern China, the folk music in the Teoswa area uses more decorative tones, such as *fa* and *ti*, rather than just focusing on the five main tones in the traditional Chinese pentatonic scale. This feature can be found in the thematic motifs of sections A and B. Although Yingge Dance has a heroic and

brave character, it is subtler and more exquisite than the equivalent folk music from the northern part of China.

The Imagery in *Tuo Yi (Memories of Shantou) – Hero’s Song and Dance*

Yingge dance typically depicts the 108 heroes in *Shui Hu Zhuan*, or *Water Margin*, which is a fictional work by Qing Dynasty author Shi NaiAn.¹⁶ Only men can participate in the dance which is designed for marching and dancing in the street, rather than the stage. Bold and exaggerated body movements representing different heroic properties and strong percussive accompaniment make this a very exciting dance.

As mentioned before, Yingge Dance is performed by marching through the streets, which means that the audience is not fixed and the dance has a property of mobility. In this case, the musical figures, whether melodic or rhythmic, have a tendency to be repetitive and in relatively simple textures. Throughout *Hero’s Song and Dance*, short and simple thematic motifs are continuously developed and manipulated, often being offset rhythmically or put in different registers (Figure 5.1, marked in red).



Figure 5.1: Zhao Wei, *Tuo Yi (Memories of Shantou) – Hero’s Song and Dance*, mm.17-18 Wei Zhao, *Tuo Yi (Memories of Shantou) – Hero’s Song and Dance* (unpublished score, 2021)

¹⁶ Anni Lv, “The Symbolic Interpretation of Puning Yingge Dance Language.” South China University of Technology, 2020, 6.

The most charming feature of this music is its strong dance-like rhythmic pulse, which comes from the Great Percussion Ensemble of Teoswa. This traditional folk-dance group has existed since ancient China. The transmission of these dances was largely oral until modern times, when 锣鼓经 (*Luo Gu Jing*, the Chinese Notation of Percussion) was invented to allow performers to accurately perform repertoire from former generations. The repertoire of the Great Percussion Ensemble of Teoswa usually has strong personal ties to the group, with each percussionist bringing their own representative repertoire and performing style. Being a part of folk activities such as religious rituals, The Great Percussion Band of Teoswa carries significant information on the history and development of Teoswa society and culture.¹⁷

The Great Percussion Band of Teoswa performs both *Pai Zi Tao* (fixed performance on the stage) and *Chang Xing Tao* (performing while marching or in an open space). Yingge dancing is accompanied by the latter, which is usually grander and livelier. The instrumentation changes according to the occasion. For marching, the ensemble is led by the bass drums and consists of different types and shapes of brass gongs, cymbals and string instruments.¹⁸ Zhao Wei uses low and wide chords to imitate the sound of the bass drum leading the ensemble (Figure 5.2, marked in red), combined with minor seconds (Figure 5.2, marked in blue) to imitate the sound of the other smaller percussion instruments. The rhythmic patterns in The Great Percussion Band of Teoswa

¹⁷ Yuan Zhao, “A Research of Chen Zuohui’s Performance Art of the Great Percussion Band of Teoswa.” Guangzhou University, 2022, 15.

¹⁸ Yuan Zhao, “A Research of Chen Zuohui’s Performance Art of the Great Percussion Band of Teoswa.” Guangzhou University, 2022, 15.

sometimes share similarities with those of jazz music, such as swung rhythms.¹⁹ Zhao Wei also utilizes this element in *Hero's Song and Dance* (Figure 5.3).



Figure 5.2: Zhao Wei, *Tuo Yi (Memories of Shantou) – Hero's Song and Dance*, mm. 13-14



Figure 5.3: Zhao Wei, *Tuo Yi (Memories of Shantou) – Hero's Song and Dance*, mm. 32-34

¹⁹ Yuan Zhao, "A Research of Chen Zuohui's Performance Art of the Great Percussion Band of Teoswa." Guangzhou University, 2022, 36.

Performance Guide of *Tuo Yi (Memories of Shantou) – Hero’s Song and Dance*

In religious rituals, Yingge dance is used for exorcisms. Zhao Wei reflects that in his piano piece. In the introduction (mm. 1–12), he introduces the figure of the apparition, using clusters of high pitches and unpredictable rhythms to create this ethereal musical character. It’s not necessary to fit every note precisely into a strict beat, as the character of the ghost should have a sense of improvisation. Performers should keep the larger beats consistent while avoiding mechanical playing.

The melody is derived from the Chinese pentatonic scale, with added chromaticism to build more tension in the music. In mm. 2–3, the cluster of notes in m. 2 has a strong feeling of dissonance and instability, while the notes in m. 3 are based on a pentatonic scale and much warmer and more consonant (Figure 5.4, circled in red). This contrast of light and dark references the two worlds of *Yin* and *Yang*. When performing, it is important to pay attention to this contrast, using different colors and touches.

The image displays a musical score for the piano piece 'Tuo Yi (Memories of Shantou) – Hero’s Song and Dance' by Zhao Wei, covering measures 1 through 4. The score is written in 9/8 time and includes a 'Rubato' marking with a tempo of approximately 70. The notation is presented in a grand staff format, with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The score features various dynamic markings, including *sfz* (sforzando), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *dim.* (diminuendo). The first measure (m. 1) begins with a *sfz* dynamic and a cluster of notes in the bass staff, which is circled in blue. The second measure (m. 2) contains a cluster of notes in the treble staff, circled in red, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The third measure (m. 3) features a cluster of notes in the treble staff, also circled in red, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The fourth measure (m. 4) includes a cluster of notes in the bass staff, circled in blue, marked with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The score also includes articulation marks such as accents and slurs, and a 'dim.' marking in the final measure.

Figure 5.4: Zhao Wei, *Tuo Yi (Memories of Shantou) – Hero’s Song and Dance* mm. 1-4

In sections A and A', the different layers of percussion instruments (see figure 5.2) need to be distinguished clearly. The pianist must give an accent on the bass chords while making a lighter, but still energetic sound for the upper intervals. Keeping a steady tempo for these sections is vital and practice with a metronome is suggested.

Unlike the lively and percussive A and A', the musical figures in the B section are more lyrical. This section can also represent a shift in perspective, shifting the view from the joyful, energetic troupe to the audience and surroundings which are tranquil and serene.

Zhao Wei's work expresses his memory of his hometown and traditional cultures in the Teoswa area, including Yingge dance. It borrows the typical folk features and dance rhythms from the Teoswa region in a way that connects with performer and audience alike.

CHAPTER 6

THE IMPRESSION OF NANZHA

Overview of The Impression of Nanzha


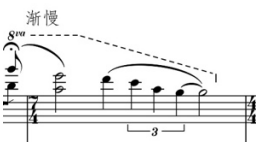


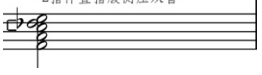
The inspiration for *The Impression of Nanzha* came from the folk music of Huaian, a city in Northern Jiangsu Province. Nanzha, a valley in Huaian, is famous for its rich waters and barcarolle-like songs. The theme of *The Impression of Nanzha* is derived from *The Twelve Boats*, a Nanzhan folk song. The composer, Lu Yuchen, who was born and raised in Jiangsu Province, was influenced by local culture while collecting folk melodies in Huaian.


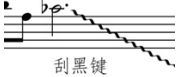



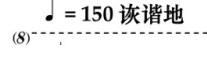
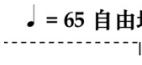
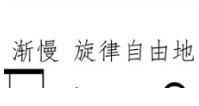
The Impression of Nanzha is in ternary form. In section A, Lu Yuchen used the melody of "*The Twelve Boats*" to create variations, transitioning from relatively conventional harmonic connections to more colorful and unexpected ones. Additionally, various elements are incorporated into the accompaniment texture to evoke vivid imagery of natural landscapes.

A mm.1-52	B mm.53-96	Trans. 97-108	A' 108-121
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Table 6.1: Lu Yuchen, *The Impression of Nanzha*, formal structure

In section B, the music has a sense of primitivism and wild energy expressed through complex beats and rhythmic patterns, discordant harmonies and polytonality. The composer made detailed articulation marks in the music and applied techniques such as stomping notes with the fist and slapping the black keys. As all the articulation marks are in Chinese, a translation is provided here for the performer's reference.

Marks in Chinese	Measure(s) it occurs	Translation into English
♩ = 60 - 68 广阔且自由地	m. 1	Widely and freely
 踏板由此持续6小节	m. 5	Hold the pedal for 6 measures from here
渐慢 	m. 17, m. 23, m. 29, m. 31, m. 48, m. 86, m. 114, m. 118	Rit.
稍快且自由地 22 	m. 22	A little faster and freely
慢起渐快至 ♩ = 62 	m. 26, m. 97	Start slowly, then accelerate
渐快 -----	m. 33	Accel.
由 ♩ = 68 快起渐慢 ----- h a b a c c c	m. 37	Start quickly, then accelerate
* 2指伸直指腹侧压双音 	m. 36	Straighten the 2 nd finger and use the finger pad to play the double notes
♩ = 60 诙谐且自由地	m. 38	Wittily and freely
渐快后逐渐渐慢 -----	m. 51	Accel. and then gradually slow down
♩ = 146 热烈地 -----	m. 53	Ardently

<p>拍黑键</p>  <p>(拍黑键部分均使用升号标注音块外框架的音高)</p>	m. 54	Slap the black keys (Slap the cluster chord indicated)
 <p>刮黑键</p>	m. 68	Glissando on black keys
<p>[花船舞节奏]</p>  <p>* 左手伴奏应弹得极为短促有颗粒感</p>	m. 69	[Rhythm of the <i>Flower Boat</i> dance] Left-hand texture should be played short and clean
<p>演奏时模仿人声“敲锣打鼓”四字的声调与重音</p>  <p>敲 打 锣 鼓</p>	m. 81	Imitating the tune and accent of “Qiāo Luó Dǎ Gǔ”
<p>拳击双音</p>  <p>srb</p>	m. 87	Play double notes with the fist.
<p>♩ = 140 自由地 无需严格遵循44拍音的时值 弹出韵味即可</p>	m. 88	Freely, no need to obey the rhythmic pulse of 4/4 beat, but play with charm
<p>♩ = 150 诙谐地</p>  <p>(s)</p>	m. 92	Wittily
<p>♩ = 65 自由地</p> 	m. 103	Freely
<p>渐慢 旋律自由地</p> 	m. 110	Rit, free melody

慢起渐快后渐慢 8'	m. 114	Start slowly, accel., and then rit.
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Table 6.2: Lu Yuchen, *The Impression of Nanzha*, translation of Chinese marks

Folk Elements in *The Impression of Nanzha*

The evolution of folk songs in the Huaian area spans a rich and storied history. Fueled by the region's abundant water systems, life for its inhabitants was often disrupted by floods, leading to periods of displacement and difficulty. However, amidst these challenges, the waterways served as vital arteries for transportation, albeit ones fraught with the perils of wartime strife. Despite the hardships, many folk artists persevered, relying on their talents in singing and busking to eke out a livelihood. This perseverance afforded local folk music the opportunity to transcend its immediate surroundings and resonate across wider regions.

Over numerous generations and waves of migration, diverse strands of local folk music merged and evolved into three distinct cultural tapestries: Jinhu Yangge, Huaiyin folk tunes, and the evocative Nanzhan folk songs. As a repository of cultural heritage, Nanzhan folk songs encapsulate the collective experiences and customs of the local populace, serving as a chronicle of their trials and triumphs. Organized into three overarching genres—narrative, romance, and depictions of working life—Nanzhan folk songs offer a multifaceted lens through which to view the cultural fabric of the region.²⁰

²⁰ Xinchun Ding, “The Cultural Characteristics of Folk Songs in Beijing-Hangzhou Canal (Huai’an Section),” *Journal of Yancheng Teachers University (Humanities & Social Sciences Edition)*, 2014, 6 (2014), 12.

The Twelve Boats, from which *The Impression of Nanzha* drew thematic materials (Figure 6.1), belongs to the genre of romance. The lyrics of *The Twelve Boats* use aquatic and animal metaphors to express praise of fine ladies and longing for romantic love.

The Twelve Boats



Figure 6.1 Comparison of the Melody in *The Twelve Boats* and the Theme of *The Impression of Nanzha*, mm. 1-4 Yuchen Lu, *The Impression of Nanzha* (unpublished score, 2021)

Nanzhan folk music combines features of both Northern and Southern Chinese folk styles. Influenced by the Wu dialect which has eight tones and a rich inventory of consonants that make it a more melodic phonology, the melody of Nanzhan folk songs primarily follows a progressive pattern of stepwise motions. Ornamental skips, which are a more common feature in Northern folk melodies, are added into the music, as well.

Nanzhan folk songs are characterized by a gentle and graceful style, with both lyrics and musical phrasing emphasizing symmetry and rhyme.²¹

The melody of *The Twelve Boats* is frequently borrowed as thematic material in *The Impression of Nanzha*. In section A, the variations of the theme can be divided into two sections and represent different scenes of the natural environment and flowing boat.

The first section (mm. 1-25) describes a distant view of the mountain and water.

There are two stylish compositional methods here:

1. Static sense of space:

- a) The significant use of pedaling to add reverberation caused by a spacious environment.
- b) The theme moves between different voices to create an echo-like effect among the mountains.
- c) The use of a wide range of pitches blended with pillars of chords delivers a feeling of depth. These chords combined with a relatively slow tempo also create an overall static feeling.

2. Dynamic ambient effect:

²¹ Xinchun Ding, "The Cultural Characteristics of Folk Songs in Beijing-Hangzhou Canal (Huai 'an Section)," *Journal of Yancheng Teachers University (Humanities & Social Sciences Edition)*, 2014, 6 (2014), 14.

If the first part of section A tends toward a static, distant view, the second part (mm. 26-52) depicts a close-up view of the ship in motion. The texture of the accompaniment changes to arpeggiated running notes referencing the flowing water and the boat (Figure 6.5). Ornamental notes and altered chords here are used to depict the splashing water when fish jump (Figure 6.6).

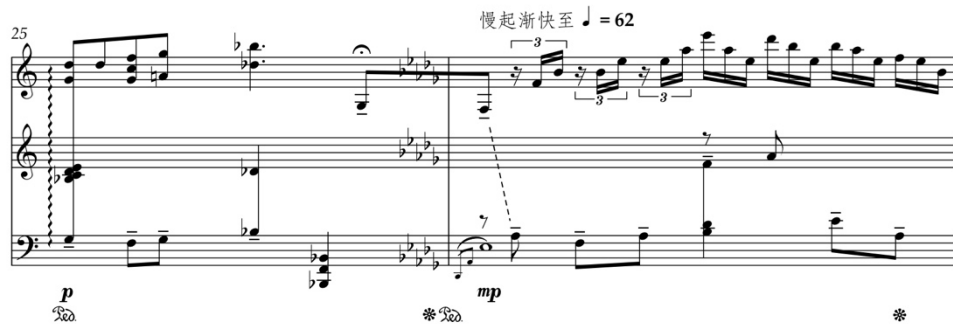


Figure 6.5: Lu Yuchen, *The Impression of Nanzha*, m. 26



Figure 6.6: Lu Yuchen, *The Impression of Nanzha*, mm. 31-33

The rhythmic pattern in section B is derived from a local folk dance called *Flower Boat Dance*, which simulates a boat in the water, accompanied by string, wind, vocal and

percussion instruments. The overall atmosphere is very lively and festive. Lu Yuchen added special notations that ask performers to slap the black keys to recreate the fervent feeling of the *Flower Boat Dance*. Beginning in m. 69, the percussive rhythm of the *Flower Boat Dance* appears in the left hand (Figure 6.7).

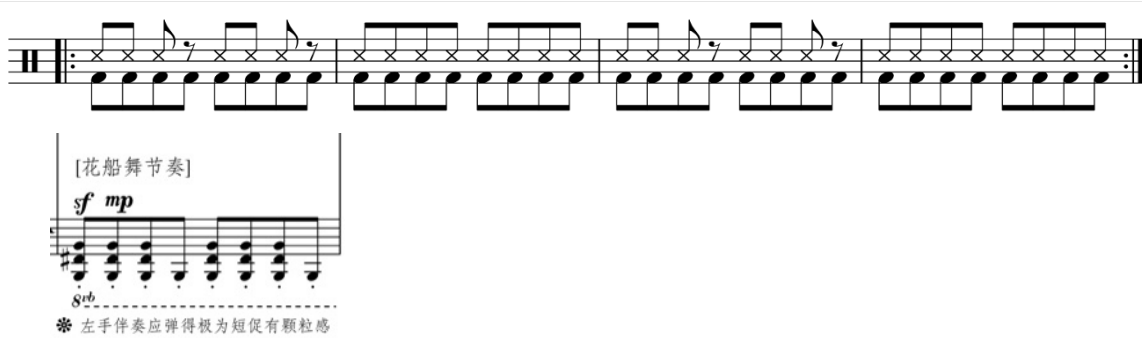


Figure 6.7: Lu Yuchen, Comparison of the rhythmic patterns of *Flower Boat Dance* and *The Impression of Nanzha*, m. 69

Section B combines the thematic material shown in Figure 6.1 from *The Twelve Boats* (Figure 6.8 circled in red) with rhythmic patterns from the instrumental parts of the *Flower Boat Dance*.

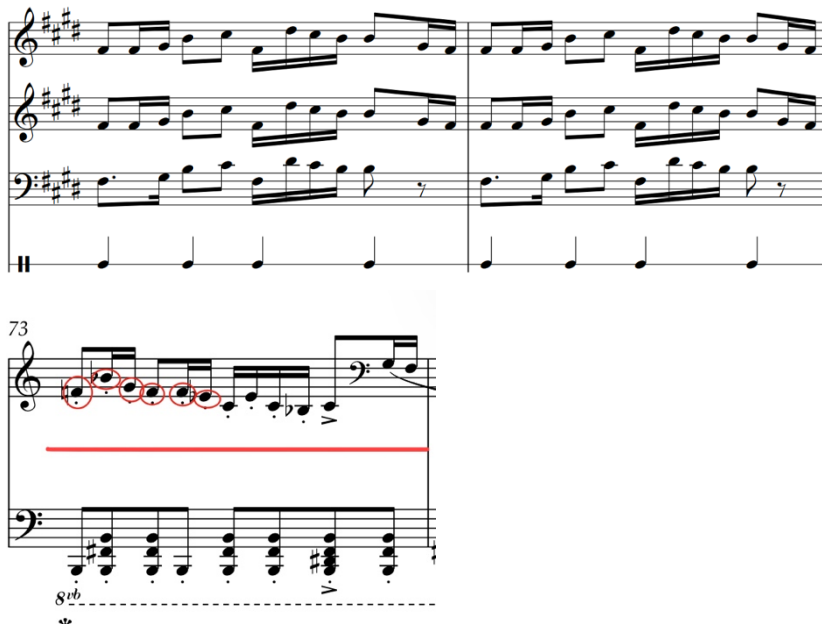


Figure 6.8: Comparison of the rhythmic patterns of *Flower Boat Dance* and *The Impression of Nanzha*, m. 73

After an arpeggiated transition, the peace and calm of section A' returns, recalling the theme from *The Twelve Boats*. In *The Impression of Nanzha*, Lu Yuchen musically depicts the colorful pictures of a water town.

Performance Guide of *The Impression of Nanzha*

There are three aspects to pay close attention to in *The Impression of Nanzha*: the layers, the embellishments and the special performance marks.

Lu Yuchen utilizes three staves in this piece, allowing him to both visually and musically convey the expansive landscape between the mountains and rivers. The thematic material continuously moves between the high, middle and low registers. The performer needs to play the main melody line cleanly and prominently within the echo-like effect, while incorporating the accent marks indicated by the composer (Figure 6.9, circled in red). It may take the performer additional time to become comfortable reading from a three-stave score. Additionally, the hands move across a wide range, requiring the performer to visually locate the next hand position ahead of time. Although sections A and A' are not in a fast tempo, I suggest that performers memorize the notes and hand movements as soon as possible to help with fluency.

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is labeled 'R.H.' and contains a melodic line in 4/4 time with three '8va' markings. The middle staff is labeled 'L.H.' and contains a bass line. The bottom staff is a lower staff with a bass line, marked with 'mp' and 'mf' dynamics and asterisks. Red circles highlight specific notes in the R.H. and L.H. staves, and dashed lines connect them. The score is for measures 1-4.

Figure 6.9: Lu Yuchen, *The Impression of Nanzha*, mm. 1-4

Performers need to ensure the lightness of ornamentations with a flexible wrist. While the main theme continually shifts between different registers, the embellishments must not interrupt the singing melodic line. Additionally, there are some places where decorative sequences incorporate large leaps and multiple notes (Figure 6.10, marked in red). In mm. 34-36, the ornamentations act as a middle voice between two melodic lines, one high and one low (Figure 6.11, m. 34). Three different touches can be used to realize multiple timbres. The extremely high melodic notes can be played in a more bouncing way to create a sparkling sound. *Portato* playing is an option for the lower melodic notes, using a deeper and longer but disconnected touch with a direction of the phrasing.



Figure 6.10: Lu Yuchen, *The Impression of Nanzha*, mm.18-21

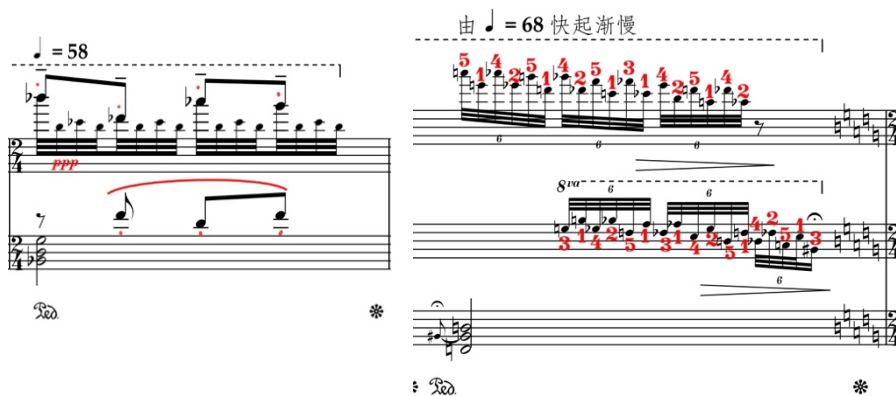


Figure 6.11: Lu Yuchen, *The Impression of Nanzha*, m. 34, m. 37 (all staves in treble clef)

For the ornamental notes, the fingers should stay as close to the keys as possible, maintaining a quiet and even sound. (I marked *ppp* as a suggestion.) This section ends with short flourish. I have written suggested fingering in red (Figure 6.11, m. 37). In the ending section, a long trill hovers above the theme in mm. 108-114. The composer indicates how to play this (Figure 6.12, mm. 108-110). In m. 113, the last two notes in the left-hand part can be played by the right hand (Figure 6.12).

The image displays a musical score for three staves. The top staff shows a trill starting at measure 108, marked with *pp* and *ppp*, and a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 60$ 自由地. Above the trill, the instruction '慢起渐快' is written. The middle and bottom staves show the accompaniment. Measure 108 includes a *pp* marking and a trill symbol. Measures 109-110 feature a long trill with the instruction '渐慢 旋律自由地'. Measure 113 shows a flourish with the instruction '渐慢' and red fingering annotations 'RH' and 'RH'.

Figure 6.12: Lu Yuchen, *The Impression of Nanzha*, mm. 108-113

Uncommon articulation markings are used frequently in this piece. One unique compositional technique Lu Yuchen incorporates is to use the percussive acoustic of the piano sound to imitate Chinese intonation. In Section B, m. 81, he marks “imitating the tune and accent of ‘Qiāo Luó Dǎ Gǔ’”, or playing gongs and drums with tremendous force, and these four Chinese characters are added to the four-chord pattern (Figure 6.13).

Similar patterns also occur in mm. 83-84 and m. 85. A firm touch should be used to perform this pattern, as well as a long pedal, as indicated, to imitate the resonance of the percussive instruments. Accents should be added on the first and third chords of the pattern.

演奏时模仿人声“敲锣打鼓”四字的声调与重音

The figure displays three systems of musical notation. The first system features a piano part with a red circle highlighting a specific chord, accompanied by a dynamic marking of *sfz*. The second system shows two red circles around chords, each with a dynamic marking of *sfz*. The third system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with various dynamic markings including *mf*, *mp*, *f*, and *sfz*. The notation includes notes, rests, and chord symbols, with some notes marked with accents.

Figure 6.13: Lu Yuchen, *The Impression of Nanzha*, mm. 80-81, mm. 83-84, m. 85

Two other techniques applied to imitate percussive sounds are “slap the block of notes framed by sharped double notes on the score” and “beat the double notes with the fist”. I have provided pictures to demonstrate the playing technique of these non-traditional approaches (Figures 6.14 and 6.15).

拍黑键
8va

8vb

(拍黑键部分均使用升号标注音块外框架的音高)

Figure 6.14: Lu Yuchen, *The Impression of Nanzha*, m. 53, Playing Technique

8va

8vb

拳击双音

Figure 6.15: Lu Yuchen, *The Impression of Nanzha*, m. 87, Playing Technique

In m. 36 (Figure 6.16), the indicated fingering for the left-hand chord is very uncomfortable, so I have provided an alternative fingering.

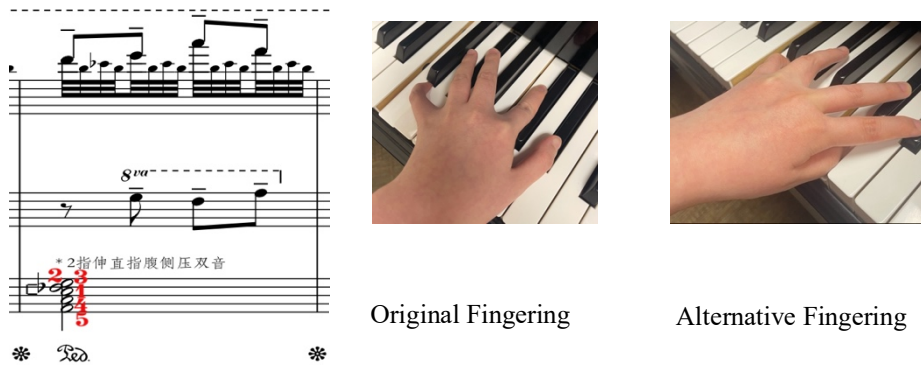


Figure 6.16: Lu Yuchen, *The Impression of Nanzha*, mm. 36, Original Fingering, Alternative Fingering

The Impression of Nanzha faithfully captures the tender and gentle flavor of Nanzhan folk songs, utilizing a wide range of registers and rich pedal techniques to convey the spatial sense of the local geography and natural scenery. Lu Yuchen skillfully uses the percussive sound effects of the piano, combined with special playing techniques, to depict the lively and joyous scenes of local folk dances and bands. Uniquely, the piece integrates piano sounds with the intonations of the Chinese language, showing a strong sense of novelty and creativity.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This project explores and promotes five award-winning piano works by young Chinese composers born after 1990, aiming to diversify the classical piano repertoire. By discussing the importance of cultural fusion in these works, which blend Western compositional techniques with Chinese cultural elements, and by analyzing each composition in terms of form, musical style, and cultural material, the study seeks to fill a gap in recorded resources. Additionally, I have provided performance guides for each of the five pieces.

The longstanding history of China and its vast geographic diversity have provided fertile soil for the development of traditional artistic culture. Each historical period and region of the country have given rise to unique musical styles and artistic formats. Piano music, as an imported art form from the western world, has only been in China for around one hundred years. However, when Chinese traditional music is used by composers as creative inspiration in piano music composition, it becomes a seemingly inexhaustible resource. Composition competitions focusing on Chinese piano works offer a platform for composers to showcase their talents, fostering the innovative fusion of Chinese and Western cultures. This, in turn, provides the impetus for Chinese piano music to reach international audiences.

The combination of East and West and the conversation between ancient and modern represent both a heritage and an opportunity for Chinese composers. For audiences from both China and the West, it offers a fresh auditory experience. I hope that composers of all nationalities can draw inspiration from new Chinese works and Chinese

traditional cultures, potentially steering the development of piano repertoire in a new direction.

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APPENDIX A

DIGITAL RECORDINGS, BY CHENBAIXUE YANG, PIANO

File Name	Format
<i>Enduri</i>	Digital, Wav https://youtu.be/FqIIACwcQxk
<i>A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera</i>	Digital, Wav https://youtu.be/aTOdTwNppzk
<i>Xia (Chivalry)</i>	Digital, Wav https://youtu.be/tDJPgDF2X-k
<i>Tuo Yi (Memories of Shantou) – Hero’s Song and Dance</i>	Digital, Wav https://youtu.be/vPFEim3iuws
<i>The Impression of Nanzha</i>	Digital, Wav https://youtu.be/USq9__IIOU

APPENDIX B
COPYRIGHT PERMISSION LETTERS

Copyright Permission Request Letter

Dear Mr. Haoting Xu:

I am working on a doctoral final project that includes a recording and a research paper, presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Music Art at Arizona State University. I understand that you are the copyright holder for music titled "*A Teenager with the Charm of Beijing Opera*". Your composition will be analyzed and recorded in this project.

Your signature below, under "confirmed by," will indicate that you agree to permit the aforementioned use. Please let me know if you have any questions concerning this license. Also, please let me know as soon as possible if this song cannot be licensed so that artistic changes may be made in the background track I plan to use. You can reach me at Chenbaixue Yang, Arizona State University, 50 Gammage Pkwy, Tempe, AZ 85281, +18602494025, and cyang132@asu.edu.

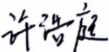
I appreciate your consideration of our permissions request.

Sincerely,

Chenbaixue Yang

Chenbaixue Yang, DMA Candidate of Piano Performance Pedagogy

By signing below, I warrant that I have the right to grant the permission requested in this letter, and that I provide you with that permission.

Signature: 

Date: 18/02/2024

Copyright Permission Request Letter

Dear Mr. Wei Zhao:

I am working on a doctoral final project that includes a recording and a research paper, presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Music Art at Arizona State University. I understand that you are the copyright holder for music titled "*The Memory of Tuo: Yingge Dance*". Your composition will be analyzed and recorded in this project.

Your signature below, under "confirmed by," will indicate that you agree to permit the aforementioned use. Please let me know if you have any questions concerning this license. Also, please let me know as soon as possible if this song cannot be licensed so that artistic changes may be made in the background track I plan to use. You can reach me at Chenbaixue Yang, Arizona State University, 50 Gammage Pkwy, Tempe, AZ 85281, +18602494025, and cyang132@asu.edu.

I appreciate your consideration of our permissions request.

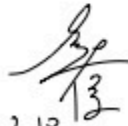
Sincerely,

Chenbaixue Yang

Chenbaixue Yang, DMA Candidate of Piano Performance Pedagogy

By signing below, I warrant that I have the right to grant the permission requested in this letter, and that I provide you with that permission.

Signature:



Date: 24.2.18

Copyright Permission Request Letter

Dear Mr. Yuchen Lu:

I am working on a doctoral final project that includes a recording and a research paper, presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Music Art at Arizona State University. I understand that you are the copyright holder for music titled "*The Impression of Nanzha*". Your composition will be analyzed and recorded in this project.

Your signature below, under "confirmed by," will indicate that you agree to permit the aforementioned use. Please let me know if you have any questions concerning this license. Also, please let me know as soon as possible if this song cannot be licensed so that artistic changes may be made in the background track I plan to use. You can reach me at Chenbaixue Yang, Arizona State University, 50 Gammage Pkwy, Tempe, AZ 85281, +18602494025, and cyang132@asu.edu.

I appreciate your consideration of our permissions request.

Sincerely,

Chenbaixue Yang

Chenbaixue Yang, DMA Candidate of Piano Performance Pedagogy

By signing below, I warrant that I have the right to grant the permission requested in this letter, and that I provide you with that permission.

Signature: 陆禹臣
Date: 2024/02/18

Copyright Permission Request Letter

Dear Ms. Yihan Wang:

I am working on a doctoral final project that includes a recording and a research paper, presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Music Art at Arizona State University. I understand that you are the copyright holder for music titled "*Xia (Chivalry)*". Your composition will be analyzed and recorded in this project.

Your signature below, under "confirmed by," will indicate that you agree to permit the aforementioned use. Please let me know if you have any questions concerning this license. Also, please let me know as soon as possible if this song cannot be licensed so that artistic changes may be made in the background track I plan to use. You can reach me at Chenbaixue Yang, Arizona State University, 50 Gammage Pkwy, Tempe, AZ 85281, +18602494025, and cyang132@asu.edu.

I appreciate your consideration of our permissions request.

Sincerely,

Chenbaixue Yang

Chenbaixue Yang, DMA Candidate of Piano Performance Pedagogy

By signing below, I warrant that I have the right to grant the permission requested in this letter, and that I provide you with that permission.

Signature:

王一涵

Date: 6.26.2024

School of Music, Dance and Theatre

50 East Gammage Parkway Tempe, AZ 85281

p: 480-965-3371 **f:** 480-965-2659 **email:** mdt@asu.edu **web:** musicdancetheatre.asu.edu