AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF WANG JIAN MIN’S
ERHU RHAPSODY NOS. 1 AND 4

YICK JUE RU

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ABSTRACT

The syncretic fusion of Western and non-Western musical elements along with their underlying aesthetics have been one significant compositional process since the twentieth century, adopted not only by certain Western composers, but also by the group of China-born “New-Wave” composers. This study examines aspects of this East-West fusion as found in two contrasting erhu rhapsodies (Erhu Rhapsody Nos. 1 and 4) by one such New-Wave composer, Wang Jian Min (b. 1956). His set of four erhu rhapsodies composed across a timespan of more than two decades, occupies pivotal positions in contemporary erhu repertoire and has been credited for its high artistic value and wide popularity within the Chinese music circle. In view of the unique social, political and cultural landscape of twentieth-century China, which has greatly impacted and shaped the compositional philosophies and sense of identity of these New-Wave composers including Wang, chapter one provides an overview of China’s twentieth-century concepts of ‘aesthetics’ (as distinct from those exhibited by ancient philosophical schools), and main musical influences arising from the period of the communist revolution (1949-1976). This overview then serves as a backdrop for the illustration of Wang’s compositional philosophy, and explication of his syncretic approach towards the conception and construction of his erhu rhapsodies.

Chapters two and three focus on Wang’s first and fourth erhu rhapsodies respectively, investigating the paradoxical dialectic between individual creativity and the (re)presentation of Chinese folk and traditional musical idioms in his work. In explicating this interaction of disparate traditions (folk, traditional and contemporary idioms), this thesis adopts an eclectic approach involving both Western analytical lenses and traditional Chinese music-theoretic perspectives. In particular, it examines Wang’s choice and treatment of pitch materials through various compositional devices, as well as compare the different manners in which these folk-inspired materials are being rendered in the two rhapsodies. Interpretation of the rhapsodies’ structural design will be informed by the Western notion of ‘rhapsody’ and the Chinese ban-shi (板式) layout. In this connection, the structural significance and ‘problems’ of the four ad lib. passages (inspired by the Chinese san-ban element) in both rhapsodies will be addressed. Additionally, this study proposes and illustrates through chapters two and three the possibilities of using set-theoretic labels as well as neo-Schenkerian tools to better explicate the cohabitation of both tonal and non-tonal elements (in part inspired by the folk materials) in Wang’s harmonic style, which in turn shed light on Wang’s large-scale structural layout.

Chapter four synthesizes analytical insights from previous chapters to highlight the pertinent distinctions in Wang’s approaches towards realizing the folk-derived materials in the first and fourth erhu rhapsodies. This study then sums up how Wang manages to assimilate and
combine the two disparate musical thinking from the Chinese and Western traditions, putting into perspective Wang’s evolving compositional voice, as well as demonstrating how Wang still manages to maintain the balance between Western contemporary techniques (which could potentially alienate listeners) and certain traditional aesthetics.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Since the latter half of the twentieth century, the syncretic fusion of disparate Western and non-Western musical elements, along with their at-times contradictory underlying aesthetics, has emerged as one significant compositional strategy adopted by many composers across the world. The greatest challenge in assimilating and integrating elements from a foreign culture into a particular traditional art form is perhaps that of utilizing the foreign elements tactfully to project an enriched perspective of the traditional art, without losing the latter’s essence. Well-known Chinese-American composer, Chou Wen Chung, one of the prominent pioneers of contemporary Chinese musical idioms, describes true Asian-Western musical fusion as a confluence of traditions that bring about a new style, and not in the form of “superficial exoticism”, “neo-chinoserie” or “orientalization”.1

In the case of China, although the tidal wave brought about by the May Fourth Movement (1911–1922) saw the absorption of Western musical concepts and idioms in the development of both professional Chinese instrumental compositions and the modern Chinese orchestra, the so-called avant-garde period in Chinese music only began in the mid-1980s, after the fall of the Gang of Four (四人帮) in 1976, which marked the end of the Cultural Revolution.2 Under the ensuing open-door policy, new cultures from the West were received with enthusiasm, and modernization was seen synonymous with Westernization. Western musical concepts (including theoretical systems, compositional techniques) were being absorbed to varying extent.3 Works since then sought to promote China’s new culture and sense of identity.4 In terms of orientation, the direction was set as early as in 1918 when Zhang Xichun (张锡纯), who spearheaded research efforts to integrate both Western and Chinese medical concepts, articulated the renowned phrase “师古而不泥古, 参西而不背中” (i.e. learn from the

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3 The assimilation of foreign culture into China could be traced back to the West Zhou Dynasty (1027-771 B.C.), evident from the record of 《穆天子传》 that King Mu, fifth king of Zhou dynasty (周穆王) actually brought a large orchestra to the Western regions (西域) for various musical exchanges and performances during his reign. Such exposures abroad have not only enhanced the variety of compositions produced during the period of imperialism (such as Buddhist music from India), but also resulted in the absorption and development of Chinese instruments (e.g. the idea of using horse-tail hair to make the bow of erhu was an influence from Arabia and Mongolia’s morin khuur [马头琴] during Song Dynasty).
4 To a certain extent, such musical movements in the Chinese music scene paralleled attempts in the “scientization” of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), which seeks to integrate both Western and Chinese medical concepts and theories for better results.
past but not be confined by it, learn from the West but not abandon China’s own tradition); this anticipates one of Mao Zedong’s (毛泽东) earliest artistic vision of “古为今用，洋为中用” (i.e. carrying forward the quintessence of Chinese tradition to serve the present and assimilating foreign elements to serve China) later in the 1920s.

In the art music scene, China’s unique historical setting has sparked the emergence of a group of “New-Wave” (新潮) composers, the majority of whom grew up during the turbulent period of the Cultural Revolution. One hallmark in their compositional style is the deliberate departure from the superficial combination of folk melodies with Western diatonic harmonies (or as Mittler terms it, “pentatonic romanticism”), which is typical of the earlier approach to cultural fusion. Instead, timbres, rhythms, textures, melodic construction and musical gestures are manipulated and synthesized to create certain abstract sonic allusions to Chinese folk music, after distilling the essence of Chinese music. Such levels of syncretic approach ultimately set these composers apart from their predecessors and Western counterparts. Prior to that, the inclination to write in the form of “pentatonic romanticism” is especially prominent during China’s Cultural Revolution, when composers had to write pieces that conform to political standards defined by the Gang of Four.

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6 “New-Wave” is a translation of the Chinese term xin chao (新潮). It is used in Peter Chang, “Tan Dun’s string quartet Feng-Ya-Song: some ideological issues”, Asian Music 22, no. 2 (1991): 128; Jiang Jing, “The influence of traditional Chinese music on professional instrumental composition”, Asian Music 22, no. 2 (1991): 89. However, according to Guo Xin, the term “new-wave” is not officially used in Chinese music history but borrowed from Western literature to describe this group of composers, see Guo Xin, “Chinese musical language interpreted by Western idioms: fusion process in the instrumental works by Chen Yi” (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2002), 65. Besides Wang Jian Min, other New-Wave composers include Chen Yi, Chen Qi Gang, Bright Sheng, Guo Wen Jing, Qu Xiao Song, Tan Dun, and Zhou Long.

7 Under a variety of political circumstances and social conditions, composers from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong have sought to create their own “Chinese” identity through music. Such “Chinese-ness” may be exemplified by the use of programmatic/extra-musical references, Chinese instruments or Chinese aesthetics. According to Barbara Mittler, “pentatonic romanticism” refers to the compositional approach that employs a Western harmonic framework and musical language that is similar to the late nineteenth century in accompanying Chinese pentatonic melodies to communicate the sense of “Chinese-ness”, see Barbara Mittler, Dangerous tunes: the politics of Chinese music in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the People’s Republic of China since 1949, Vol 3 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997), 33.

8 For details, see 居其宏, “新中国音乐史: 1949-2000” (湖南: 湖南美术出版社, 2002), 97-120.
1.1 Purpose of Study

Wang Jian Min (王建民), the composer in this study, represents one such “New-Wave” composer in the contemporary Chinese music scene. His compositions reveal fascinating instances of musical syncretism in terms of aesthetical underpinnings as well as musical materials and compositional techniques. His four erhu rhapsodies in particular, composed over a timespan of slightly more than two decades (1988 - 2009) have not only been affirmed by the prizes and accolades they garnered at compositional competitions, but have also been extremely well-received since their premieres due to their artistic and technical merits. In fact, these works have become standard repertoire for erhu at examinations, concerts and competitions at the professional level.

Within Wang’s set of erhu rhapsodies, the fourth represents the greatest departure from conventional tonal and harmonic practices, with its seemingly more ambiguous and fluid sense of tonality/centricity. Moreover, it features great sophistication and effectiveness in the treatment of the most basic pitch materials. Wang, in sharing his compositional thoughts on the fourth rhapsody, revealed that he consciously aimed to inject a fresh and unique aural impression that will differentiate this latest work from his previous rhapsodies. By contrast, his earlier rhapsodies (especially the first) written while he was a fresh graduate from the Shanghai conservatory, exhibit stronger tonal allusions and more easily discernible tonal organisation. The second rhapsody, for instance, adopts a similar approach to the first rhapsody especially in generating a 9-tone synthetic scale from its basic folk-distilled pitch materials. Although the third rhapsody deviates from this practice of adhering to a specific self-constructed mode, it is still generally possible to discern a sense of pitch centricity in most sections, based on tonic-dominant gestures from its melodic shaping, bass pedal or bass V-I punctuation. This general overview, however, is not in any way suggesting that the first three rhapsodies are similar in

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9 Wang’s four erhu rhapsodies are composed in 1988, 1998, 2003 and 2009 respectively. Compositional awards for his erhu rhapsodies include: Erhu rhapsody No. 1 – 2nd prize at the 6th China National Composition Awards in 1988 (全国第六届音乐作品评奖, first prize vacant); Erhu rhapsody No. 2 – Silver Prize at the 3rd China Golden Bell Award in 2003 (中国第三届“金钟奖”, Gold Prize vacant); Erhu rhapsody No. 3 – 1st prize at the 12th China National Composition Awards in 2006. For other compositional awards, see “王建民”, in China Music 华乐大典·二胡卷, Vol. 1, ed. 乔建中 et al. (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Publishing, 2010), 460.
11 For the constructed scale in second rhapsody, see 王建民, “源于民间 根系传统 —《第二二胡狂想曲》创作札记”, 《人民音乐》9 (2003): 3.
12 Wang reveals in his interview that the third rhapsody represents a natural musical outpouring based on his thorough understanding of the Xinjiang music, as well as certain characteristic manners in which its melodies were crafted, hence he does not see the need to construct any scale. For a more detailed discussion, refer to Wang Jian Min, interview by author, Singapore, June 24, 2011 (question 3).
compositional approaches or in their resultant soundscape. In fact, each of these rhapsodies gradually departs from the emphasis and reliance on tonal relationships, exploring different manners of rendering the respective basic musical materials. They reflect increasing refinement in compositional craft and showcase different possibilities of achieving an integration of Chinese and Western musical elements that surpasses superficial blending. Nevertheless, it is the fourth rhapsody that represents the most radical deviation from conventional tonal relationships (at least in terms of aural impressions).

This thesis, then, focuses on his two most contrasting erhu rhapsodies – nos. 1 and 4.\(^\text{13}\) It will elucidate Wang’s approach towards musical syncretism by adopting an eclectic approach that involves both Western analytical lenses and traditional Chinese music-theoretic perspectives. In presenting the analytical findings, subsequent chapters will also demonstrate how Wang’s approach in assimilating diverse musical and cultural elements is tactfully manipulated to complement rather than conflict with each other. Additionally, by comparing and contrasting Wang’s compositional approaches and techniques between these most contrasting rhapsodies, the study will be in a better position to comment on Wang’s evolving compositional voice and musical identity across twenty-one years and perhaps, also demonstrate how he manages to effectively strike some sort of balance between achieving the two seemingly antithetical aims of “artistic value” and “popularity” in his compositions.\(^\text{14}\) On the issue of composing contemporary music, Wang firmly believes that the ‘degree of innovation’ in terms of compositional techniques or concepts should be one that is ‘new but not quaint’ ("创新度" is “新而不怪”).\(^\text{15}\) To him, the artistic worth of a composer is not measured by how technically dense/superior his creation is, but rather by its receptivity and degree of circulation. To him, a miniature but exquisite work that is widely performed and passed on would be of a higher value than perhaps huge works that exists only for a transient period of time and never performed again after its premiere.\(^\text{16}\)

Current research has so far largely focused on Wang’s first three erhu rhapsodies and generally revolved around issues concerning the performance aspects (in terms of musical shaping and other technical issues), with some brief analytical notes based largely on a Chinese

\(^{13}\) The analyses in this thesis are based on the erhu and piano reduction version. Refer to 王建民, “第一二胡狂想曲”, in China Music 华乐大典·二胡卷 Vol. 2, ed. 乔建中 et al. (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Publishing, 2010), 5-25; and 王建民, “第四二胡狂想曲” (台北: 台北市立国乐团, 2010), for the scores of Wang Jian Min’s first and fourth erhu rhapsodies.

\(^{14}\) ‘Popularity’ in this context refers to the work being well-received by both performers and audiences.

\(^{15}\) 王建民, “源于民间”, 2. On this issue of innovation in new music, Ranković also observes that even "young listeners with a musical education mostly cannot love this music, although they can respect it”, in other words, technical innovations in new music has led to emotional asceticism (“On the unpopularity of new music”, International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music 10, no. 2 (1979): 199-206).

\(^{16}\) Refer to Wang Jian Min, interview by author, Singapore, June 24, 2011 (question 14).
There is currently no published research on Wang’s fourth erhu rhapsody, except for a recent published interview explicating some of his compositional approaches towards the conceptualization of the work. Amongst the existing studies, 汝艺 (2007) for instance, briefly discusses the borrowing of the Western ‘rhapsodic’ concept and focuses more on its implications in the development of erhu performing techniques, expressiveness and the unconventionality in fingering techniques. In addition, he also attempts to trace the similarities in the intervallic movements of various motivic variants in the first and second erhu rhapsodies. However, certain distinctions between the variants, changes in centricities, and how these relate to the larger structural layout are not explored. With structural analysis, most Chinese scholars consider the structural design of these rhapsodies based solely on the multi-sectional Chinese structuring concept; one exception is 孙凰 (2004), who presents her structural overview of the first erhu rhapsody through both the Chinese and Western lenses. Remarkably, though 杨奕 (2009) offers his structural reading of the third rhapsody solely from the Chinese ban-shi perspective, he does attempt a more detailed discussion on the issue of tonality. However, he does not probe deeper into Wang’s compositional language, especially the manner in which disparate materials are interwoven as opposed to being an amalgamation of awkwardly linked elements. As such, this study aims to probe more deeply into the various structural and tonal elements, to elucidate Wang’s approach towards syncretism, which differentiates him from his peers and predecessors.

This set of erhu rhapsodies brings forth a set of questions that this study will address. Firstly, which aspects of the Western notion of ‘rhapsody’ are being applied by Wang, and how are they integrated with the multi-sectional Chinese structural concept based on the arrangement of ban (板式结构)? Secondly, what are the structural roles of the cadenza-like passages (that is more commonly found in concertos) in his ‘rhapsody’? Thirdly, how do the various rubato and ad lib. passages (one would associate with the san-ban [散板] element from the Chinese structural concept) relate to the piece as a whole? Fourthly, since Wang draws upon different folk sources for each rhapsody, which aspects from the folk sources are adopted and how differently are they rendered in the rhapsodies? Last but not least, what is Wang’s nature of

19 Refer to Example 1 (谱例 1) in 孙凰, “谈王建民的二胡狂想曲”, 9. The details of her reading are not presented in her thesis.
20 Refer to Table 1 (图表 1) in 杨奕, “传统琴弦上的现代‘狂想’”，5 and 7-13.
‘centricity’, if there is one, in the fourth rhapsody, which sounds tonally fluid and ambiguous?

In order to better understand and appreciate the levels of Chinese-Western musical synthesis in Wang’s erhu rhapsodies, it is essential to first examine how his compositional philosophy, his sense of musical identity and his unique insights towards musical structuring may have been shaped by his knowledge of ancient Chinese music aesthetics, his personal experiences that are a result of China’s socio-cultural landscape in the twentieth-century, as well as the Western musical knowledge gained from his conservatoire training later on. 21

1.2 Cross-cultural phenomena in music; the emergence of and influences on the ‘New-Wave’

The assimilation or fusion of elements from diverse cultural sources has been termed “syncretism”; it was originally used more specifically in anthropology to explain the growth of culturally mixed phenomena when the elements are similar or compatible.22 This term was later adopted by ethnomusicologists, where it was first used to explicate the broad spectrum of African-derived musical styles by Richard Waterman in 1952.23 However, this does not imply that any musical compositions containing the fusion of elements from various cultures can be considered “syncretic”. Some scholars have advocated a stricter definition to musical syncretism, referring only to works that reflect a deeper level of assimilation and fusion. J.H. Nketia, for instance, clarifies that syncretic approach is “not a quest for the exotic, for flavor and nuance, but a search for new musical experiences that stretch the ears of a composer or broaden his imagination and understanding of concepts of music other than what he has inherited.”24 Consequently, studies of composers’ syncretic approaches in mediating the contrasting

21 Musical works popular in China during 1950s-1970s mainly included songs sung in school (学堂乐歌), revolutionary songs (革命歌), model works (样板戏) and songs composed by youths while they were sent for ‘re-education’ in rural farms (知青乐歌).
22 The concept of cultural syncretism first emerged in the 1930s from the anthropological study of acculturation. Elsie Chews Parsons in Milta, Town of the Souls, cited in Guo, (“Chinese musical language”, 19), explains that during the acculturation process, ‘new traits tend to be welcomed or readily borrowed if they do not clash with pre-existent traits, or again if they have something in common with pre-existent traits to take the edge off the unfamiliarity’. Parsons also observes that the basis for rejecting a new trait by the natives occurs when ‘the new trait is too unfamiliar, offering nothing to tie up to, or is quite incompatible with old traits, not yielding to any process of identification’.
elements from disparate cultures, their resultant sonic effects and consequently, influences on other composers have attracted much scholarly attention. A detailed discussion of the inherent differences between the Western and non-Western musical systems is beyond the scope of this study. However for the purpose of this research, we note that there are fundamental incompatibilities between the styles of Western classical and Chinese traditional music, as they stem from two diametrically opposed philosophical origins. Fundamental differences between these two musical systems include their scale systems, concepts of formal structuring, techniques of melodic crafting, metrical and rhythmic organisations, timbre, textures, musical styles and aesthetics.

In considering this issue of musical fusion, it is also essential to note the differences in compositional intent between composers of the Western and non-Western/Eastern worlds. For Western composers, this fusion process was initially an important means to enrich their compositional materials and to develop alternative aesthetic viewpoints. On the other hand for most non-Western composers, certain Western compositional techniques are absorbed and fused with aspects of their native musical traditions, to allow them to “give their ethnic heritage modern, European-based forms of expression”, and thereby present their musical cultures on the international stage. Early attempts to incorporate Asian elements into a Western compositional idiom can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century, where the initial awareness and interest in the use of Asian musical materials (particularly its melodic and rhythmic characteristics) was motivated by a desire for “exotic” colours. In 1889 and 1890, the Exposition Universalle held in Paris lent composers such as Debussy and Ravel firsthand exposures to music of the Javanese and Balinese gamelan, as well as traditional Chinese and Japanese musical cultures. Consequently, this sparked off a growing interest in Asian music, thereby impacting the development of Western music.

Twentieth century composers who have drawn upon musical elements from the Asian culture can largely be categorized into three groups according to their approaches. The first

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27 Although prior to the nineteenth century, Western attempts to incorporate selected Eastern musical are also evident, especially in Turkish marches and Scheherazade, they served more as decorative purposes. See Chou Wen-Chung, “Asian concepts and twentieth-century Western composers”, The Music Quarterly 57, no. 2 (Apr., 1971): 211; Elliott Schwartz and Daniel Godfrey, Music since 1945, 12.

28 This three-group division is motivated by the chronological-based classification first suggested by Everett, “Intercultural synthesis”, then Guo Xin, “Chinese musical language”. Later, Sharon Cheong, “Creating with Asian folk and traditional music” (Master’s thesis, National Institute of Education, 2009), 2, proposes a slightly different manner of categorizing by taking into account the composers’ background, and thus does not adhere entirely to a chronological approach. For the purpose of this study, I build on Cheong’s classification in singling out Asian composers known for their successful Asian-Western fusion
group of composers are Westerners, who employ Asian musical elements such as Asian melodies, rhythms, or the pentatonic scale to create an ‘exotic’ flavour, in what is otherwise an essentially European-based nineteenth century musical language.\(^{29}\) They are generally less concerned about the authenticities or aesthetics of the foreign tradition.\(^{30}\) Examples include Gilbert and Sullivan’s *Mikado* (1885), the choice of Japanese and Chinese subjects as well as imitations of oriental music in Puccini’s operas *Madama Butterfly* (1904) and *Turandot* (1926), and pentatonic melodies in Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde* (1908).

The second group refers to Western-trained non-Asian composers who were active in the 1930s to 1980s. Their more in-depth engagement of selected Asian musical traditions, especially in their later works, is in contrast to earlier paradigms of exoticism, Everett refers to this as a “new musical orientation”.\(^{31}\) Works of this period reflect greater command and knowledge of specific Asian musical traditions (in terms of their principles of theory, philosophies and performance practices), as well as greater compositional refinement in integrating disparate cultural resources.\(^{32}\) The spectrum of musical results often included an enriched vocabulary of sounds including non-organized sounds, new perception of sonic spaces, textures and timbral effects. As a result, aural references to its Asian or non-Western sources may or may not come across so obviously in these compositions. Examples of these composers include Henry Cowell, who incorporated Asian musical instruments and sounds in his Koto Concertos or other works that fused western and non-western instruments and styles from the Japanese, Indian, Iranian, Irish, traditional American and Native American cultures.\(^{33}\) Harry Partch on the other hand, explored microtonal scales and custom-made instruments.\(^{34}\) On a more radical front, John Cage’s 4’33” was motivated by the philosophy of Zen Buddhism and the aesthetics of silence, while his “Music of Changes” (1951) was inspired by the Chinese *Book of Changes* (I-Ching). Another significant composer is Olivier Messiaen, whose interest in Classical Indian rhythms/tāla and Indonesian Gamelan timbres is best exhibited in his *Turangalîla Symphonie* (1946-48), where the process of superimposing harmonic and rhythmic sequences (from Indian tāla) reaches a high degree of intricacy especially in the first movement.\(^{35}\) Additionally, his core constructional principles of minimalism was also inspired by

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\(^{29}\) Everett, “Intercultural synthesis”, 4.


\(^{31}\) Everett, “Intercultural synthesis”, 2.

\(^{32}\) *Ibid.*, 4-5.


\(^{35}\) For more detailed analysis, see Mirjana Šimundža, “Messiaen’s rhythmical organisation and Classical
structural principles of Indian drone-based music, ōlā cycles and metrical concept of Indonesian gamelan, as it seeks to generate materially cyclical and harmonically static structures through repetition and gradual transformation of limited material.\(^{36}\)

The third group comprises Western-trained composers of East Asian origins post 1940. They draw upon their native folk and traditional music culture, philosophy and aesthetics as compositional resources, and assimilate them into contemporary Western musical languages. These composers include Chou Wen-Chung (China), Toru Takemitsu (Japan) and Yun Isang (Korea). For the purpose of this study, we focus on examining the case of China-born composers through two subcategories, differentiated principally by the primary instrumental medium which the composers work with. The two subcategories are as follows:

(i) Composers who write primarily using Western musical idiom and Western-based instrumentations.

This group of *New-Wave* composers include: Tan Dun \(\text{谭盾} \text{[b. 1957]}\), Su Cong \(\text{苏聪} \text{[b. 1957]}\), Yu Julian \(\text{于京君} \text{[b. 1957]}\), Bright Sheng \(\text{盛宗亮} \text{[b. 1955]}\), Ye Xiaogang \(\text{叶小钢} \text{[b. 1955]}\), Chen Qigang \(\text{陈其钢} \text{[b. 1955]}\), Chen Xiaoyong \(\text{陈晓勇} \text{[b. 1955]}\), Zhou Long \(\text{周龙} \text{[b. 1953]}\), Chen Yi \(\text{陈怡} \text{[b. 1953]}\) and Qu Xiaosong \(\text{瞿小松} \text{[b. 1952]}\). Taking their cue from Chou Wen-Chung who had synthesized aesthetical ideals of Chinese visual and literary arts with the Varèsean ideal of sound in his work, they began incorporating Western contemporary techniques with some aspects of traditional arts in experimental ways.\(^{37}\)

(ii) Composers who write primarily using a Chinese musical idiom and for Chinese instruments.

They are the contemporary counterparts of the previous sub-group, and perhaps the less well-known representatives of *New-Wave* composers which I propose to include. Some of these composers are Liu Xing \(\text{刘星} \text{[b. 1962]}\), Xu Xue-Dong \(\text{许学东} \text{[b. 1962]}\), Xu Chang-Jun \(\text{徐昌俊} \text{[b. 1957]}\), Wang Jian-Min \(\text{王建民} \text{[b. 1956]}\), Zheng Bing \(\text{郑冰} \text{[b. 1956]}\), Guo Wen-Jing \(\text{郭文景} \text{[b. 1956]}\), Tang Jian-Ping \(\text{唐建平} \text{[b. 1955]}\), Huang He

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\(^{37}\) These composers are the more well-known representatives of the *New-Wave* composers, see Everett, “Intercultural synthesis in postwar western art music: Historical contexts, perspectives, and taxonomy”, 5-9; and Guo Xin, “Chinese musical language”, 65-69. For more illustration of these composers, refer to Barbara Mittler, *Dangerous tunes*, 165-172.
[黄河 (b. 1954)], and He Xun-Tian [何训田 (b. 1953)].

Their predecessors include composers such as Liu Tian Hua [刘天华], Zhao Xiao-Sheng [赵晓生], Peng Xiwen [彭修文], Gao Weijie [高为杰], Guan Nai-Zhong [关乃忠] and Liu Wenjin [刘文金].

This group of New-Wave composers strives towards greater explorations and deeper-level synthesizing of various Eastern and Western elements. These include aesthetics (in re-creating, re-interpreting and re-conciling elements from distinct cultures), choice and nature of musical materials (metrical characteristics, rhythmic organisation and melodic characteristics that are usually folk-derived) and compositional techniques in the treatment of musical materials (structural, textural, harmonic, motivic design, pitch construction). The following paragraphs explore how such compositional ventures might have been shaped by the socio-historical backdrop and societal musical influences of China in the mid-late twentieth-century, that is, during the formative years of these composers.

At least four major periods may be defined in twentieth-century China: (1) “Republic of China” (1911 – 1949); (2) “Liberation” of 1949 (with the formation of the People’s Republic of China) marked by the communist revolution (including “Great Leap forward”); (3) Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976); and (4) the era of liberal reforms since 1980. Based on this classification, the group of New-Wave composers (largely born in the fifties), clearly grew up during the second period. This period corresponds to the era of the communist revolution, and represents a time where ancient Confucian traditions/philosophy were being discredited and outlawed (as it was believed to reflect the Imperialist societal thoughts of the past). This was also a time where China sank into a state of stagnation (if not decline) in her musical and artistic development as a result of the adverse socio-political landscape at that time, especially in years leading to the Cultural Revolution. Hence, the concept of ‘aesthetics’ in twentieth-century China was of a different nature from those exhibited by the ancient philosophical schools, although it will be inaccurate to claim that ancient aesthetics and those of the twentieth-century do not share any similarities at all.

Since the era of communist revolution in 1949, music (particularly songs) was perceived as a powerful political and ideological symbol and tool for spreading the communist propaganda to the masses. As put across by Mao, “we should take over the rich legacy and the ‘good traditions’ in literature and art that have been handed down from the past ages in China and foreign countries, but the aim must still be to serve the masses.”\footnote{Quoted in Arnold Perris, “Music as propaganda: art at the command of doctrine in the People's Republic of China”, Ethnomusicology 27, no. 1 (1983): 7.} Such emphasis in absorbing the past traditions is reflected by his ideology of “取其精华 去其糟粕” (meaning to absorb the
quintessence of Chinese tradition and concepts, while discarding the dross). As such, composers and performers of revolutionary songs and plays were urged to learn from the authentic folk traditions and their art forms such as village operas, rural folk dance and yang-ge (秧歌, or literally translated as “rice seedling song”) sung by peasants. Consequently, only two schools of literature and art were recognized at that time: capitalist and proletarian, as expounded in Chairman Mao’s Forum on Literature and Art in 1942. Hence, to uphold their proletarian ideals, workers in the arts should serve the ‘people’ in creating works with so-called ‘nationalistic’ features. It is quite ironic that although Mao eradicated the Confucian traditions, his ideologies about music conforming to the needs of the society and its indispensable role in ‘educating’ the people (in communist ideologies) seem to echo somehow the essence of Confucius’ philosophy of li-yue (礼乐) – which emphasizes the extra-musical functions of music in educating the people in the attainment of positive etiquettes and virtue (礼 and 德). This ideologically motivated movement to draw upon authentic folk traditions since 1942, may in part explain the interest in these traditions by the New-Wave composers subsequently.

The main musical influences on the New-Wave composers arising from the historical backdrop of China (prior to 1976) generally came from two domains (excluding their private music lessons if any): general music education in the form of songs sung in school (学堂乐歌), and musical exposure from China’s socio-cultural landscape, which largely comprises revolutionary mass songs (革命歌), marches, ‘model works’ (样板戏) and songs based on Mao’s book of quotations (语录歌) as composed or arranged by communist revolutionary composers. Both avenues served the central purpose of supporting and disseminating the

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40 Note the choice of word, ‘workers’ instead of ‘artists’ or ‘composers’! According to Mao’s 1942 forum, the proletarian ideal of literature and art describes the main function of art as a means to unite and educate the ‘people’ so as to obliterate the enemy. Hence, ‘nationalistic’ features are characteristic of creations produced during this era. In addition, Mao also expressed that workers in literature and art should also serve the ‘people’ wholeheartedly. For more details, see Mao Yu Run, “Music under Mao, its background and aftermath”, Asian Music 22, no. 2 (1991): 104.
41 Confucian philosophy exerts control on the unbosoming personal emotions as reflected by, “乐者，音之所由生也; 凡音之起,由人心生也; 人心之动,物使之然也”. Cited in 李妹, “中西音乐美学的比较研究” (PhD diss., Si Chuan University, 2007), 17. This implied that music which stimulate sensual pleasure was considered licentious and hence, undesirable. Such stringent restrictions represented one major setback in the development and range of musical works produced during that time, as they reflected minimal creativity, conformed to strict and direct pentatonicism, sparse rhythmic density, simplicity in techniques, euphemistic in emotions and strict adherence to tradition, so that the listener can maintain a certain emotional stability.
42 General music education (学堂乐歌) were made compulsory for both primary and secondary schools since 1940, with the central aim of spreading revolutionary thoughts, nationalistic ideals and patriotism to students, so that China can be brought to prosperity. Music sung were usually songs directly lifted from Europe and Japan, with lyrics re-written to reflect the needs of the nation. For examples of学堂乐歌, see 邹建军, “学堂乐歌的历史意义及其影响初探”, 《大众文艺理论》 1 (2009): 157.
43 During the period of Cultural Revolution, only eight ‘revolutionary model works’ (革命样板戏) comprising five Beijing operas, two ballets and one symphony were permitted to be performed and
government ideologies. Thematic materials for ‘model works/plays’ were largely drawn from China’s folksongs so that they can be readily accepted by the masses. The following discussion only highlights certain pertinent musical influences from China’s changing social-cultural landscape during the formative years of these New-Wave composers, which may in turn provide a general backdrop for us to examine how these might have shaped Wang’s compositional philosophy and sense of identity later on.

Initially, from the period of ‘Liberation’ till early 1960s, one positive influence of ‘songs sung in school’ was the introduction of Western music theory and Western instrumental performing skills to students; this played a pivotal role in raising the general musical and cultural standards in China. Unfortunately during the period of communism, we have sufficient grounds to speculate that the ensuing stringent nationwide artistic control has resulted in the gradual stagnation of such musical developments, as songs taught in schools were gradually being replaced by revolutionary songs that reflected less variety and comparatively lower artistic value. We may thus conclude that the New-Wave composers actually had limited exposures to Western musical knowledge from general education in schools. In terms of musical exposures from the socio-cultural landscape, most musical works performed after ‘Liberation’ were revolutionary songs and model works. A famous example is the earliest version of the ballet, “White-haired Girl (白毛女)”, which was structured in sung monologue and dialogue, with the accompaniment of a few Chinese instruments. Texts were set to simple and easy to sing melodies, without complex harmonies, counterpoint, multi-textural or elaborate motivic treatments. Mao considered this the pinnacle of art due to its plot and even chose it as a ‘study model’ for both artists and composers.44

Subsequently, during the period of “Great Leap Forward” (大跃进) from 1958-1963, musicians were being indoctrinated to create masterpieces that were supposed to surpass those of the Western tradition within a short span of time.45 In order to connect with the masses, composers were urged to write music that praised agriculture and steel-melting, as part of a larger propaganda to encourage the rapid development of China’s agricultural and industrialization projects such as steel production.46 Composers had to obliterate all bourgeois sentiments and personal inclinations by embracing “group compositions”, which specifically studied. More details of these eight ‘model works’ are illustrated in Arnold Perris, “Music as propaganda”, 116.

45 “Great Leap Forward” was a result of Mao’s “Hundred Flower Campaign” (百花齐放 百家争鸣), so as to give the impression of “rapid advancements and development” under the communist revolution. For more details, see 居其宏, “新中国音乐史: 1949-2000”, 45-70.
meant collective effort between the secretary of the party committee (who provided the theme),
the people (who provided ‘life experiences’) and the composer (who provided the technique).
The composers were looked upon as an indispensible ‘persona non grata’. Based on Mao’s
_Yen’an Forum on Literature and Art_, many composers were also forced to undergo thought
“reconstruction” to erode any thoughts related to feudalism, capitalism, imperialism and
revisionism. The constant political pressure from Mao consequently escalated into an “anti-
Rightist” campaign. Within three years of functioning under the supposedly “Great Leap
Forward”, China sank into a land of famine and the artistic quality of musical works declined.
The “Great leap Forward” was a tragic fiasco in many aspects.

One important instrumental work that survived the test of time was the programmatic
violin concerto – “Butterfly Lovers” (梁祝小提琴协奏曲), composed in 1959 by Chen Gang
(陈刚) and He Zhanhao (何占豪) when both were still students at the Shanghai Conservatory of
Music, under the supervision of Party officials. Although written using a primarily western
idiom in terms of structure and orchestration, this was one of the rare instrumental work which
was accepted and interpreted as a “revolutionary document” as the story criticized feudalism
and thus conformed to Mao’s revolutionary ideology. Its main melody was also lifted from
one of the local plays in Southern China, and thus easily accepted by the masses due to its
familiarity and simplicity. Interestingly when this concerto was performed, performers had to
play the Western instruments the “Chinese way”, such as mimicking the characteristic
portamento(s) of the erhu.

The process of artistic drought in musical creations reached rock bottom during the
Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), when China sank into great political, economical and cultural
abyss. In the first stage of this Cultural Revolution (1966 - 1969), the only available music were
songs with lyrics that were taken from the book of Mao’s quotations (红宝书) compiled by Lin
Biao (林彪). These songs based on Mao’s book of quotation (also known as 言语歌) depicted
Mao as the symbol of absolute truth towards success in proletarian revolution and socialist
China, and was sung daily by the people. Rhythms and melodies were simple and repetitive so
that it can be memorized and learnt easily. However within three years, Mao’s wife, Jiang
Qing began banishing these songs as the music was perceived to reflect folk tunes with
‘unhealthy’ associations.

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48 The story behind the “Butterfly Lovers” violin concerto is translated in _ibid._, 115.
49 Interestingly, Mao Yu Run in “Music under Mao” reveals an alternative reading of the “Butterfly
Lovers” concerto – as the “propagation of morbid and pervasive passion and toxic bourgeois sentiment”.
If interpreted in this manner, this concerto would have been banned.
50 _Ibid._, 118, for samples of “语录歌”.
51 For more details on Jiang Qing’s reasons for banishing the songs based on Mao’s book of quotation “语
录歌” and their various musical associations, refer to 梁茂春, “‘文化大革命’时期的音乐”, _《西安音乐学院学报》_ 4 (1996): 20.
During this period, only eight ‘revolutionary model works’ (样板戏) were permitted to be performed and studied. The productions of all proletarian revolutionary ‘model works’ not only had to conform to the “Leftist” (左派) revolutionary spirit and “Three Conversions” (三化), but also to adhere to an additional “Three Emphasis” (三突出) ideology, as instigated by the Gang of Four during the Cultural Revolution. Initially in 1940s, assimilating foreign musical concepts to an extent were encouraged if it can serve the central purpose of the communist credo, however, such practice was completely eradicated during the Cultural Revolution. Performing or composing Western music was a dangerous act and would be severely punished due to the heated “anti-Rightist” campaign. It was through such times, with their stringent rules and criteria regarding the type of music to be composed and performed, which greatly hampered the artistic creativity and variety of works produced. Hence, musical creations and their artistic content at the time of Mao were a huge contrast to those that first appeared after the Revolution of 1911, whereby composers and writers had complete freedom in their creations.

Interestingly, although Western music was banned during this revolutionary period, there was a rise in the number of Western musical instrumentalists, as they were required to play in the Western orchestras that accompany the Beijing operas. This was actually a movement instigated by Jiang Qing, who thought that the grandeur of these revolutionary model works was better portrayed by Western symphony orchestras rather than traditional Chinese ensembles due to their “crude and piercing timbres”, problems with intonation, and lack of expressiveness. Hence, many Chinese instrumentalists started switching to Western instruments and there was a severe dip in the number of Chinese ensembles and compositions during this period. It may be through such opportunities that many New-Wave composers had the opportunity to pick up Western instruments, such as Wang Jian Min who first majored in the cello and trombone, rather than any Chinese instruments. Not surprisingly, his compositions were primarily written for Chinese instruments. Musical compositions of that period reflected little originality, as they were churned out in accordance to features and models specified by the political party. Even the rare Chinese instrumental works written at that time were highly

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52 “Three Conversions” dictates the three main musical characteristics in any compositions. First, the musical material has to reflect the “revolutionary spirit” (革命化); second, the musical language and style have to feature the “national spirit” (民族化); and third, meet the needs of “populism” (群众化). It was first explicated by Mao in his 1942 Forum on Literature and Art, see Mao Yu Run in “Music under Mao”, 104; 居其宏, “新中国音乐史: 1949-2000”, 76. On the other hand, “Three Emphasis” refers to bringing out the positive, heroic and central character in ‘model operas’ (在所有人中突出正面人物, 在正面人物中突出英雄人物, 在主要英雄人物中突出最重要的即中心人物), see 古远清, ““三突出”的构造过程及其理论特征”, 《鄂州大学学报》9, no. 1 (2002): 28; and 努力塑造无阶级英雄人物的光辉形象, 《红旗杂志》11 (1969), cited in 刁艳飞, “文革时期的二胡音乐研究” (Master’s thesis, Shan Dong Teacher’s Training Institute, 2009).
conservative and formulaic particularly in their tonal or structural design. This may explain Wang’s strong reaction against the use of Western ABA form design in a Chinese instrumental composition when he became a composer. Furthermore, almost all compositions written during this revolutionary period had programmatic or descriptive titles to reflect the political or narrative symbolism, and were promoted for their grand atmosphere rather than for artistic merits.

In terms of education, conservatories and schools were closed in 1966 and most students were sent to farms for ‘re-education’. The harsh working environment and dire intellectual stagnation have resulted in psychological imbalance and emotional distraught in many of these “sent-down-youths”. Overwhelmed by homesickness and a feeling of being forsaken by their families, a new musical genre called “songs of the rusticated youths” (or 知青歌曲) emerged. These songs were created by youths during the period of forced labour, where they wrote lyrics to existing revolutionary songs or well-known foreign tunes to reflect their hardship and sufferings. These youths are mostly amateur composers and many of whom had no musical trainings. Hence for those who managed to compose, songs were usually short and simple, comprising of either one or two sections, drawing musical inspiration from familiar folk characteristics. Such episodes of forced labour are common experiences of many New-Wave composers in their youth. These experiences played a critical role in shaping their compositional philosophy and style, especially their strong sense of Chinese identity and knowledge of the folk music tradition.

Considering this unique historical backdrop and social ethos in which the New-Wave composers have been exposed to in their formative years, we can trace how such twentieth-century “aesthetics” as articulated by Mao’s nationwide artistic vision, together with a knowledge of ancient Chinese music aesthetics and later the primarily Western-styled conservatoire musical trainings received, have contributed to the compositional thinking of New-Wave composers. The New-Wave’s experimental musical fusion was further spurred by China’s Open-door policy in the late 1970s, which marked a momentous venture away from pre-Cultural Revolution restrictions in music.

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53 For a list of Chinese instrumental works produced during this period and its brief analysis, see 刁艳飞, “文革时期的二胡音乐研究”, 10-32; and 梁茂春, “文化大革命”, 20.
54 For details, refer to Wang Jian Min, interview by author, Singapore, June 24, 2011 (question 13).
56 For one, Chen Yi has revealed that it was only after she has went through such dark periods of harsh labour that she found her roots, learnt to appreciate the simplicity of life and communicate with the uneducated farmers on a personal and spiritual level, which inspired her to find a way of self-expression in music combining elements of East and West at a deep level. It was also at that time that she started composing and improvising on her violin and later inspired her to start her own extensive research on Chinese folk songs and Beijing opera music. See John de Clef Piñeiro, “An interview with Chen Yi”, in New Music Connoisseur 9, no. 4 (2001): 27, http://www.newmusiccon.org/v9n4/v94chen_yi.htm (accessed February 2, 2011).
Particularly focusing on Wang Jian Min, the subsequent sections will highlight some of these influences and how they are exhibited with respect to his erhu rhapsodies.

1.3 Wang’s musical background and compositional aesthetic

Unlike the first group of China-born New-Wave composers who have received musical trainings and subsequently built their careers in the West, Wang Jian Min studied exclusively in conservatories within China. Therefore, he has received rigorous trainings not just in Western classical and Chinese traditional music theory, but also has direct exposures to the authentic folk cultures within China. Wang first graduated as a Western instrumentalist (in cello and trombone) from the Wu Xi School of Literature and Art (无锡市文艺学校) in his hometown during the later period of the Cultural Revolution in 1973, before pursuing music composition under Gao Hou Yong (高厚永) and Xu Zhen Min (徐振民) in the Nanjing Art Institute (南京艺术学院) from 1974-1977. After assuming the role of composer-in-residence in Wu Xi Dance Troupe (无锡歌舞团) and composition lecturer at the Nanjing Art Institute, he subsequently went on to pursue advanced studies in music composition as a cadre in the Shanghai Conservatory (1985-1987), where he studied with Yang Li Qing (杨立青), Lin Hua (林华), Zhao Xiao Sheng (赵晓生) and Chen Zhong Hua (陈中华).57 This period of further studies paralleled the all-round social modernization and an unbridled freedom in the experimenting and absorption of contemporaneous Western compositional techniques, which were previously censored.

In his compositions, Wang adopts achieving ‘refinement’ without losing ‘popular appeal’ (雅俗共赏, 中西并存) as his primary aesthetic ideal.58 For Wang, refinement in artistry is reflected by the work’s technical sophistication, which at the same time takes into consideration idiomatic writing and a musical result that does not alienate his listeners. This perhaps explains why his erhu and guzheng works have been extensively performed and well-received. In some sense, such philosophy seems to echo two of Mao’s objectives for art in 1942 – “populism” and “nationalism”. But, “nationalism” in Wang’s context does not refer to feelings of patriotism or purposes of propaganda, it is more in the sense of ‘national music’, which emerges from (folk) tradition with a new Chinese identity and spirit. This in fact, is in line with traditional Chinese music which, unlike the Western Classical tradition, was never an art for the elitist (except perhaps court music). Additionally, it also strikingly resembles chairman Mao’s earliest artistic vision of “古为今用, 洋为中用” in 1964, namely, carrying forward the quintessence of Chinese tradition yet assimilating foreign elements in the search for new and

57 See China Music, 华乐大典·二胡卷, Vol. 1, s.v. ‘王建民’.
58 王建民, “源于民间”, 1.
‘modernized’ modes of expressions and techniques.\textsuperscript{59}

In this connection, Wang has also acknowledged the fact that success and popularity in national instrumental music rely on innovative ideas and techniques, but innovation should “only be made on the basis of traditions” and using simple techniques to the best effects will best reflect the abilities of a composer.\textsuperscript{60} Rather than displaying “technique for technique’s sake” (避免为技法而技法的倾向), he stresses that composers especially in writing Chinese instrumental works should concentrate on the expressive aspects of the work, because that is also the evaluative criterion of the public.\textsuperscript{61} Alluding to the art of Chinese painting, Wang believes that the element of “imaginative space” (akin to the 留白 concept) is also important to music, as opposed to an overloading of compositional techniques which are not integrated in a coherent manner. In a certain sense, this seems to resonate with the Confucius aesthetic principle of \textit{ya} (雅 or “elegant simplicity”), which is more concerned with the intrinsic emotions that art can evoke rather than extrinsic displays.\textsuperscript{62}

Therefore like many \textit{New-Wave} compositions that draw upon folk and traditional elements as basic compositional resources, each of Wang’s four erhu rhapsodies also draws musical influences from different folk cultures within China which reveal distinctive folk flavours.\textsuperscript{63} The influences for each of these rhapsodies include folksongs, folk dances, or folk operas from Yunnan-Guizhou province (云贵地区), Hunan region (湖南花鼓戏), Xinjiang (新疆) and Chinese northwestern region (西北) respectively. Their geographical locations are illustrated in Fig. 1. However, these pitch, rhythmic and metrical elements derived from the folk sources are thoroughly synthesized and transformed before being employed in his works, which explains the more abstract sonic references to folk materials rather than the exact quotation of folk tunes or rhythms in Wang’s works. In a sense, such ideals in combining the essence of

\textsuperscript{59} Mao first explicated his vision on drawing upon foreign elements (including political sciences) to serve the needs of China in 1940 \textit{《新民族议论》}, and also encouraged a similar approach in the area of music in 1956 \textit{《同音乐工作者的谈话》}. For more details, see 欧阳朗, “简析毛泽东“洋为中用”的文艺思想”, \textit{青海师专学报} 4 (1993): 9; and 孙国林, “毛泽东‘古为今用,洋为中用’批示的来龙去脉”, \textit{党史博采·纪实版} 11 (2010): 2.

\textsuperscript{60} By ‘simple techniques’, Wang does not refer superficially to a technique’s complexity or simplicity, nor its classification as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ techniques. Rather, it is the appropriateness and skillfulness in the choice and application of these techniques by the composers, see 王建民, “源于民间”, 2.

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Ibid.}, 6.

\textsuperscript{62} This is encapsulated by Gongsun Ni’s (公孙尼子) description, “乐者, 心之动也, 情动于中, 故形于声”. According to the Confucius classic, \textit{Record of Music《乐记》} authored by Gongsun Ni, one important theory was that of “single-tone entity” (物感说). In his view, music (乐) is perceived to stem fundamentally from the surroundings (物), as a result of the linear relationship from surroundings/objects (物) \rightarrow inner voice (心) \rightarrow tones (音) \rightarrow music (乐). Thus from a Confucius lens, music is a humanistic reflection of the materialistic world by human consciousness and epitomizes the essence and spirit of traditional Chinese musical cultures. For more details, see 李妹, “中西音乐美学的比较研究”, 17-18, 21-22; and John Myers, \textit{The way of the pipa: structure and imagery in Chinese lute music} (USA: Kent State University Press, 1992), 34-35.

\textsuperscript{63} 郭媛, “王建民, 《第四二胡狂想曲》创作访谈录”, 22.
Chinese folk elements with certain Western musical concepts resonate with Béla Bartók’s belief that the highest goal of art music influenced by folk music is the expression of an ineffable spirit resistant to verbal articulation, which cannot be captured through facile/simplistic insertion of folk tunes. Hence “the best way for a composer to reap the full benefits of his studies in peasant music … is to assimilate the idiom of peasant music so completely that he is able to forget all about it and use it as his musical mother tongue.”64

Fig. 1: Illustration of folk influences for each erhu rhapsodies65

Such an approach reflects the strong sense of identity Wang and other New-Wave composers shared as Chinese composers and we could perhaps attribute this to the musical and political influences between 1950s-1970s, during the formative years of these composers as discussed in the preceding section. The exposure to revolutionary songs, yang-ge, model works, folk operas and ‘re-education’ in farms has likely contributed to their strong sense of cultural identity and allow them to be well-versed in certain authentic folk culture of China. On the other hand, their implicit incorporation of folk elements in terms of its abstract sonic application combined with philosophical underpinnings of Western new music sentiments betray a deliberate transcendence of both age-old practice in its stereotypical ‘orientalistic’ tonal expressions and a desire to focus on more abstract issues of aesthetics.

Judging from Wang’s compositional ideals and discussions of some of his

compositional practices, there lies the curious question of how he manages to achieve a confluence of both Chinese and Western musical practices, and to develop new compositional directions. The following section examines some significant issues pertaining to Wang’s syncretic approach in his set of erhu rhapsodies, especially with respect to his specific compositional approaches and aesthetic ideals.

1.4 Wang’s erhu rhapsodies – Compositional approaches, aesthetics

Commissioned by Deng Jian Dong (邓建栋) for his graduation recital and composed in 1988, the first erhu rhapsody occupies a pivotal position in the third development phase (1979-1999) of contemporary erhu music after the end of the Cultural Revolution. More importantly, it represents Wang’s first major composition for the erhu after graduating from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1987. Being a non-erhu player, Wang spent a considerable amount of time studying erhu scores to learn how to write idiomatically for the instrument. According to him, he paid attention to issues such as playing techniques including fingerings, expressive possibilities as well as the instrument’s timbral characteristics at different registers. When planning the large-scale tonal path for his composition, the ease of performance on the instrument in those tonal areas is one prime consideration. To date, he has only written solo works for the erhu and guzheng; he is adamant to write solo pieces only for instruments on which he has done an in-depth study and has gained a thorough understanding of. Not surprising then, in drawing upon Chinese folk materials, aesthetics and musical concepts in his works, Wang demonstrates a similar depth of understanding in his musical distillations and assimilations.

One remarkable feature of Wang’s rhapsody is the revolutionary move away from being dependent on the use of programmatic title as early as in 1988. His first erhu rhapsody, together with Guan Nai-Zhong’s (关乃忠) Erhu Concerto No. 1 (both composed in 1988), represent two earliest departures from the Chinese traditional predilection for descriptive music. Since the ideology behind the use of programmatic title is rather distinct between the Chinese and Western musical cultures, this transformation in the nature of title in Chinese instrumental

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68 Wang Jian Min, interview by author.
70 Such serious research into traditional Chinese/folk elements is reflected both in his compositional notes as well as in conversations with the composer. Wang details his conceptualizations and the reasons for combining certain folk materials and their compositional treatment.
works by these Chinese composers in a sense marks a significant milestone in liberating the expressive possibilities of the instruments and a transformation of traditional aesthetical thinking.

Unlike in traditional Chinese music practices, non-descriptive titles are more commonly used in Western Classical music. Although program music in the West can be traced back to the fourteenth-century Italian caccia, the Golden Age for program music actually occurred only in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries when literary associations occupied a prominent position in musical creativity. Composers then increasingly turned to the more ‘compact form’ of *concert overture* as a vehicle to blend musical, narrative and pictorial ideas. One representative product was the *symphonic poem*, first created by Franz Liszt as he sought the union of music and drama in an orchestral work; the other manifestation lies in programmatic symphonies. But despite having programmatic titles, the idea of appreciating music as music still seems to hold for many Western musicians and composers. For instance, Beethoven’s “Pastoral Symphony” is “more an expression of feeling than tone painting” (mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung als Mahlerei). To cite another example, Krzysztof Penderecki’s “Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima” was originally titled 8’37”. Although Penderecki re-titled the piece after its completion, he urged listeners not to take this descriptive title too literally, as the piece was originally conceived in abstraction without any associations to Hiroshima.

On the other hand, this idea of programmatic music has occupied a prominent role since ancient China, evident from how the Chinese seem to favour “non-musical” or “extramusical” ideas in musical subjects. For instance, the traditional 5-tone pentatonic scale are linked to the *Theory of Five Elements* (五行学) from the Yin-Yang philosophical school of thought, which states that everything in the world is interrelated and governed by invisible laws and order, meaning that everything exists in mutual-generation and mutual-inhibition. Additionally, the five musical tones are also representative of the five human’s internal organs and even reflective of the class division in feudalistic system and social ranks during the time of Confucius.

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72 According to Penderecki, ‘[The piece] existed only in my imagination, in a somewhat abstract way. When Jan Krenz recorded it and I could listen to an actual performance, I was struck with the emotional charge of the work. I thought it would be a waste to condemn it to such anonymity, to those “digits”. I searched for associations and, in the end, I decided to dedicate it to the Hiroshima victims’ (1994); cited in Sarah Wallin, “Krzysztof Penderecki: Threnody for the victims of hiroshima (1960)”, http://sarahwallinhuff.com/documents/penderecki.pdf (accessed February 1, 2012).

73 The five musical tones also correspond to directions, seasons, colours and sense of taste. Traditional Chinese medical books such as *《黄帝内经》 – 金匮真言论篇* illustrates the relation between five musical tones and the five organs - “宫属土, 通于脾；商属金, 通于肺；角属木, 通于肝；徵属火, 通于心；羽属水, 通于肾”， see 朱明, *《黄帝内经》*, (陕西: 陕西旅游出版社, 2003): 57. There are also historical records of its relation to the feudal class system - “宫为君，商为臣，角为民，徵为事，羽为物，五者不乱”， see 《乐记·乐本篇[A]》清阮元校刻, 十三经注疏·礼记正义. (北京: 中华书局, 1980), quoted in 张宏生 and 莫雪川, “二、中国古代音乐的等级色彩”， in “试论中国古代音乐艺术与美学思想的特点”，《外语艺术教育研究》 4 (2009)
Consequently due to these associations, there were stringent rules governing the order of appearance of the five-tones, which posed great constraints to musical creativity. At the same time, music served utilitarian functions in Chinese society, both in the ancient and modern times—from Confucius philosophy of *li-yue* (礼乐), Taoism’s philosophy of naturalism (自然乐论) to Mao’s nationalistic ideals in using music to ‘educate’ and unite the people. As observed, musical performances were almost never contemplated solely for its aesthetic or recreational values alone, unlike with Western formalism. Therefore, expectations for some form of ‘verbal message’ prompted descriptive or programmatic titles. Contemplating sound-for-sound’s sake becomes secondary. Such preference in making references to concrete objects is not only evident in Chinese’s musical practices, but also exhibited in the nature of Chinese characters (which could be traced back to their pictorial origins) for instance.

Moreover, the practice of writing program notes to precede musical compositions has already been well established in Chinese musical culture since around 170 A.D. Although the desire to interpret the meaning of a given piece and the practice of writing program notes are not exclusive to the Chinese, emphasis on these extra-musical meanings and love for literary connotations are intrinsic to the Chinese culture. Such practice is especially evident in ancient zither (古琴/guqin) repertoires, where the composer usually devotes a written section prior to the music to describe the origin and meaning of the piece.

With regard to the nature of titles employed in ancient Chinese music, besides the common practice of dedicating descriptive titles, there are also occasional use of metrical titles such as “八板” (8-beats), “老六板” (6-beats) and “三六” (Three variations on 6-beats), indicating the metrical characteristic of the piece. The use of “programmatic” titles in traditional Chinese instrumental compositions can generally be categorized into three types: psychological, descriptive and imitative (although there may be overlaps between these groupings), with the majority belonging to the psychological type. According to Han (1978),

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74 In Confucius’s philosophy of *li-yue* (礼乐), the greatness of music lies not in the perfection of artistry, but in the attainment and expression of virtue and positive etiquettes. Taoism’s ideology of naturalism (自然乐论) is particularly preoccupied with the ideology of “harmony” (和) and the strong relationship between music and “nature”. ‘Aesthetics’ in twentieth-century China however is more generally represented by Chairman Mao’s artistic vision.


76 For details and musical illustration, see 李吉提,《中国音乐结构分析概论》 (北京: 中央音乐学院出版社, 2004), 88-90, 206-209.

77 Ibid., 25-26. On the other hand, 李吉提 categorizes five functions in the use of what she terms “literature titles” (文学标题) in traditional Chinese music: 1) reflective of the music’s structural characteristics (直接体现音乐的结构特点); 2) depicting the music’s emotions and artistic conceptions (表现音乐情绪、意境) which corresponds to the ‘psychological titles’ labeling by Han; 3) programmatic titles which adhere to a story (表现音乐情节内容的标题), corresponding to Han’s ‘descriptive titles’; 4) titles which do not contain any specific meanings, but are given to serve the needs of folk musicians or given by literati on the spur of inspiration (无特定含意的音乐标题); and 5) to reflect the origins or
psychological titles suggest the general mood of the piece, without a concrete story to follow nor any attempt to imitate natural sounds, such as martial effects in “General’s Command” (将军令) and exuberance in “Frenzied dance of the golden snake” (金蛇狂舞). On the other hand, descriptive titles usually illustrate a story, for instance, the famous pipa piece “Ambush from Ten Sides” (十面埋伏) has twenty-one sections depicting the whole process of battle between armies of Chu and Han in 202 B.C. Citing another example, “Escape of Lin-Chong” (林冲夜奔) portrays a segment of Lin-Chong’s story and the political corruptions during the end of Song Dynasty. Conversely, imitative pieces generally refer to repertoires that contain passages which imitates natural sounds such as flow of water or bird calls – a technique that is considerably more popular in Chinese musical practices than in the West.

Hence, in adopting the western title “rhapsody” instead of a more typical Chinese descriptive title, Wang Jian Min in effect eschews a programmatic narrative to structure his music. The term ‘rhapsody’, popularized largely in the West in the nineteenth century, generally signifies the absence of any regular form. This genre tends to be freer in its typically one-movement continuous structure, and is often characterized by a certain improvisatory spirit or impassioned character; in the hands of composers like Liszt, it is given a nationalistic and virtuosic dimension. Wang reveals his underlying rationale for employing the Western concept of “rhapsody” for his first commissioned erhu work in 1988. Firstly, this approach represents his reaction against the Western “A B A” structure that prevailed in many Chinese compositions from 1949-1970s. He felt that composers hardly utilized the wide array of structuring and compositional concepts unique to the Chinese music culture in their writing. Therefore, the multi-sectional structuring inherent in the rhapsodic style offer space for him to portray what he considers the Chinese narrative process of musical unfolding. This entails a gradual unfolding and blossoming of ideas through various stages as the piece develops (“娓娓道来式的, 小河淌水, 慢慢地慢慢地, 越流越粗, 越流越大”). Secondly, the rhapsodic vehicle frees him from adhering to a particular emotion, narrative, or titled description, characteristic of traditional Chinese instrumental works. He felt that music in essence is still a rather abstract form of art and cherishes the greater freedom to shape the piece as he explores the expressive and virtuosic potential of the erhu and his musical materials. Thirdly, in a nationalistic vein, Wang also mentions that these rhapsodies embody a general nationalistic and spiritual outlook of the performing motivation of the piece historically (反映音乐的源头或当初应用情况的标题). More examples are illustrated in 李吉提, 《中国音乐结构分析概论》, 116-118.

78 Grove Music Online, s.v. ‘Rhapsody’. See also The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2nd ed., s.v. ‘Rhapsody’.

79 Quoted from the author’s interview with Wang Jian Min (question 5), where he explains what he meant by a gradual unfolding and blossoming of an idea, as slowly revealing parts of the idea rather than painting its full picture right from the start, “所谓娓娓道来式就是说出现一点再露出一点，出现一点再露出一点，不是那种风风火火或特别明显的”.
Chinese, reflecting their diligence, positive outlook towards life and ability to endure hardship. Wang also reveals his conscious endeavour in creating works with an emotional impact that could inspire listeners.

Within this rhapsodic framework, Wang then incorporates aspects of the Chinese ban-shi structure (板式结构), which illustrates what he felt to exemplify the progressive and gradual narrative process of the Chinese. Needless to say, there are important differences in the two kinds of structural approaches — the Western rhapsodic design and the Chinese ban-shi structuring. The western rhapsody had evolved from simpler ternary structures to larger multi-sectional and often polythematic ones in the nineteenth-century; they are typically founded on thematic and tonal contrasts, at times exhibiting an element of musical antagonism. By contrast, traditional Chinese musical constructions promote the ideals of “complementarity” (协调), “completeness” (完整性) and “naturalness” (自然性), all of which echo the ancient aesthetic concept of ‘beauty’. In the case of the commonly employed ban-shi structuring in traditional Chinese instrumental work, a typical ordering is the “散—慢—中—快—散” format (that is, progressing through free—slow—moderate—fast—free tempos). Such structuring based on tempo changes is based on the notion of “completeness” in the form of being flanked by an opening and closing san-ban (散板, somewhat analogous to the western idea of ad lib. or free tempo), connected by the gradual process of musical development and transformation. The progressive increment in tempo here is taken as “natural” and the music is heard to logically move through various emotional stages. The ban-shi structure thereby mirrors the endless cyclical progression and changes of the natural world (through changes in tempo or relationships between rhythmic density and sparseness); which is in stark contrast with the western musical aesthetics concerned with, for example, proportion and balance, tension and resolution. This ban-shi concept also realizes the fundamental mode of musical thinking in the horizontal dimension, intrinsic to Chinese music. Considering that traditional Chinese music do not exhibit melodic or harmonic structuring concepts like the West, such ban-shi layout embody an important structuring

80 Interview by main author (question 5); 王建民, “第一二胡狂想曲—创作札记(一)”, in China Music, 华乐大典·二胡卷 Vol. 2, ed. 乔建中 et al. (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Publishing, 2010), 342; and 郭媛, 《第四二胡狂想曲》创作访谈录”, 23-24, where Wang describes in detail, “我主要还是想表现那种民族精神，中国人的那种坚韧不拔、吃苦耐劳的面貌，一种对目标的追求、不退缩、积极向上的信念。”

81 Some scholars have also attributed such ban-shi layout to be representative of the “循环往复” and “大团圆” ideologies. Traditional structural concepts of Chinese music reflect aesthetical ideals from Confucianism, Taoism and the Yin-Yang school of thought. See 李妹, “中西音乐美学的比较研究”, 60-61; 李吉提, 《中国音乐结构分析概论》, 235 and 246.

82 This formal layout in Chinese instrumental works has roots in daqu (大曲) repertoires and the Chinese opera (戏曲). For more details on its usage in various genres such as daqu (相和大曲 and 燕乐大曲), guqin pieces and opera (戏曲曲牌 and 戏曲板腔体), refer to 王次炤, 《音乐美学新论》 (北京: 中央音乐学院出版社, 2003), 246–247; 李吉提, 《中国音乐结构分析概论》, 61-74, 112-113, 162 and 207-211.
principle.

In Wang’s East-West structural amalgamation here, we witness a number of interesting features. First, he modifies the traditional ban-shi design to end with a virtuosic culmination (急板, Presto section) in place of its free tempo (散板) return, thereby following the Western rhapsodic predilection for a climactic ending. Second, within this modified ban-shi layout, Wang alters the conventional order of appearance of the various tempo-based sections so that his pieces do not always unfold in the expected manner from slow to fast, especially in the later rhapsodies. In some sense, this approach deviates from traditional aesthetic ideals associated with the ban-shi layout. In describing his structural approach, Wang associates it with the essence of san (‘散’ or ‘freedom’) akin to the art of Chinese prose writing (散文, san-wen), as he strives to achieve a balance between ‘freedom’ in his structural design and a sense of unity across the work. Wang reveals his awareness of the dangers of adopting such multi-sectional structuring, especially as it may weaken a piece’s structural unity and structural strength if not skillfully handled. He emphasized the fine line between the proper ideals of san (‘散’) (freedom) as embodied in the aesthetics of the 散文 (san-wen, a Chinese literary genre), and the misinterpretation of 散 as being loosely-constructed (松散, song-san). Hence to complement the risk of losing structural unity across multiple sections, he felt that musical variants have to be crafted to bear close resemblances to one another. We shall explore in chapters 2 and 3 how Wang manages to alter and fuse the Chinese ban-shi structuring concepts with the Western concepts of large-scale thematic and harmonic planning in the first and fourth erhu rhapsodies, and how his approaches differ between these two works.

In terms of structure, it is also apparent that Wang’s handling of the san-ban element appears to be unconventional. In traditional Chinese instrumental works, there are usually three occurrences of san-ban: san-qi (散起), san-fang (散放) and san-shou (散收), named after their structural locations, namely in the introduction, at the climax and at the concluding section of a piece. However in Wang’s rhapsodies, other than the introductory ad lib. section (which corresponds to the idea of san-qi), we find other san-ban-like passages being employed in areas other than the other two conventional structural locations. Significant appearances include transitory passages as well as cadenza-like passages, which raise yet another issue. Bearing in mind that cadenzas originally evolved in the context of concertos and not rhapsodies, we note

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84 As Wang describes in the interview (question 6), “段落一多,你可能结构力会松懈”.
another aspect of Wang’s cross-general borrowing here.

Let us first consider the traditional aesthetics and essences associated with the Chinese notion of san-ban (散板), which essentially differs from the Western concept of “rubato”, so as to set the stage for comparison with Wang’s unconventional usage in his erhu rhapsodies in subsequent chapters. The earliest usage of san-ban in Chinese instrumental works can be found in ancient zither (guqin) repertoire as a result of ancient Chinese notational practices that uses Chinese characters, whereby only notes and certain performing techniques are notated, but not the rhythm or pulse (“定音不定板”). Thus, musicians are given the freedom to interpret and perform based on their musicality and understanding of conventional practices, which resulted in different performances of the same piece.\(^7\) This is an example of ‘suggestive scoring’ (提示性), unique to the Chinese musical culture and is closely linked to the aesthetic and artistic temperament of a literati.

From a macro-perspective, the san-ban represents a specific instance of a broader category of Chinese music governed by free tempo (或散体性音乐). Another similar sub-genre is the ancient literati music (文人音乐), which lacks a clear musical motif, and is more often improvised through singing at the spur of inspiration rather than composed (边吟边述).\(^8\) Founded on the concept of non-determinate beat duration (拍无定值) from the pre-Ming Dynasty and reflecting a flexibility in the concept of “time” (拍), the san-ban has traditionally been considered one of the most unique and challenging type of ban (板式) to master.\(^9\) It also plays an important role in fulfilling the Chinese aesthetic notion of “写意” and “随意性”, both closely associated with evoking imageries and moods. As with the concept of liu-bai (留白) in Chinese painting, san-ban also plays on the aesthetic ideal of leaving space for the imagination of the performer and listener. Essentially, this differs from the Western concept of “rubato”, which refers generally to a certain flexibility with time within a metrical frame. Besides the mentioning of liu-bai in his compositional notes, Wang also speaks of san-hua (散化, “suffusion”), as applied to his melodic construction which we shall examine in more detail later.

\(^7\)For an illustration of the different performing interpretations of a piece of traditional guqin work based on the ancient notation score, refer to 李吉提, 《中国音乐结构分析概论》, 70-71.
\(^8\)Other traditional usages of san-ban include pastoral songs from Mongolia (长调牧歌), mountain songs (山野歌曲) and Chinese Opera (戏曲音乐). Originating from Chinese opera, the idea of ‘san-ban’ takes on various forms within the opera context to include for instance, 紧打慢唱, 导板 and 无板无眼. This various forms of san-ban affect the manner in which they are being rendered by the performer. However in the context of Chinese instrumental work, there is strictly speaking, only one type of san-ban and thus generally referred to by this more general term. For more details, refer to 李吉提, 《中国音乐结构分析概论》, 69-71 and 97-98.
The foregoing glimpse into some of Wang’s compositional thinking and personal insights pertaining to the confluence of Chinese and Western musical cultures then inform our understanding of his belief that such fusion of disparate cultural elements should be a natural hybrid rather than an artificial or superficial combination. The evidently more sophisticated techniques in his latest rhapsody seem to reflect Wang’s move towards more contemporary Western compositional approaches, especially in how, its core intervallic characteristics of perfect fourths and major seconds distilled from folk sources manifest as structural elements in the form of quintal/quartal structures and whole-tone elements, resulting in more ambiguous pitch centricities. With such departures, we are then curious how he manages to stay true to his compositional philosophy of achieving technical sophistication, yet producing a musical result that does not alienate his listeners.

In the following two chapters, discussions of Wang’s first and fourth erhu rhapsodies will be informed by both Western analytical approaches and traditional Chinese music-theoretic perspectives. By examining Wang’s approach towards mediating and reconciling disparate elements from the two musical traditions, this study will then attempt to demonstrate Wang’s evolving compositional language, musical identity and his maturity as a composer, traced across two decades with reference to this set of rhapsodies.

1.5 Analytical Methodology

The presence of diverse compositional influences and techniques in Wang’s first and fourth erhu rhapsodies necessarily entails multiple analytical perspectives, so as to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of Wang’s syncretic compositional approach. Since each of the rhapsodies are based on Chinese folk musical elements from different regions, each piece will be examined with reference to aspects of the referenced Chinese musical sources. The analytical procedure in this study is informed by a number of sources and perspectives – Wang’s compositional notes, interviews and verbal commentaries on the pieces, information on Wang’s musical background and compositional beliefs, relevant Chinese musical concepts, as well as relevant Western analytical perspectives.

Since every analytical tool has its advantages and limitations, to better illustrate the blend of both traditional and contemporary elements in these works, the study will apply, where appropriate, traditional motivic and harmonic analysis, at times borrowing Schenkerian symbols to illuminate deeper tonal relations, and elsewhere, using set-theoretic labels to explicate non-triadic pitch organisation. Some Schenkerian notational symbols which I have borrowed includes the use of broken slurs (to indicate the retention or composing-out of a single tone over a longer span), stems (to designate notes of deeper structural significance), unstemmed filled noteheads (denoting notes that form part of the immediate musical context but not necessarily
accountable for in conventional tonal [Schenkerian] terms), and stemmed open noteheads (to signify tones on the deepest structural level). The use of solid slurs is largely used to group related tones, especially between deep-level tones which appear to reflect certain tonal gestures. It is essential to note however that these ‘related-tones’ may not necessarily be underpinned by tonal voice-leading expected of conventional Schenkerian graphs, due to the unique nature in which ‘tonal’ elements are being employed in the works.
CHAPTER TWO: ANALYSIS OF ERHU RHAPSODY NO. 1

Having received the commission to write an erhu rhapsody upon graduation from the Shanghai Conservatory in 1988, Wang spent a considerable amount of time familiarizing himself not only with the technical and expressive possibilities of the erhu, but also in conceptualizing this rhapsody. This rhapsody represents Wang’s early compositional philosophy and style, and occupies a significant position in contemporary erhu repertoire. It has pushed boundaries in erhu performing techniques as well as shifted away from the more superficial amalgamation of musical elements that typifies compositions written in the early nineties. A study of the work, informed by some background knowledge of Wang’s compositional approach reveals his unique manner in drawing from the Western and Chinese musical concepts and aesthetics. Rather than a superficial approach, Wang manages to negotiate and synthesize disparate elements to produce a tightly-knit and coherent piece of work. This chapter examines Wang’s approaches in synthesizing these diverse elements. We shall see his handling of pitch materials derived from folk sources, his structural design, and how he evokes the abstract sonic allusions to folksongs and folk dances from the Yunnan region and Guizhou provinces.

2.1 Source and treatment of pitch materials

In a sense, Wang’s syncretic approach and ideals resonate with Béla Bartók’s belief that the ultimate goal “is the complete absorption of folk music’s marvelous essence, which in turn may facilitate artistic evocations of that essence without reference to or reliance upon specific models.”90 In choosing his pitch materials inspired from a folksong genre of the Miao tribe known as fei-ge (苗族飞歌), Wang is more interested in capturing their essences and spirit, then exploring their compositional potentials. This differs from the more straightforward approach of directly embedding existing folk tunes in a piece of work.91 To this end, Wang distills the genre’s distinctive melodic trait in the form of a four-note motivic core (which he terms as 核心/主题/特性音调, or 核心音调 in short).92 From this cell, Wang then explores its compositional possibilities at various levels – be it as a characteristic melodic motif at various passages, or harmonically as vertical sonorities and chord progressions; elsewhere he exploits

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90 Quoted in Mark Nelson, “Aspects of Béla Bartók’s synthetic methods”, 60.
92 The composer describes the interchangeability of the terms “主题音调”, “特性音调” and the Western concept of “动机” (motif) in view of his four-note core motivic cell in this rhapsody, except that it is transformed and developed in ways different from those of the West. Refer to interview with author, question 13.
its inherent bi-modal property (drawn from the Miao folksong genre) as a means of creating contrast in his thematic and harmonic layout.

Ex. 1 illustrates two authentic fei-ge excerpts originating from the Miao tribe. Notice that their fundamental melodic movements are governed by triadic outlines, coupled with the characteristic minor 3rd inflection.\(^\text{93}\)

Ex. 1: Excerpts of “飞歌” from Miao tribe illustrating the characteristic melodic inflection (音调的特性)

(a) Melodic inflection\(^\text{94}\)

(b) An excerpt of Miao folksong, 《登上高山头》\(^\text{95}\)

In capturing the essence of this feature, Wang juxtaposes a major and a minor third from the modal centre (宫音上方大小三度并存) within a four-note motivic core (Ex. 2), first presented in the ad lib. introduction by the solo erhu in an improvisatory manner (see Ex. 3).\(^\text{96}\)

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\(^\text{93}\) This tonal inflection reflects the intonation which characterizes the Miao dialect. The “飞歌” is usually sung in mountainous and field areas in the Yunnan region and it is a more common term used by the South-Eastern folks. At Xiang xi (湘西), this kind of folksong is also known as “高腔”, while in other dialects of the Western area, it is also referred to as “顺路歌”, “吼歌”, “喊歌” etc., see 杜亚雄, 《中国各少数民族民间音乐概述》 (北京: 人民音乐出版社, 1996), 703.

\(^\text{94}\) Excerpt from 汝艺, “论王建民的二胡作品对二胡艺术发展的意义” (Master’s thesis, Shanghai Conservatory of Music, 2007), 9. The specific folksong in which this excerpt is taken from is not known, as the author did not indicate the source.

\(^\text{95}\) Excerpt taken from 杜亚雄, 《中国各少数民族民间音乐概述》, 703.

\(^\text{96}\) As evident in Wang’s compositional discussion, it is apparent that he is thinking in terms of a four-note idea, instead of a three-note motif with the minor 3rd inflection characteristic of the folk source. Wang
To be sure, such juxtaposition of a major/minor third within a cell is not found in the original folk genre, where the lowered third only exists as an inflection. On the other hand, we do note that there are instances within the rhapsody where the minor third appears more as a melodic decoration/inflection than as part of a four-note idea. In describing the function of motivic permeation using this core motive, Wang metaphorically compares it to guiding posts along a lengthy pathway, which serve as important markers that constantly reassure the hiker. Similarly, this core motivic cell constantly 'guides' the listener along the path of musical narrative. However, such ‘signposts’ (or manner of motivic permeation) do not always appear in the same fashion. Wang associates his compositional handling with the spirit of san (散 or “suffusion”), whereby he is free to transform the motif by altering its ‘shape’. Hence, appearances of this cell may not always bear direct resemblances to one another through a specific melodic contour for instance, but may more subtly allude to the motif.

Ex. 2: Motivic cell (核心音调) based on tetrachord 4-17

Ex. 3: Rendition of the major/ minor 3rd tetrachord in bar 1 (note the harmonic equivalence of E© and F).

In subjecting this (0347) cell to various melodic and harmonic transformations, Wang made the folk material his own. Let us now investigate its subsequent appearances.

With respect to melodic crafting, Wang’s deployment of the four-note cell as the characteristic motif at the beginning of various passages mirrors to some extent the Chinese concept of he-tou (合头), which refers to the similarity in the beginning portions between motifs, phrases or sections. However its application by Wang in this rhapsody transcends this
convention. In his case, ‘similarity’ at the beginning of sections/passages does not mean exact notes involved, but rather an idea embodied by the core motivic cell, which takes on a variety of form. In a sense, this approach differs from the Western concept of thematic/motivic variation, whereby a motif is usually defined by its melodic or rhythmic profile, which are then varied through various means. In Wang’s erhu rhapsody, this motif is so lacking in a definitive melodic and rhythmic shape in the conventional sense that we may regard it as an abstract collection of pitch class, namely pitch class set 4-17.

As Wang mentions, there are two contrasting motifs (motifs a and b) employed in the rhapsody. However, it may perhaps be more appropriate to view them as two distinct approaches in realizing of the 4-17 cell, rather than as two totally unrelated motifs. Motif a (in Ex. 4) illustrates how this motivic cell is being deployed as the characteristic melodic motif in its melodic crafting (marked out in boxes), as well as how this 4-17 tetrachord is sometimes embedded at a deeper level within the melody (refer to square bracket). In embedding two 4-17 tetrachords that are third related within motif a (A-B♯-C♯-E and C-D♯-E-G), the second tetrachord adds on to form a longer string of thirds, which surpasses the triadic outline of one triad characteristic of the fei-ge genre. In addition to the tetrachordal embedding, motif a₁ (bars 27 - 34) further manifests the modal duality inherent in “4-17” in the form of a contrast between ‘C♯’ in the erhu melody and ‘C♭’ in the bass; this prefigures more of such chromatic clashes between melody and accompaniment later on, such as at bars 216-219 (‘D♭’ versus ‘Db’).

Ex. 4: “4-17” inherent in Motif a and a₁:

Elsewhere, besides appearing as the core of melodic variants, 4-17 is also manifested in the harmonic dimension. The first instances are the vertical sonorities in the accompaniment, especially as linkages between phrases (e.g. at bars 7-8, 10-11, 15 and 24-25). Its major and minor third components are also exploited to create contrasts in harmonic colours between (point of return), “轮回” (Sanskāra or continuous movement), as well as Confucius’s “中庸之道” (middle course). For more details, refer to 廖胜京, “旋律中的各种逻辑关系”, 《星海音乐学院学报》2 (June 2006): 45; 《中国音乐词典》, s.v. “合头” (北京: 人民音乐出版社, 1984); 李吉提, 《中国音乐结构分析概论》, 107; and 王耀华、杜亚雄, 《中国传统音乐概论》, (福建: 福建教育出版社, 2006), 357.

100 Refer to interview with Wang, question 6.
adjacent chords, as illustrated in Ex. 5 (see also bars 147-148, 199-202 and 213-215). At times, it is exhibited in the form of contrast between phrases. For instance, in the passage based on motif a (bars 3-20), the second phrase’s momentary dwelling on ‘D♯’ (at bar 15), can be heard as an ‘inflected E’. Another instance can be found at the end of this passage, where the two mediants of A (C♯ and C♭) inflect both the harmony and melody in unpredicted ways (bars 21-26).

Ex. 5: Linking passage built upon major-minor alteration to create contrast:

The modal duality inherent in the “4-17” idea is also being infused into chord progressions, especially evident in the second half of the rhapsody. In the Largo section (bars 239-253) centered on C, the chord progressions largely revolve around I, bIII, ♭III and V. However, these traditional roman numeral chord labeling do not imply conventional major triads, but represent chords with the characteristic ‘4-17’ major/minor ambiguity. Tracing the progressions across the passage reveals the following progression: I (bars 239-240) – bIII (bars 241-242) – I (bars 243) – III (bar 244) – V (bar 245) – I (bars 246-247) – bIII (bar 248) – ♭III (bar 249) – bIII (bar 250) – ♭VII – bVI – I (bar 253). Notice also the less obvious 4-17 framework involving bVI, ♪VII, I and bIII. Such approaches clearly reveal Wang’s central compositional concept of ‘diffusing’ the core motivic cell (打散) at various levels within the work.101

101 Refer to interview with Wang (question 13).
Wang’s contrasting “motif” b is characterized by series of thirds (三度叠置方法/高叠模式).\(^{102}\) This is probably inspired by folksongs from the southern region of China (where the Miao tribe is), whose melodies largely revolve around the skeletal framing of three or four notes in movements of thirds. Here, harmonic contrasts involving minor and major colouring (reminiscent of the modal duality inherent in 4-17) are nonetheless still evident. Observe that although both renditions of motif b (bar 62) and b\(^1\) (bar 74) are supported by a ‘D’ center in the bass, motif b is more minor in character, outlining an A minor chord with an F\(^\natural\) whereas motif b\(^1\) articulates a D major equivalent. This idea of contrast is further underscored by the style of accompaniment between the variants. The lower voice of the piano accompaniment is given more prominence in presenting motif b\(^1\), and subsequently echoed by the solo erhu whose melody gradually evolved into a countermelody to the left hand melodic fragments. Ex. 6 demonstrates the two contrasting renditions of this motif.

Ex. 6: Motif b and b\(^1\) (note ‘F\(^\natural\)’ versus ‘F\(^\#\)’ respectively)

Apart from assimilating the characteristic chromatic inflection and wide melodic leaps governed by thirds, fifths and octaves, other more abstract sonic qualities associated with the fei-ge are also absorbed. These include accompanying features such as loud and sonorous, yet lyrical singing in an ad lib. manner. Perhaps, this accounts for the frequent use of portamento and extremely high harmonics on the solo erhu at various sections. The improvisatory and often free-tempo presentation of such folk singing is also being captured through various ad lib. (or alternatively marked as rubato) sections/passages which we will discuss in relation to the concept of san-ban later on.

\(^{102}\) The description of “三度叠置方法/高叠模式” is quoted from Wang’s interview (question 6). It is also described as “三度音程模式” in Wang’s compositional notes, 王建民, “第一二胡狂想曲—创作札记 (一)”, 1.
2.2 Use of ‘4-17’ in Scale construction

Apart from being rendered in the linear and vertical dimensions as discussed previously, the ‘4-17’ folk-inspired cell in turn also generates the 9-tone synthetic scale employed in this rhapsody (see Ex. 7a).103 If we disregard the added inflections (变音, indicated by filled note-heads), we observe that its underlying framework (骨干音) is similar to the skeletal framework in folksongs of the Yunnan-Guizhou region (云贵地区). In terms of outlook, this scale may bring to mind Olivier Messiaen’s third mode of limited transposition. However, its derivation and usage by the two composers are fundamentally different.104

In terms of derivation, Wang’s construction of this source set stems from the four-note cell distilled from Miao folksong material, to achieve certain colouristic effects (marked out in Ex. 7a).105 But for Messiaen, this mode (along with his derivation of other modes of limited transpositions illustrated in Ex. 7b) represents an alternative approach towards harmonic construction in the twentieth century. It also represents the first manifestation of a phenomenon (which he calls the ‘charm of impossibilities’) that dominated his life as a composer, where ‘certain mathematical impossibilities, certain closed circuits, possess a strength of bewitchment, a magic strength, a charm’.106 A comparison of how the two composers conceive of the scale is telling. In Messiaen’s case, as indicated by the square brackets in Ex. 7(a) and (b), this mode can be divided into three segments, each comprising the same intervallic structure – a tone followed by two semitones. The last note of one segment is also the first note of the next, implying that transposing the scale fragment a major third up or by interval class 4 (T₄) will

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104 When Wang composed this rhapsody after graduating from the Shanghai Conservatory a year before, he already knew of Messiaen’s Modes of Limited Transposition (MLT). However, as evident from Wang’s brief compositional explanation, it is obvious that his approach is essentially distinct from Messiaen’s (refer to interview with Wang, question 2). Therefore, contrary to 孙凰 in “谈王建民的二胡狂想曲”, who claims that Wang borrowed Messiaen’s MLT to construct his synthetic scale for this rhapsody, we may want to adopt a more neutral stance in investigating Wang’s derivation and usage before arriving at such conclusion.
105 Wang describes this as “宫羽交替的色彩”, see interview with Wang, question 2.
106 Quoted by Jean Marie Wu in “Mystical symbols of faith: Olivier Messiaen’s charm of impossibilities”, in Messiaen’s language of mystical love, ed. Siglind Bruhn (New York: Garland, 1998), 85. The ‘charm of impossibilities’ represents Messiaen’s life-long fascination in exploring with certain mathematical impossibilities of the modal and rhythmic domains. It generally refers to the “charm” resulting from transpositions of synthetic scales (modes of limited transposition), rhythmic impossibilities in retrograde motion (non-retrogradeable rhythms), and self-imposed limitations effecting permutations of note values in a particular ordering (symmetrical permutations). In addition, Messiaen is also drawn to the charm of indivisibility of prime numbers. The three major ‘charm of impossibilities’ are described by Messiaen in his conversations with Claude Samuel, Olivier Messiaen: music and color. Conversations with Claude Samuel and Oliver Messiaen, trans. E. Thomas Glasow (Portland, OR: Amadeus, 1994), 48; see also, Olivier Messiaen, The technique of my musical language, trans. John Satterfield (Paris: Leduc, 1956), 8.
yield the same set of notes. For Wang, however, the scale is impregnated by overlapping 4-17, as shown in Ex. 7(a).\textsuperscript{107}

Ex. 7: (a) Scale employed in Wang’s Erhu Rhapsody no. 1 (based on D as tonic, as used in the piece);\textsuperscript{108} (b) Messiaen’s modes of limited transposition (based on C as tonic)\textsuperscript{109}

In other words, Messiaen was fascinated with the ‘charm’ brought about by the inherent symmetrical property of the mode whereas Wang’s focus was on the particular tetrachordal motif embedded within.\textsuperscript{110} Hence, the mode may not always appear as a whole in the rhapsody (especially prior to bar 100), but it is still possible to trace the transpositional levels at which the mode occur at various passages. Wang’s differing conception can be further observed in his choice of transpositional levels, sense/strength of pitch center and appearance of the mode.

Apropos the choice of transpositional levels at which the mode appears, Wang does not restrict himself to levels that maximize the number of common tones. As illustrated in Ex. 8, transpositions other than $T_4$ and $T_8$ will yield contrasting collection of notes. Tracing the changes in pitch centers across this rhapsody (refer to Table 1), it is apparent that Wang largely employs transpositions other than $T_4$ and $T_8$, with the exception of a short passage (bars 191-215) within section B which passes through ‘Ab’ and ‘Bb’ centricities instead of the ‘C’ and ‘D’

\textsuperscript{107} I use the prime form numbers of 4-17 to indicate the overlapping instances of the pc set.
\textsuperscript{108} Ex. 7(a) is taken from Wang Jian Min, “Music Extravaganza – Seminar”.
\textsuperscript{109} Ex. 7(b) is taken from Donald Street, “The modes of limited transposition”, \textit{The Musical Times} 117, no. 1604 (October 1976): 819–23.
\textsuperscript{110} “我的用法是采取在这个音阶的基础上, 调用它里面我认为可用的特性音调的某几个音, 采取区域性的是片段性的这种移位的方式来组合我们的旋律。” Interview with Wang, question 2.
centricities. The four transpositional levels used in his first rhapsody are illustrated in Ex. 8. Notice how these transpositional levels seem to emphasize the subdominant in the circle of fifths. The complete chromatic aggregate is also being encompassed within these transpositional forms.

Ex. 8: Four contrasting transpositional forms, with $T_0$ representing the home centricity of the rhapsody

$T_0$: \[ D\ E\ F\ F\#\ G\#\ A\ B\ C\ B\#\ D \]

$T_3$: \[ G\ A\ A\#\ B\ C\ D\ E\ F\ F\#\ G \]

$T_7$: \[ A\ B\ C\ C\#\ D\#\ E\ F\ G\ G\#\ A \]

$T_{10}$: \[ C\ D\ D\#\ E\ F\#\ G\ A\#\ B\ B\#\ B\ C \]

In contrast with many of Messiaen’s music based on such modes, Wang’s handling of his scale materials here is more conventional in its tonal clarity. In this rhapsody, these four pitch centers (D, G, A and C) are generally clearly established through the use of pedal points (e.g. bars 2-31, 62-73), ostinatos (e.g. bars 119-130, 191-194), pitch saliency (e.g. bars 26-46, 236-240) and cadential gestures. Had it been Messiaen, it would have been more an exploitation of the ‘atmosphere of several tonalities [D, F\#$, B$_b$ in this case] at once… the composer being free to give predominance to one of the tonalities or leave the tonal impression unsettled’. 111

For his ‘modulations’, Wang frequently makes use of common tones and cadential gestures for a smooth transition. For example at bars 223-240, the common tones D, B$_b$, F\# are used to bring about the $T_{10}$ modulation. Prior to that, the A$_b$ center at bar 191 is brought about by a V-I gesture from bars 190-191, as well as common tones (such as D$\#$ / E$_b$, C, G). This subsequently leads in to a sense of B$_b$ center at bar 203, with the bass traversing down in major seconds (D - C - B$_b$) – which are common tones of both scales based on A$_b$ and B$_b$ center, accompanied by an outline of an extended G tetrachord (G A$\#$ B D F) in the melody. In short, Wang brings out the modal duality as a central compositional idea and fuses it with certain diatonic elements or tonal gestures to establish a sense of centricity. On the other hand, Messiaen hardly employs his modes in a melodic fashion, he prefers to use them more as colours, with “neither a tonic nor a final”. 112 Messiaen’s treatment of such modes has been

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111 Olivier Messiaen, *Technique*, 87. At the time when Messiaen wrote *Technique* in 1944, he did not view his seven modes as equals because of their varying symmetrical properties. The greater the symmetry the greater the tonal possibilities, hence his preference for modes 2 and 3 could be attributed to their fewer transpositions and more numerous allusions to tonal harmonies compared to modes 4 and 6.

112 Messiaen describes that classic tonalities had a tonic. The ancient modes had a final. But his has neither of these. In addition, Messiaen explains that “[these modes] aren’t harmonies in the classic sense of the term. They obviously aren’t tonal harmonies, and not even recognized chords. They are just
observed to gradually shift from a commitment to one mode in melody-accompaniment layout, to polymodality, and later more complex merging of both modal and non-modal materials (especially from 1940s onwards). This is also coupled with a shift in emphasis towards incorporating modes as block chords rather than lines (melodies). For example, one distinctive usage of these modes by Messiaen involve a ‘parallel chord series’ (with the exception of modes 1 and 5), as illustrated in Ex. 9.

Ex. 9: Messiaen’s mode 3 arranged in parallel pentad series

Although Wang renders this 9-tone scale using tonal gestures as discussed earlier, with ‘modulations’ largely revolving around “closely related” pitch centricities (namely the subdominant or dominant) except in the middle section, his pitch centricities are not all of the same clarity. Take for instance Wang’s use of pedal points and ground bass in establishing the centricity at bars 62-73. Despite the ‘D’ pedal and bass ostinato reiterating the lowest note of the extended third series (D - F - A - C - E - G - B) from both the melodic outline and triadic chordal accompaniment, the bass ostinato pattern gradually opens out in fifths at bars 66 and 70 (perhaps first anticipated by the fifth relations at bar 61), before resuming the thirds renditions later on (at bars 74 – 81). This to a certain extent contributes to a sense of tonal fluidity in the melodic voice. On the other hand, clearer establishment of centricities using tonal elements can be found at bars 27 – 61. The overriding sense of ‘A’ centricity is contributed by the largely ‘A’ tetrachordal outline, as well as the ‘E’ and ‘A’ framing notes. From a larger perspective, the overall centricity is further articulated by the bassline which leads towards ‘A’ (bars 27-33). This overriding ‘A’ center then seems to tonicize ‘D’ at bar 34, with the series of D-A punctuations both within the bass and between the erhu–accompaniment melodic exchanges.

colors...”, see Claude Samuel, Olivier Messiaen: music and color, 62, 48-49; my italics.

113 Trends traced from Messiaen’s piano Préludes and Technique. For an overview of Messiaen’s techniques, see Cheong Wai-Ling, “Messiaen’s triadic colouration: modes as inversion”, Music Analysis 21, no. 1 (2002): 59. As quoted by Samuel of Messiaen, “I don’t use my modes in a melodic fashion... I use them as colors”, Claude Samuel, Olivier Messiaen: music and color, 48-49.

114 The shift in emphasis towards chords rather than lines is also reflected in Messiaen’s treatment of birdsongs, where the earlier preference for melodic representation of birdsong is superseded by harmonized ones; see Cheong Wai-Ling, “Messiaen’s triadic colouration: modes as inversion”, 59.

115 These chords are not ‘parallel’ in the literal sense, but suggestive of the lining up of triads derivative from major or minor scales, where major, minor, diminished and even augmented triads follow in succession. As Messiaen puts it, ‘each voice realizes the entire mode, starting on a different degree’; see Olivier Messiaen, Technique, 88.

116 Extracted from Olivier Messiaen, Technique, Ex. 333.
However this ‘D’ territory is short-lived as the music shifts back to ‘A’ (bar 47) via a series of triads in third relations (D - F - A) and the ‘A-E’ punctuations (47-58). There are also instances where the bass actually articulates the full scale as part of the lead in to a new centricity, as seen in bars 220-222, where it actually passes through the full T₀ scale.

2.3 Structural design in light of both Chinese and Western concepts

Recalling Wang’s structural approach towards his set of erhu rhapsodies as discussed in Chapter 1, this section explores Wang’s earliest approach in modifying the Chinese traditional ban-shi structure and fusing it with the Western idea of large-scale thematic and harmonic planning within a rhapsodic framework. First, notice how this rhapsody reveals a modified multi-sectional ban-shi layout of the form 散-慢-中-快-广-急 (free-slow-moderate-fast-largo-presto), where the final return to san-ban (散板) is replaced instead by the Largo section (广板) and Presto section (急板). One wonders if this is a manifestation of the Western predilection for a climactic ending, as typically seen in concerto endings and other virtuosity-based genres. Second, within this modified ban-shi layout, the Largo (广板 at bar 239) appears to resemble the Western idea of a reprise, notably for musical structures that feature a return of the first main section. Such concepts of thematic/tonal reprise are not central to the traditional Chinese ban-shi structuring concepts, although ‘reprise’ in the form of tempo — a return to san-ban (or ad lib. closure), similar to how the piece opens with a san-ban introduction (which recreate the opening mood and ambience) is more pertinent.

Interestingly at this ‘reprise’ (Largo section), the original motif a (from bar 3) is altered through registral displacement and rhythmic augmentation (Ex. 10 compares the two melodic contours). Moreover, it is rendered in C as opposed to the original A-centricity, which one might relate to the fact that folk music of the Xi-nan region (where the Miao tribe is) does not typically end in the presupposed “tonic”. However, we should note that in the first place, it is unusual from a Western perspective for the first main section (bar 2), after what is clearly an introductory section (in D centricity), to be in the dominant (A centricity), with the piece ending in D eventually. In any case, whatever the overall governing pitch centricity, if the Largo section is indeed functioning as a thematic reprise, it does not coincide with the tonal reprise. But, as if to compensate, a sense of ‘reprise’ is suggested by its exuding grandeur, a marked transformation of the original solo erhu rendition in section A.

117 See 李妹, “中西音乐美学的比较研究”, 33.
Ex. 10: Pitch contour of \textit{Largo} theme, reminiscent of earlier theme based on motif \textit{a} (accepting octave equivalence)

Next, we consider how Wang makes use of the \textit{san-ban} element in an unconventional manner, granting them an added role as crucial structural determinants in this rhapsody. Apart from the introductory \textit{ad lib.} section (which corresponds to the idea of \textit{san-qi}), the other two \textit{san-ban}-like passages are employed less conventionally — as a transition and as a cadenza (which is somewhat similar to the idea of \textit{san-fang}) respectively, before leading to the final \textit{presto} section. We shall now examine them in turn.

The first \textit{san-ban} introduces the central 4-17 motif of this rhapsody (Ex. 2) in an improvisatory manner and, as mentioned, opens the work in D. This centricity is established by the initial outline of a ‘D’ tetrachord framed by ‘D’ and ‘A’. Later, at system 5 in the reduction score, the inherent limited transpositional property of the synthetic scale shapes the descending cascade of notes on the erhu, featuring the juxtaposed ‘F\#’, ‘D’ and ‘B\b’ triad (of the T\textsubscript{0} scale). There are also interesting instances of harmonic colour changes. For instance in system 3, the ‘A’ centre (dominant) is highlighted as the third of ‘F’ tetrachord instead of an ‘A’ tetrachord; later in bars 8 - 9, ‘E’ centricity in the melody is featured as the third of ‘C’ tetrachord; and in bars 163-166, the brief return to ‘C’ is again highlighted as the third of an ‘Ab\textsubscript{7}’ chord instead of a ‘C’ tetrachord. Overall, this \textit{san-ban} opening strongly alludes to the kinds of \textit{liu-bai} reminiscent of guqin music in respect of the handling of time (free tempo), space (sparse texture, wide tessitura) and, arguably, timbre (“space” encompassing normal sounding tones and harmonics).\textsuperscript{118} One notes the strategic placement of pauses at the ending of phrases and the manner in which the phrases seem to flow into one another. The changes in rhythmic density further contributes to the ebb and flow in energy-level.

\textsuperscript{118} In an article on \textit{liu-bai} in Liuzhuang’s music, Guoxin notes the play with timbre within a three-dimensional space involving time, space and timbre. For details, refer to 郭新, “音乐“留白”使“洋”声传古韵—刘庄《风入松》中文化传统与现代技法的整合”, 《中国音乐》3 (季刊, 2011): 97, 100-102.
The second san-ban-like passage at bar 84 is a relatively short one and resembles a transitory passage. Its transitory gesture is marked by a greater extent of tonal ambiguity as it leads to bar 100 (which also happens to be marked by ‘rubato’, more on this shortly). In terms of thematic content, it is motivically distinct from the previous sections — instead of the triadic 4-17 motive, its melodic lines are based on a series of thirds (see Ex. 11 for the transitory motif) and of a very different character and contour. Furthermore, its harmonies are largely extended tertian sonorities involving two different chords in the accompaniment. For instance, in bars 84-87, D minor seventh and G minor chords support the erhu melody that outlines a B\(\flat\) triad. Adding to the tonal ambiguity is the bassline which also traverse through a series of thirds (F - D - B\(\flat\) - G - E\(\flat\)). The marking of ‘moderato rubato’ instead of ‘ad lib.’ or ‘a piacere’, with the presence of barlines and even time signatures perhaps reflect a certain subtle distinction from the traditional concept of san-ban, suggesting a certain flexibility with time within a defined metrical frame as opposed to the concept of unmeasured time.\(^{119}\) Nonetheless, when heard, it still retains the characteristics and spirit of san-ban.

Ex. 11: Transitory motif (motif c)

The third san-ban at bar 266, featuring the solo erhu before building up to the final presto section, brings to mind the Western idea of a “cadenza” but with an added Chinese “twist”. In Western Classical music, the cadenza (It., meaning cadence) can be traced back to the sixteenth century, where its primary role is to embellish and delay the completion of the final cadence. However, eighteenth-century cadenzas became a moment of technical showmanship (either pre-composed or improvised), typically before the final tutti of a concerto movement or aria and are almost always indicated by the appearance of a fermata over a cadential six-four chord.\(^{120}\) Typically, cadenzas would reference some of the main thematic ideas.\(^{121}\) Here, Wang appears to apply some of these cadenza elements to the rhapsody.

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\(^{119}\) It was only later in his compositional career that Wang became more aware of the inappropriate use of ‘rubato’ as a translation for ‘san-ban’, which explains why some of these rubato passages in the first rhapsody may actually imply the ‘san-ban’ concept. Refer to interview with Wang, question 7.

\(^{120}\) *The New Grove Dictionary*, s.v. ‘Cadenza’. Eighteenth century cadenzas can either appear as a dominant prolongation (all of Mozart’s mature cadenzas and most of Beethoven’s short ones) or as a higher-level tonic prolongations (in Beethoven’s longer cadenzas). For details, see Swain, Joseph P., “Form and function of the Classical cadenza”, *The Journal of Musicology* 6, no. 1 (1988): 56.

\(^{121}\) As Johann Joachim Quantz suggests, having thematic references will enhance the unity of the piece, to which D.G. Türk adds that improvised variety and an element of surprise are just as important to keep listeners attentive. Non-thematic cadenzas have been composed by C.P.E. Bach, Haydn and early works of Mozart (before 1779) though. Cadenzas by Beethoven and other nineteenth-century composers favour...
Of the three san-ban passages, the third san-ban is particularly challenging for the soloist. Negotiating the greatest possible range on the erhu (from $d^1$ to $a^4$) is no easy feat to begin with. Admittedly, in terms of technical agility and complexity, it does not exceed some other passages in the rhapsody, but coupled with its san-ban nature, there is an added level of interpretational demand, which will truly reveal the musicianship and cultivation of a performer. This represents a higher level of challenge than mere external technical display. With regard to thematic references, suggestions to motif $a$ (in the form of tetrachordal cell) and motif $b$ (in the form of harmonics rendition of the triadic idea) are evident in this fourth san-ban-like passage, as illustrated in Ex. 12.

Ex. 12: Thematic references in cadenza passage

As observed above, the composer may occasionally use ‘rubato’ to indicate ‘san-ban’. However, one should not assume that all rubato markings would suggest a san-ban interpretation. An instance is the passage at bar 100, which presents a new motif (that strikingly resembles motif $a$) in an improvisatory manner, but it does not exactly evoke the spirit of a san-ban. Nonetheless, being preceded directly by the san-ban inspired transitory passage (bars 84-99), this passage serves a significant structural purpose. It demarcates the onset of a new section, which we shall just label as section B for now. This section is marked by the arrival of a relatively stable G centricity, which contrasts with the more tonally-fluid transition before. Despite introducing a motif that resembles motif $a$ in terms of its underlying ‘4-17’ frame including the opening melodic contour (as illustrated in Ex. 13), it is more than just another variant of motif $a$. Tracing the subsequent developments of this motif throughout section B (Ex. 14), we witness a greater extent of motivic manipulation (including intervallic expansion, exploration of subsets of 4-17 both melodically and harmonically), greater rhythmic variety (in part inspired by southern China folk music), greater metrical variety, greater extent of major/minor duality in its harmonic progression, as well as more dramatic gestures in articulations and expressivity. For instance, the characteristic three-note subset (014) and its inverse, is first highlighted in this passage by juxtaposing series of (014)’s in the form of a scalic run (bars 115-116) and at structural points (bars 118-119). Within section B, the inverted

the use of important ideas, usually the principal second-theme group in the middle of the cadenza, see ibid, 34.
form of (014) is portrayed using part of the characteristic peacock dance (孔雀舞) rhythmic pattern \( \text{jiq} \) (bar 139), coupled with a widened tessitura, leaps, varied metrical stress and even changing metres. This rhythmic unit imitating the peacock dance rhythmic pattern is then gradually extended to its full form \( \text{jiq} \) at bar 191 (corresponding to motif \( d^3 \)).

Ex. 13: Motif at bar 100 (motif \( d \))

![Motif at bar 100](image1)

Ex. 14: Return of 4-17 in motif \( d \) and its variants:

**Motif \( d \) (“4-17”)**

![Motif d](image2)

**Motif \( d^1 \)**

![Motif d1](image3)

**Motif \( d^2 \)**

![Motif d2](image4)

**Motif \( d^3 \)**

![Motif d3](image5)

Rhythmically akin to 傣族孔雀舞 (peacock dance of the Dai tribe) in erhu motif
As evident from Ex. 14, there are further emulations of various folk characteristics, including rhythmic and metrical features from folk-dances of the Yunnan and Guizhou regions in section B. An example is the irregular metrical organisation (portraying an aural impression of alternating 3 beats and 2 beats), as well as the triadic melodic movement that characterizes the a-xi dance of Yi-tribe (彝族阿细跳月). An aural allusion to the a-xi dance in the rhapsody can be found at bars 203-210, where Wang captures not just the triadic movements and leaps in the accompaniment, but also its rhythmic grouping and articulations (the lightness and liveliness with the syncopated stresses in the second half of the 2-bar rhythmic group, refer to motif $d^4$). The percussive effects on the solo erhu further emphasize the syncopated stresses and dance-like atmosphere. After a brief departure from the a-xi dance rhythm, it returns again at bar 216. But this time with a different time signature (5/4), which explicitly expresses the quintuple metre of a-xi dance. Ex. 15 compares bar 216 with an excerpt of an authentic a-xi dance. Notice the striking parallel between the two in terms of the pair of melodic gestures marked (1) and (2). In addition, the change in time signature (5/4 → 4/4 → 6/8 → 5/8 → 4/8 → 3/8 → 2/8) from bars 216 - 238, coupled with syncopations, further breaks away from the preceding metrical regularity to heighten the build up to the climatic piano/orchestral arrival of the Largo section (bar 239).

Ex. 15: (a) Emulation of a-xi dance metrical and rhythmic characteristics in Wang’s rhapsody (bar 216)
(b) Excerpt of a-xi dance from Yi tribe

We may now situate the san-ban passages within the whole rhapsody. Ex. 16 presents the large-scale structural layout of the rhapsody, illustrating its motivic content and harmonic organisation across various sections. This harmonic hierarchy stems from a partial-Schenkerian perspective: certain structural pitches, it should be pointed out, cannot be accounted for in strict Schenkerian terms but determined more based on surface salience à la

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123 Sample of skeletal score extracted from 《中国音乐词典》, s.v. “跳月”.
124 Note the slightly different tonal interpretation as well as the different approach adopted towards motivic labeling in 孙凰’s reading, “谈王建民的二胡狂想曲”, 9.
Lerdahl.\textsuperscript{125} This is necessitated by the nature of the 9-tone synthetic scale used and the absence of a normative syntax to derive the structural pitches.

Ex. 16: Large-scale harmonic structures across the first rhapsody

![Harmonic Structure Diagram]

The large-scale harmonic and motivic organisation across the rhapsody reflects a tripartite design on the higher structural level. Firstly, in terms of its large-scale tonal organisation, note how Wang again employs tonal pitch relations, with various pitch centers largely related by the circle-of-fifths. Its three-part division is partly reflected by its harmonic structure. Section A is fundamentally moving between the tonic and dominant regions with relative tonal clarity. By contrast, section B structures its keys along the circle-of-fifths in the form of ascending fourths (marked by flagged notes in Ex. 16) and tends to be less tonally stable (especially at motifs $d^3$ and $d^4$ passages). Finally, a sense of tonal reprise is more strongly felt in the coda section, with pitch centres again largely related by the circle-of-fifths as it leads towards D.

Secondly in terms of motivic content, the strategic placement of these variants and the manner in which they are handled are also in sync with the higher-level tripartite structural reading. As discussed previously, the first section is primarily characterized by the presentation of two basic motivic ideas found across the work. On the other hand, the second section based on motif $d$ is essentially characterized by greater exploratory spirit, evident from the manner in which the motif is varied and developed, as well as its greater rhythmic influences drawn from folk sources compared to the previous section. A recapitulation of the motivic ideas then appears across the \textit{Largo} section (functioning as section A’), cadenza passage and coda, as illustrated in Table 1 (on pages 47-48).

In examining Table 1, note that the sectional labeling does not imply Western textbook models of thematic and harmonic layout expected of a ternary, extended binary or sonata

\textsuperscript{125} The approach here takes its cue from Lerdahl’s perception-based notion of event hierarchy. An event is deemed to have greater structural importance if it is (a) attacked within the region; (b) in a relatively strong metrical position; (c) relatively loud; (d) relatively prominent timbrally; (e) in an extreme registral position; (f) relatively dense; (g) relatively long in duration; (h) relatively important motivically; (i) next to a relatively large grouping boundary; (j) parallel to a choice made elsewhere in the analysis, (“Atonal prolongational structure”, \textit{Contemporary Music Review} 4, no. 1 [1989]: 71-76). Lerdahl’s proposition here is a response to Robert Morgan, “Dissonant prolongation: theoretical and compositional precedents”, \textit{Journal of Music Theory} 20, no. 1 (1976): 49-91.
structure. To begin with, it is unconventional to have motif \(a\) first appearing in the dominant tonal region and motif \(b\) in the tonic within section A. Furthermore, as pointed out earlier, it is also potentially misleading for the grand \textit{Largo} to be taken as a ‘reprise’ in the conventional sense, since it is neither in the opening key nor the key in which motif \(a\) is originally rendered (in section A). This, together with the absence of a returning motif \(b\) further adds to its distinctiveness. Besides, in tracing motifs \(a\) and \(d\), it is obvious that Wang’s motivic treatment is more of a fluid succession of melodic ideas stemming from folk-inspired germinal ideas based on the pitch class set 4-17 rather than having recurring main theme(s). This fundamentally differs from the typical concept of thematic development or thematic variation of the Western musical tradition.

In sum, the foregoing discussions have offered a glimpse into some of Wang’s earliest syncretic attempts. Apropos organisation on the macro-level, this work features a ‘hybrid’ structure between the multi-sectional \textit{ban-shi} layout and a tripartite design in the manner of a rhapsody. On the micro-level, the tetrachordal pitch material though abstracted from the Miao folksong style was rendered in ways that lean more towards the Western tradition whilst still retaining aspects of Chinese melodic structuring. The end product is aural landscape which captures the folk-style unique to the Yunnan and Guizhou regions, as well as preserves the manner of narrative unique to Chinese music. The following chapter next investigates how some of these early compositional strategies are retained and further developed in Wang’s latest rhapsody.
Table 1: Structural design and influences in Erhu Rhapsody No. 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2-26</th>
<th>27-61</th>
<th>62-73</th>
<th>74-83</th>
<th>84-99</th>
<th>100-118</th>
<th>119-150</th>
<th>151-190</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Transition?</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tempo</td>
<td>Ad Lib.</td>
<td>Andante</td>
<td>piú mosso</td>
<td>Adagio</td>
<td>Moderato Rubato → Allegretto</td>
<td>Rubato</td>
<td>Allegro con brio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ban layout</td>
<td>散板</td>
<td>行板</td>
<td>慢板</td>
<td>中板自由</td>
<td>自由</td>
<td>快板</td>
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<td>Motif</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a₁</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>b₁</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>d₁</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>Introducing “4-17”</td>
<td>Exploration of “4-17” both melodically and harmonically</td>
<td>“4-17” manifested btw. erhu and piano</td>
<td>Melodic line based on long series of 3rds</td>
<td>Absence of “4-17”</td>
<td>Based on series of 3rds (with harmonics)</td>
<td>Absence of “4-17”</td>
<td>Based on series of 3rds</td>
<td>“4-17” set reintroduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk influences</td>
<td>苗族“飞歌” (mainly in maj/min duality and harmonics dimension)</td>
<td>“飞歌” 新疆塔吉克舞曲</td>
<td>“飞歌” (triadic outline)</td>
<td>Absence of maj/min duality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hints of 彝族阿细跳月 (in melodic contour and rhythm)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>191-202</td>
<td>203-210</td>
<td>211-238</td>
<td>239-265</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>267- end</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A’?</td>
<td>Transition? (disrupted return of section A)</td>
<td>Coda (in function. High point in exploration instead of returning to stability and thematic familiarity)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>free</td>
<td>Allegro Assai →</td>
<td>Presto</td>
<td></td>
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<td>散板</td>
<td>急板</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>$d^3$</td>
<td>$d^4$</td>
<td>$d^5$</td>
<td>$a^2$</td>
<td>Cadenza</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Exploring with “4-17”</td>
<td>“4-17” manifested in harmonic content (chord progressions)</td>
<td>fleeting image of “4-17” and motif ‘b’</td>
<td>Further explorations with “4-17”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prevailing Pitch/ Tonal centre</strong></td>
<td>$A^b$</td>
<td>$B^b$ (melody largely framed by $B^b$ triad)</td>
<td>$G \rightarrow D^b \rightarrow D \rightarrow G$</td>
<td>$C$ (not in home centricity nor motif a centricity!)</td>
<td>Leading to D</td>
<td>$E$ (against D-A open fifths) $\rightarrow A$</td>
<td>$\rightarrow D$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk influences</td>
<td>傣族孔雀舞 rhythm (Peacock dance from Yunnan’s Dai tribe)</td>
<td>Resembling 彝族阿细跳月 rhythm</td>
<td>Resembling 彝族阿细跳月 rhythm and metrical subdivision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>彝族阿细跳月 and 傣族孔雀舞 rhythm</td>
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CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS OF ERHU RHAPSODY NO. 4

Composed twenty-one years after the first erhu rhapsody, the fourth rhapsody is an indication of Wang’s compositional maturity and advancement in his approach towards musical syncretism. Apart from carrying forward certain compositional concepts and techniques from earlier rhapsodies, especially with regard to the distillation and treatment of folk-derived pitch materials or in fusing a modified ban-shi layout with Western concepts of large-scale motivic and harmonic planning, there is evidently a stronger desire to maximize the use of the most basic derived musical material to create an aural landscape that is significantly distinct from the previous rhapsodies. This chapter discusses how the work’s melodic crafting, harmonic sonorities, harmonic pathway and textural treatment reflect the folk-inspired intervallic elements in ways that surpass the conceptualization of his earliest rhapsody. Through studying Wang’s handling of the folk-derived pitch material and his approach towards the deep sense of coherence in his structural design at this later stage of his compositional career, we shall gain a better understanding of Wang’s development as a composer.

3.1 Source and treatment of pitch materials

Similar to his approach to motivic construction in the first rhapsody, pitch materials for the fourth rhapsody are also inspired by folk sources, this time drawn from the Chinese northwestern region (西北民歌). Ex. 17 illustrates two well-known excerpts from such folk sources quoted by Wang himself, when he was describing the compositional influences for this rhapsody. As illustrated in Ex. 17, this folksong genre is largely characterized by melodic perfect fourths and major seconds. Interestingly, note that the first folksong example largely revolves around three pitch classes (D-E-G), except at cadential points, where there is an added second. In the second folksong example, due to an added major second stepwise movement within the leap of a fourth, the piece largely revolves around four pitches (D-E-G-A), but it eventually ends with a transposed form based on G-A-C (notice the common tones between these two collections). Moreover, although intervalllic perfect fifths (as indicated by green brackets) seem inherent in these traditional folk tunes, they do not stand out as explicitly as seconds or fourths. In Wang’s handling however, the perfect fifth, which is the intervalllic inversion of the fourth, is treated just as prominently as perfect fifth on the musical surface. This idea of intervalllic equivalence seems pertinent in our discussion of his music, even if Wang may not have been conscious of the concept of interval class.

127 郭媛, “王建民，《第四二胡狂想曲》创作访谈录”, 22-23.
Ex. 17: Example of folksongs from northwestern region

(a) Jiao Fu Diao《脚夫调》

(b) Yellow River Boatman Song《黄河船夫曲》

In rendering these basic building blocks of major seconds and perfect fourths, Wang combines them to form motivic cells which in turn permeate different levels within the work. There are fundamentally two possible combinations to form a three-note motivic cell based on the two different ways of ordering a major second and a perfect fourth. For instance, with pitches C and D, one can either add a perfect fourth above C or below C, resulting in C-D-F and C-D-G, or, in set theoretic terms, (025) and (027) respectively. Wang also uses these two basic intervals to create a larger four-note collection, which we will refer to as (0257) (forte name: 4-23) for ease of referencing. We shall find these trichords and tetrahedrons manifested in a variety of ways as pitch-class collections. At deeper levels, transpositional relations (T₂ and T₅) stem from them. Wang then proceeds to combine these two interval classes and their trichordal or tetrahedral amalgam in different ways, at times retaining a particular melodic and/or rhythm contour such that we may refer to specific thematic formations. The two basic interval classes

128 Extract taken from 李吉提, 《中国音乐结构分析概论》, 100.
129 Ibid., 160.
are stated in the form of a (027) right in the opening three notes of the *ad lib.* introduction. Ex. 18 traces all the main themes generated across the rhapsody, with (027) serving as the main unifying idea. Each of these themes demonstrates a different approach to realizing the core motivic cells melodically, and will be explicated in the following paragraphs.

Ex. 18: Main themes generated from the core motivic cells (025) and (027) in Erhu Rhapsody no. 4

(a) *Andante* theme

(b) *Allegro* theme (section largely based on [0,2,4,7,9] collection)

(c) *Moderato* theme

(d) *Piu mosso* theme
In terms of melodic treatment, it is apparent that Wang’s deployment of the three-note cell as the characteristic motif at the opening segment of various thematic variants is similar to his previous erhu rhapsodies, which we have related to the Chinese concept of *he-tou* (合头). However, in addition to this, Wang further explores the idea of overlapping cells in the melodic construction of this rhapsody. This may be associated with another characteristic Chinese melodic development concept known as the *cheng-di-shi* technique (承递式进行), which refers to the last note or last few notes of a musical segment being the starting note(s) of the next segment. It can either be applied strictly, where repeated note(s) in both musical segments appear in the same order, or used more freely, where melodic idea and notes involved at the end of one segment and the start of the subsequent segment are more loosely similar. Although not unique to Chinese music (see for example the beginning of Mozart’s Symphony No. 40 as illustrated in Ex. 19, or the “Neapolitan Dance” from Act 3 of Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake*), this
technique is more widely used in traditional Chinese music. Ex. 20 illustrates two examples of its traditional usage, with 20(a) demonstrating a freer form of *cheng-di-shi* structuring.

Ex. 19: Opening melody of Mozart’s Symphony No. 40, where ending note(s) of a phrase is/are also the starting note(s) of the succeeding phrase.

Ex. 20: Traditional handling of *cheng-di-shi* (承递式) structuring

(a) Excerpt of *tu di huan jia* 《土地还家》 illustrating a freer form of *cheng-di-shi* melodic technique.131

(b) Excerpt of *lian huan nan yin* 《连环南音》, illustrating the ending note(s)/word of a phrase being the starting note(s)/word of the next phrase.132

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130 *承递式发展* is defined as 音乐某一陈述环节的 ‘终点音’ (可以是一个音或几个音) 同时又是新音乐环节的 ‘起点音’. For details and musical illustrations of its structural functions in music of various tempi, see 李吉提, 《中国音乐结构分析概论》, 93-98.

131 李吉提, 《中国音乐结构分析概论》, 94.

132 Ibid., 95.
This cheng-di-shi technique is the main structuring element governing the unfolding of the Andante passage from bars 2-15. Notice how the ending pitch class at the end of each 2-bar phrase is also the starting pitch class of the subsequent phrase. At bars 9-11, this linking technique is replaced by a sequencing approach and the 2-bar phrase unit is extended by an additional bar as it links to an ad lib. rendition of the same theme (bar 12, a piacere passage). This ad lib. rendition then resumes the early 2-bar pacing and the cheng-di-shi manner of phrasal connection. Note that the cheng-di-shi connection of this 3-bar phrase (bars 9-11) involves an A♭/G# enharmonic respelling. Another remarkable feature is the characteristic double-dotted rhythm of the head motif that reappears in he-tou manner across phrases. In terms of contrasting elements, we note that the initial Andante theme features the characteristic leap of a fifth, which is transformed into a fourth a bar later. But subsequently in the a piacere version, these intervals are combined in close succession and thus subtly introducing a compositional feature that is to re-surface in subsequent themes. Compare Ex. 18(a) with Ex. 21.

Ex. 21: A piacere rendition of Moderato theme

Apart from applying the cheng-di-shi melodic development technique, the Andante theme also features some brief instances of overlapping cells involving (025) and (027) in its melodic construct. This overlapping technique in melodic construction is to recur again in the Andantino theme later. Furthermore in the accompaniment (as marked out in Ex. 18a), the two 3-note cells contribute not only to chord structures in the right-hand, but is also expressed as a 3-note bass ostinato pattern stacked in open fifths, which combines to form the larger (0257) collection.

In the ensuing Allegro theme, this idea of combining a fourth and fifth in close proximity which first appears in the previous a piacere passage is retained and further emphasized via repetition and at a higher rhythmic density (bars 20-21). Besides deploying the (027) trichord as the characteristic motif in its melodic crafting on the surface level, this passage also features a second-level embedding of this cell within a melodic phrase (refer to square brackets in Ex. 18b). This is set against an accompaniment featuring the cell in the right-hand, which combines to form the larger (0257) collection in the bass ostinato; it is then subsequently used to generate the countermelody in the right-hand accompaniment. Significantly, we encounter the first appearance of chromatically-altered (027) and (0257) cells alongside their diatonic forms in the accompaniment (as circled in Ex. 18b), this prefigures more of such
diatonic-chromatic juxtapositions of core motivic cells (either linearly or vertically) later in the rhapsody.

Retrospectively, we observe that both the Andante and Allegro themes are largely constructed based on the three-note (027) cell, which slightly differs from the succeeding Moderato theme (at bar 57) constructed based on the superset collection (0257). This set also implies that transposing at T2, T3 and T7 will allow for common tones. An interesting observation is the choice of pitch collections based on (0257) as the Moderato theme unfolds, moving through T4, T2 and T7 as illustrated in Ex. 22. It is fascinating that amongst these transpositions, T7 is not presented as a direct transpositional shift on its own, but more indirectly by the successive addition and subtraction of a note, which results in an intermediate pentatonic collection (02579) in the process (bars 607 - 637). Ex. 22 traces the transpositions among pitch collections from bars 57-65, illustrating Wang’s preference for choosing different pitch collections that maximize the number of common tones between them. This creates a soundscape that subtly changes in colour. Hence, we note the first instance of how the characteristic intervals of major seconds and perfect fourths (T2 and T3 in set theoretic terms) are applied on a more abstract level in terms of the transpositional path.

Ex. 22: Transpositional relationship between pitch collections based on (0257) from bars 57-65

In the piu mosso passage just seventeen bars later, a sense of anticipation is generated not just by the pulsating quaver in the bass, but also by imitative exchanges between the solo erhu and accompaniment (right hand) based on the core motivic cells. Vis-à-vis Wang’s transpositional paths observed above, we note a similar construction, but now as imitative exchanges between the erhu and accompanimental parts. These exchanges are set T3 apart, against the open-fifths bass drone. Furthermore, this 1-bar imitative motivic idea also seems to alternate between set classes (027) and (0257), both in the erhu and accompanimental renditions on the more surface level; at certain junctures, these gather with the bass to form an even larger pentatonic collection (refer to illustration in Ex. 18d). Hence, we continue to see how Wang expands the possible connections between his basic materials – (027) expanding into (0257) linearly, and later into pentatonic vertical structures (02579).
Comparing the four themes (Andante, Allegro, Moderato and piu mosso) thus far, we note a striking similarity in their basic melodic shape: \(\curvearrowright\). This basic contour is formed by the presence of a pair of repeated notes, which subsequently dips downwards by a fourth/fifth and then back up by a fourth/fifth. However, each of them is variously varied with additional notes or embellishments; their varied rhythmic profile contributes further to their distinct character.

The ensuing Largo theme significantly differs from the previous themes not only in its lyricism (donned by a new sense of expressiveness that is unsurpassed in previous themes), but also in eschewing that basic contour (\(\curvearrowright\)). For the first time, listeners get the opportunity to relish in this fresh and almost poetic aural landscape, in contrast with the previous more rhythmic and upbeat sections. This Largo theme is largely founded on the larger (0257) set, which brings to mind the Moderato theme (Ex. 18c) that is also principally constructed with the same set. In fact, there is more affinity between them than meets the eye. One can almost trace the opening melodic frame of the Largo theme back to the demisemiquaver anacrusis of the Moderato theme, allowing for octave displacements, melodic decorations, and rhythmic alterations (refer to Ex. 23). Such subtle ‘links’ between themes as well as the gradual introducing and modifying of thematic ideas appear to be Wang’s consistent approach, which explains the sense of aural familiarity across various sections despite the highly-contrasted musical surface in terms of articulation, tempo markings, metrical characteristics, pitch centricities and rhythmic characteristics.

Ex. 23: Comparison between Largo opening and Moderato anacrusis (accepting octave equivalence)

On a different issue, observe that both the melody and accompaniment of this Largo passage are crafted based on the pitch class set (0257), although they each feature a different collection of pitches. But in line with Wang’s inclination in this rhapsody to exploit common tones under transposition, the two different collections are related again by T₃. Apropos melodic generation, the thematic development across the whole passage reflects shifts in pitch
collections related by T_{10} (illustrated in Ex. 18e) and subsequently T_{5} or T_{7}. These pitch collections are A\textsubscript{b} B\textsubscript{b} D\textsubscript{b} E\textsubscript{b} \rightarrow G\textsubscript{b} A\textsubscript{b} C\textsubscript{b} D\textsubscript{b} (bars 107-108\textsuperscript{2}) \rightarrow D\textsubscript{b} E\textsubscript{b} G\textsubscript{b} A\textsubscript{b} (bars 108\textsuperscript{1}-110\textsuperscript{2}) \rightarrow G\textsubscript{b} A\textsubscript{b} C\textsubscript{b} D\textsubscript{b} (bars 110\textsuperscript{3}-111\textsuperscript{2}) \rightarrow C\textsubscript{b} D\textsubscript{b} F\textsubscript{b} G\textsubscript{b} (bars 111\textsuperscript{3}-112) \rightarrow E F\sharp A B (bars 113-114\textsuperscript{3}) \rightarrow D E G A (bars 114\textsuperscript{4}-116). Finally as the passage draws to a close, the pitch collection shifts down by T_{2} at bar 115. This *Largo* theme is then transformed in the ensuing *piu mosso* passage (bar 118), while keeping to its characteristic leaps and dips (taking into account slight rhythmic alterations, intervallic equivalence and registral displacements which largely resembles the *Largo* theme). There is also an added sense of intensity due to the faster pacing and rhythmic density of the accompaniment. The original *Largo* theme returns later at bar 164, but this time appearing at T_{4}.

Separating the *piu mosso* passage and the grand return of the *Largo* theme at bar 164 is a momentary departure from the song-like lyricism to feature a greatly distinct *Andantino* theme, which reveals yet another manner of presenting the characteristic cells in terms of melodic crafting. This time, the melody seems to unfold through an uninterrupted series of (025) and (027) on the surface, with sequential movements that are extremely unpredictable and at times elaborated with extensions and digressions (as marked out in Ex. 18f). However, from a larger perspective, it is observed that this *Andantino* theme is governed by the uninterrupted series-of-fourths, which at times even evolve to a juxtaposition of two strands of (0257) that interlock (refer to illustration in Ex. 18f). Such juxtaposition of two cells and continual application of the series-of-fourths in spinning out the melody is unique to this *Andantino* theme. After eight bars of this seemingly unpredictable unfolding, the whole phrase in the solo erhu is transposed up a T_{2} and rendered by the piano (bars 148-155), whilst the erhu assumes an accompanimental role, playing the fleeting demi-semiquaver motif constructed from the (0257) collection. The passage intensifies towards bar 156 with melodic movements that are still largely governed by the series-of-fourths. At bar 156, the series-of-fourth idea is “re-shaped” into a more arch-like manner and set in a three-part imitation as illustrated in Ex. 24. Not only are both the imitative pattern and imitative entries built upon a series-of-fourths (imitation at T_{5}), but these series-of-fourths are further governed by (027) (the most basic cell of the rhapsody). These collectively exhibit a hierarchic and textural motivic embedding of (027) in a manner not found elsewhere in this piece.
Finally in the *Presto* theme, yet another treatment of the three-note cell is observed. This time, the embedded (025) appears as an intervallic contraction of (027) (refer to illustration in Ex. 18g). Throughout this *presto* section, the 3-note cell is emphasized repeatedly, including being set in “imitation” and highlighted with accents (bars 197-205). To be clear, “imitation” in this context is used loosely to refer to how the bass echoes the erhu accented melodic portions in augmentation.

The preceding paragraphs have presented Wang’s different renditions of his core motivic cells. The motivic affinities between each theme provide a sense of coherence beneath the seemingly contrasting musical surface. The following section moves on to examine how the musical coherence in this work extends beyond thematic crafting to deeper structural levels.

### 3.2 Melodic-harmonic organisation

Previously, in the first rhapsody, apart from the more surface manifestations or second-level embedding of the core motivic cell in its melodic crafting, the modal duality inherent in 4-17 is also realized in terms of harmonic colours as vertical sonorities, scale construction and even as chord progressions. However in the fourth rhapsody, these core motivic cells are not used to construct a scale, but are more freely employed as a three/four-note idea. More significantly differing from the first rhapsody is the extensive manner in which these cells – (027) and (025) are materialized as deeper structural elements underlying various themes and their harmonic content – an approach which is little used in the first rhapsody. In addition, centricities are fundamentally non-tonal in nature but largely pentatonic; at times chromatic and whole-tone elements are also introduced. These pentatonic and whole-tone collections can be seen as a product of the two folk-derived basic intervals – interval class 2 and 5, as well as the resultant combination of the basic core motivic cells of this work.

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133 Wang has described the connections of each of these sections in terms of their ‘nationalistic’ features and expressive intentions, see 郭媛, “王建民，《第四二胡狂想曲》创作访谈录”, 24.
We shall now examine the different approaches in which these elements – (027), (025), (0257), whole-tone and pentatonic collections – permeate the deeper structures and interact with other structural elements in various sections of the work. Despite the impression of tonal fluidity and ambiguity, there are still unmistakable instances of tonal relationships at certain junctures. Therefore to better elucidate the underlying large-scale harmonic structures across each passage/section and the presence of tonal relationships that are highly elaborated (by non-tonal means), each passage/section will be illustrated with the aid of music reduction graphs which borrow and adapt certain Schenkerian notational symbols, together with set-theoretic labels to represent the interactions between these tonal and non-tonal elements at different levels. It is critical to note that most of the more structural notes represented in these graphs below are fundamentally based on surface salience (such as motivic significance, longer rhythmic duration, strong metrical position, registral prominence or relative stability). Each passage/section reveals different scenarios and will be discussed in the following.

**Andante section**

With regard to the cheng-di-shi melodic development in the *Andante* section, the deeper structural tones are governed by two elements: (025) and whole-tone descent (refer to Ex. 25). Interestingly, these two different structuring elements also coincide with the two sub-sectional divisions (based on their respective tempo characteristics) within this *Andante* section – a strict-pulsed *Andante* (bars 2-11) and a freer-pulsed *Andante* marked as ‘a piacere’ (bars 12-17). For the first subsection, the melodic tones selected are principally based upon surface salience, tracking the sequential treatment of the 2-bar thematic idea that is governed by the cheng-di-shi structuring. The sequence here largely revolves around the basic melodic contour and rhythmic profile of the 2-bar phrase. Consequently, these reveal two (025) trichordal descents governing its deeper structural motions, connected by an ascending octave transfer of G (which is exhibited as a (0257) link on the musical surface). Embedded within the second structural (025) trichord is also a more implicit whole-tone series articulated by the top voice within the melodic phrase from bars 7-10.

These (025) segments are subsequently linked to the structural whole-tone descent of the ‘a piacere’ passage through the enharmonic equivalent A♭ and G♯. On surface, this is presented as a register transfer from a♭1 to g♯2, linked by the characteristic demi-semiquaver lead-in based on (0257). The deeper-level tones revealing a complete whole-tone descent in the second sub-section are selected based on saliency stemming from the stronger metrical positions and the relatively longer rhythmic durations which are further emphasized with trills. As illustrated in Ex. 25 and 26, the completion of this melodic whole-tone descent is withheld till the end of the prolonged bar 18, which features a series of uninterrupted (0257) and
subsequently two strands of whole-tone descents largely in parallel fifths, at the beginning of which is another \( (0257) \) (circled in Ex. 26). The arrival of the delayed ‘D’ is significant on two counts: not only does it complete one of the whole-tone descents underlying the *a piacere* passage, it also completes the chromatic aggregate as constituted by the two whole-tone descents (refer to Ex. 25). On the musical surface, there is an unembellished V-I gesture to anchor D at the end – a tonal gesture to establish the overarching pitch center of this section.

Although there are distinct V-I gestures in the bass of this ‘a piacere’ passage, a sense of tonal fluidity still results. This is due to the series of V-I gestures moving through a succession of \( T_2 \) transpositions, which cumulatively complete a whole-tone collection \([1,3,5,7,9,11]\) – an entirely different whole-tone collection from the one embedded as deeper structural tones in the melody above \([0,2,4,6,8,10]\).

Ex. 25: Large-scale motivic structures in *Andante* section (bars 3-18)

Ex. 26: Large-scale structures in linking passage (bar 18)

**Allegro section**

The following *Allegro* section manifests up to three levels of motivic embedding, going beyond the two levels of embedding found in the first rhapsody. A third-level embedding of \((027)\) on the phrasal level occurs at bars 21-52. The transpositional path of each phrase based on the *Allegro* theme manifests \((027)\), as illustrated in Ex. 27. However, what makes this inter-phrasal relation based on \((027)\) unique is how they are rendered within the Chinese organisational sequence of “起、承、转、合” (initiation, continuation, deviation, closure).\(^{134}\)

\(^{134}\) This traditional four-phrase structuring mode has parallels in the Chinese literature, specifically in the art of four-line poem construction (四句结构的诗体绝句). In one of Wang’s published articles on
As illustrated in Ex. 27, the ‘initiation’, ‘continuation’ and ‘closure’ segments in this section are principally governed by (027), both on the more surface level as well as inter-phrasal level (which adds to a longer series of fifths), but the ‘closure’ segment differs slightly from the ‘initiation’ and ‘continuation’ segments with an additional phrase, which contributes to the sense of harmonic and melodic closure to this section, on D. Notice also that these two phrases within the ‘closure’ segment are related by T-2, which recalls earlier observations on Wang’s preference for a subtle modification in harmonic colouration (with the two pitch collections differing only by one note). In fact, the principal down-beat note of the three phrases of this ‘closure’ segment articulate a (027) that is used to build the one-bar lead-in at bar 40. From another perspective, the structural tones in the entire ‘closure’ segment collectively constitute a pentatonic collection (that also largely governs the structural tones in the bass across this section).

In contrast to the ‘initiation’, ‘continuation’ and ‘closure’ segments, the ‘deviation’ segment is constructed principally based on the larger (0257) set, coupled with chromatics (G© versus Gª and subsequently C© versus Cª) and an extended phrase length. But more pertinent to the idea of ‘deviation’ here is the introduction of this chromatic motif, which represents its first appearance in the melody. Its harmonic appearance occurs within the accompaniment of the Allegro theme. In terms of phrase rhythm, it departs from the original 5-bar melodic unit by immediately repeating the opening two bars (marked out in black brackets in Ex. 27), then transposing it at T₅, slightly shortened, followed by yet another repetition, now more obviously compressed. An extended 3-bar melodic unit (bars 38-40) then ends this segment. Next, the ‘closure’ segment marks a return to the 5-bar melodic unit and original register, characteristic of the initiation and continuation segments. Additionally on the surface level, we observe the first instance of (025) outlining an incomplete seventh chord E-B-D (bar 31), which seems to be the only instance in the piece where the core motivic cell takes the form of an extended triadic shape.

Additional references and discussion on melodic construction and structuring principles, he explains that a complete musical passage consisting of phrases of equal lengths reflects a certain sense of balance and direction (“结构力”), involving “离心”力 and “向心”力 (i.e. centrifugal and centripetal forces). In terms of traditional Chinese melodic construction (especially those 4-phrase ones), melody usually progresses according to the sequence of “起、承、转、合”. Linking to his concept of structural strength (“结构力”), Wang views “起、承、转” to represent the process of centrifugal force (离心力), while “合” represents centripetal force (向心力). For details, see 王建民, “旋律力的研究”, 《人民音乐》2 (2000): 15. Such concepts are also discussed in Han Kuo-Huang, “Folk songs of the Han Chinese: characteristics and classifications”, Asian Music 20, no. 2 (1989): 109. However his English translation slightly differs from mine here. A musical illustration of this concept with regard to phrase structuring in Chinese folk source can be found at 李吉提, 《中国音乐结构分析概论》, 109, 111-112 and 118.
Ex. 27: Embedding at the phrasal level
Notice that the anacrusis to each of these segments gradually builds up, first in the accompanimental part (bar 19) leading to the ‘initiation’ segment, then as a triplet in the erhu part (bar 24) connecting to the ‘continuation’ segment, subsequently lengthened and rendered by the accompaniment (bar 29) as it leads to the ‘deviation’ segment, and finally culminating in the hugely expanded lead-in by the erhu (bar 40) to the ‘closure’ segment. Apropos the large-scale structural organisation based on (027) governing the ‘initiation → deviation’ segments and ‘deviation → closure’ segments (marked by pink brackets), the two collections of pitches based on this large-scale (027) are again related by T₅, as shown in Ex. 28.

Ex. 28: Large-scale motivic embedding in Allegro section

Finally, this Allegro section further demonstrates another of Wang’s exploration of the different manners of overlapping and juxtaposing the core motivic cells even in the generation of the accompaniment. For instance, on the more surface level (Ex. 29), apart from having framing notes of the bass fragments primarily based on (027) and (025) at bars 41-48, which adds to the sense of tonal ambiguity, it is also remarkable how the bass moves through different pitch-class collections based on (0257), at times expanding to a pentatonic collection (02579). These collections are connected through a transpositional path governed by alternating T₂ and T₅ (which once again maximizes the number of common tones between two different pitch class collections) before it eventually settles on D, in line with its melodic resolution.
The succeeding Moderato – piu mosso section presents itself as one of the most tonally fluid sections in the rhapsody. Apart from the more foreground and middleground manifestations of the core motivic cells, whole-tone element is also central to its harmonic organisation at the deeper level, especially in the first part of this Moderato section. There are three instances of whole-tone descent governing the deeper-level harmonic structure from bars 58 to 81; the choice of whole-tone collections and the manner in which they are rendered reflect the level of detail in Wang’s compositional planning.

First, the foremost two strands of whole-tone collections [marked as whole-tone (a) in Ex. 30] structuring the bass and the melodic movements overlap at bars 66-72, which function as a link to the ensuing piu mosso passage. The melodic structural tones are principally selected based on the central voice-leading strand and sequential pathway of the motivic idea that are characterized by a basic melodic contour and rhythmic profile; while bass structural tones are based on the ostinato bass sequence. We may interpret the whole-tone collection underlying the melodic line as completing the whole-tone collection first articulated in the bassline, with an overlap of the common tones F, E♭ and D♭. Aurally, there is an obvious enharmonic connection between the D♭ - A♭ sonority from the bass at bars 71-72 and the C♯ - G♯ in the solo erhu and accompaniment at bar 73. The interruption in this whole-tone bass descent is due to the continuation of another set of whole-tone descent, first initiated in the inner voice of the accompaniment at bar 69, which overlaps with the first bassline whole-tone descent to form quartal structures [marked out as whole-tone (b) in Ex. 30]. This deep-level whole-tone descent further acts as a crucial unifying element connecting the more surface manifestations of the three-note core motivic cells, variously rendered as melodic motives and accompanimental elements in the Moderato and piu mosso passages.
Ex. 30: Underlying harmonic structure across *Moderato* and *piu mosso* passages

Besides whole-tone descents, the erhu melody in the *Moderato* passage also demonstrates the superset (0257) being used to create the transpositional path on the phrasal level. As traced in Ex. 31, each motivic unit from bars 58-64 moves in series of T-3 and T-2, which materializes to form the larger (0257) at a deeper level. Within each phrase, three salient pitches corresponding to (025) are also brought out. Only at the end of this *Moderato* passage, when cadential gestures based on motivic T-5 movement aiming to establish the sense of F♯ at the beginning of *piu mosso* passage, did the alternating series of T-3 and T-2 movement break up. On the more surface level, the bass movement of the *Moderato* passage seems to reveal a series of V-I punctuations, contributed by the bass ostinato pattern based on a particular ordering of the (027) cells such that V-I movements are highlighted. These V-I movements are subsequently verticalized, giving way to series of open-fifths bass pedals in the *piu mosso* passage, which in turn traverse down at series of T-2. This consequently unfolds the second whole-tone descent initiated from the inner voice [(B♭ – A♭) – F♯ – E – D – C – B♭]. Although the imitative melodic unit of the *piu mosso* passage is also transposed down through series of major seconds, it is set at a different rate from the transpositional pathway (also based on T-2) in the bass, which further adds to the sense of tonal ambiguity.
Ex. 31: Foreground structure from bars 58-73

Following the whole-tone structural elements in the *Moderato* and first part of the *piu mosso* passage, the pentatonic collection then becomes the central structuring element in the later part of the *piu mosso* passage (bars 84-96) and extending to the third *san-ban* (as illustrated in Ex. 30). This shift corresponds to significant changes on the musical surface in terms of rhythmic and motivic character, textural treatment, as well as changes in key signature. There are principally two pentatonic collections governing the deeper-level melodic structure which are related by T₂, C D E G A (bars 84-92) and B₃ C D F G (bars 92-97). These two collections are the same as the pentatonic series reflected in the counterpointing bass (bars 84-96). A fragment of the whole-tone series later appears to link to the succeeding third *san-ban* passage. These structural tones as illustrated in Ex. 30 reflect the transpositional path of each phrase/motivic units in the melody (for instance, the sequential movement of the motif in the erhu melody from bars 92-95), or in the bass (namely the pathway traversed by its ostinato pattern and rhythmically highlighted bass pitches). We note too the C-F-C framing in the bass from bars 92-96.

*Largo section*

The sense of tonal ambiguity from the *piu mosso* passage appears to finally give way to some sort of tonal definition in the ensuing *Largo* section, which is largely pentatonic but undergoing chromatic transpositions. A fleeting sense of centricity is contributed by the opening phrase of the *Largo* theme (bars 105-108), which seems to be framed around Eᵇ and Aᵇ. This is however set against a bass progression which strongly alludes to IV-V-I in Dᵇ. Such bi-chordal harmonic juxtaposition, together with the identity of chords IV and V being obscured (due to added notes or notes being left out), contributes to the resulting ambiguity. In the larger scheme of things, as illustrated in Ex. 32, this fleeting ‘cadence’ on Dᵇ subsequently initiates a long series of stepwise descent in the bass to eventually arrive at G (bar 117), revealing a G – Dᵇ – G deeper-level bass frame spanning the entire *Largo* section. Above this bass, the melodic line
largely revolves around (0257) (which relates by T₁₀, T₇ and T₅ as discussed previously) whilst continuing an ‘inner-voice’ deeper-level whole-tone descent to ‘D’ (bar 117).

In the ensuing *piu mosso* passage, G appears to be the focal pitch in the melody, especially with the G-D frame in the opening phrase. But from a larger perspective, this G initiates a deeper-level pentatonic descent. These structural tones are emphasized by their longer rhythmic duration and strong metrical position within the melodic line. This pentatonic descent gradually completes on B♭ (bar 133). In the process, it actually frames three pentatonic collections on the surface level: G F D C B♭ (bars 118-128²), G F E♭ B♭ C (bars 128³-130²) and F E♭ C A♭ B♭ (bars 130³-133). Additionally, we note an inner voice-leading strand G-F-E♭-D as illustrated in Ex. 32, which only completes in the following *a tempo* passage. The bass features C as its deepest structural tone and thus relates to the overarching G bass from the *Largo* section by a large-scale ‘V-I’ motion. Subsequently within this *piu mosso* passage, there are two other ‘V-I’ gestures: D-G and F-B♭, which contrast with the long stepwise descent of the *Largo*.

Ex. 32: Underlying harmonic structure across *Largo* section

The ensuing *Andantino* section (sandwiched between two *Largos*) is no less tonally stable. It contrasts with the song-like lyricism of the preceding *Largo* to traverse a more chromatic pitch space with quartal melodic movements. The bassline of the *Andantino* features a series of unembellished V-I gestures, seemingly deviating from a C-centricity, but their descending and ascending whole-tone transpositions do weaken the implied centricity (refer to score and Ex. 32). The sense of unsettledness is further contributed by changing time signatures.
(shifting almost every bar between $\frac{7}{8}$, $\frac{8}{8}$, $\frac{9}{8}$) as well as the seemingly irregular appearances of pairs of demi-semiquaver figuration (rstrip) on the erhu based on various combinations of the motivic cells which gradually intensify towards bar 156.

The *Andantino* quartal theme in the erhu (at bar 140-147) is subsequently transposed up by T₂ and rendered in the piano part (at bars 148-155) before returning to the structural D in the erhu part at bar 156. The bass punctuations, like before, shifts up and down by whole-tone (Ex. 32). Hence from a macro-perspective, the melodic line across the whole *Andantino* section is arguably framed by a large-scale movement from D to G connected by rising and falling notes (bars 140-155) and later with notes largely revolving around the pentatonic series B♭ C D F G (bars 156-165). This is set against the large-scale bass movement featuring (027) as its main structuring tones (namely C, D to G). Having arrived on G at the end of the *Andantino* passage (at bar 163), it then shifts through a ‘V-I’ movement to C in the subsequent second *Largo* passage (bar 164). This time, the initial lyrical nature of the *Largo* theme is replaced by an atmosphere of majestic return, especially with the piano now taking over the theme with accompanimental figuration that adds to textural and emotional intensity. Melodic movement in this *Largo* return also reflects a macro-structure based on (025), largely revolving around G, C and finally settling on A at bar 172 (against A♭ bass).

Even in the concluding *Presto* section, the sense of home centricity is not unequivocally expressed until the ending bars. As illustrated in Ex. 33, the deeper structural tones underlying the melodic line progresses through three segments D – C, D – C and D – G, which are connected in terms of its top voice by whole-tone descents and harmonic tones that revolve around (0257). On the other hand, anchoring tones in the bass feature large-scale V-I movement across the section, but again such seemingly tonal relations are not obvious aurally due to surface embellishments involving core motivic cell(s), whole-tone and pentatonic fragments. Moreover, although the final resolution chord at the end of the *Presto* section highlights the sovereignty of G through registral framing, it did not appear in the form of a G (major/minor) triad, but a (0257) tetrachord. More remarkably, it features yet again the juxtaposition of the diatonic form of this tetrachord in the top accompaniment with its chromatically-altered version in the bass.
Ex. 33: Underlying harmonic structure across Presto section

In sum, the harmonic organisation of each section of the rhapsody is variously governed by the core motivic cells (or their component intervals of seconds and fourths) and the resultant whole-tone or pentatonic collections. In addition, the folk-derived intervallic major second not only characterizes transpositional paths (T₂ or T₁₀), but also relates the opening and ending pitch centricities across a section/passage. At least three latter instances have been observed. First, in the introduction, the opening G-D polarity subsequently shifts to A-E. Second, in the motivic structures underlying the melodic path of the ensuing Andante section, the starting E center eventually settles on D after passing through two series of (025) and the completion of a whole-tone descent (refer to Ex. 25). The third instance is the large-scale motivic embedding of the melodic line in the following Allegro section, which again emphasizes an E opening but resolves on D (refer to Ex. 28).

3.3 San-ban

As seen in chapter 2, the san-ban element aids in creating an aural impression of fluidity, through its melodic, rhythmic and even tonal features both within and across various sections. This rhapsody contains four san-ban-like passages, but their motivic treatment and harmonic characteristics are distinct from those of the first rhapsody. Previously, we saw how the different san-ban-like passages (appearing as transitions and as a cadenza) are characterized by distinctive motivic and harmonic/tonal treatments, especially the varying strengths of the established pitch centers throughout the rhapsody. In the fourth rhapsody, all four san-ban passages are generally similar in their extensive use of the core motivic cell(s) through the various musical parameters. They also share a similar rendering of the folk-distilled intervals of seconds and fourths as transpositional paths (or T₂/T₁₀ and T₅/T₇ from a set theory perspective), as well as the resultant impression of tonal fluidity. Interestingly, notice that all four san-ban passages here are demarcated either as ‘ad lib.’ or ‘a piacere’, instead of ‘rubato’ as found in the first rhapsody. This modification is an indication of Wang’s increasing sensitivity to the choice
of musical terms that can more accurately depict the essence of the Chinese san-ban. In some sense, these terms are more appropriate as it draws a distinction between ‘san-ban’ (which essentially refers to music governed by ‘free’ tempo) and ‘rubato’ (which refers to flexibility within a fixed metrical frame).

The ad lib. introduction presents in a quasi-improvisatory manner the most prominent three-note core motivic cell (027). As illustrated in Ex. 34, the two characteristic intervals of major seconds and perfect fourths are emphasized through various means, most prominently by their superposition as vertical sonority, and succession in melodic motions. Such approaches foreshadow the prevalence of quartal/quintal elements (open fourths/fifths, linear series of fourths/fifths) and vertical stacking of seconds across the work.

Ex. 34: Ad lib. introduction illustrating the opening presentation and rendering of core motivic cell

Furthermore, (027) as circle-of-fourths (or consecutive movements at T3) is first presented and utilized to effect various harmonic shifts at systems 1 and 4 of this introduction. For instance, in system 1, after the initial A♭ – B♭ – E♭ (027) at the beginning, D is highlighted as the focal pitch in the form of an inverted D pedal (after the first consecutive series of fourths and seconds), which is soon anchored over a G bass four octaves below (system 2). Together with the accented tonic-dominant (G-D) gestures, this represents the first brief instance of G as an important center. Next, in system 4, the second extended series-of-fourths results in a brief slipping to the flat-side before appearing to be anchored on A then E. Interestingly, notice that this series of open fifths leading to an anchoring on A further embeds the whole-tone movement

135 This move can first be observed in the third rhapsody. Refer to interview with Wang, question 8, where he explained his preference for “ad lib.” later in compositional career.

136 Wang loosely refers to such compositional handling as “叠加” (die jia), which he explains is a central compositional approach in the fourth rhapsody. However Wang does caution against over-extending such consecutive linear motion/stacking especially with the interval of a major second, because stacking or stringing more than two consecutive seconds (e.g. C D E F♯) would deviate from the musical style of the northwestern region (西北). Therefore, one hardly finds the use of more than two consecutive major seconds in the rhapsody. The exceptional thick vertical cluster of seconds in the opening of this introduction is probably for colouristic purposes; no subsequent occurrences of such clusters appear in the rest of the work. On the other hand, Wang feels that consecutive motions in perfect fourths can be less constrained, which perhaps explains instances of extended and uninterrupted linear motion of fourths on the musical surface (e.g. the Andantino theme), as discussed by Wang, “Music Extravaganza – Seminar”.

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(G-F\textsuperscript{b}-D\textsuperscript{b}-C\textsuperscript{b}-A). The key signature of the ensuing \textit{Andante} section (bar 2) suggests A as the dominant; D as the overarching focal pitch is established across the \textit{Andante}, although the more surface manifestations of non-tonal elements to some extent conceal the sense of D.

By opening the work in an ambiguous manner without clear establishment of a home centricity (except for a subtle hint of D as focal pitch in the second system on the erhu), the nature of the harmonic path and sonorities here do in some sense prefigure some of the harmonic characteristics in subsequent sections. For instance, it may seem curious for this introduction to open with an A\textsuperscript{b} - E\textsuperscript{b} frame presenting the (027) cell when it almost immediately shifts to highlight a G-D open-fifth in system 2. But having examined the harmonic organisation of other sections, this sense of A\textsuperscript{b} - E\textsuperscript{b} immediately brings to mind the local-level framing pitches in the opening two phrases of the \textit{Largo} theme. Such a tonal move to the flat-side therefore anticipates the tonal move of the \textit{Largo} as a contrasting section, being the only passage to appear more strongly established in the flat region.

In the second \textit{san-ban}-like passage within the \textit{Andante} section (bars 12-18), Wang contrasts two different renditions of the \textit{Andante} theme – a more resolute form followed by a more \textit{ad lib.} version within the \textit{Andante} section. Both renditions retain the general motivic and rhythmic characteristics as discussed earlier, but the more \textit{ad lib.} passage takes on an added sense of fluidity, brought about by various factors. Firstly, there are alterations to its accompanimental pattern/figuration and melodic characteristics, including the use of ornaments such as spreads and trills, thereby breaking away from the bass quaver ostinato pattern characterizing the strict-pulsed \textit{Andante} (bars 2-11). The ‘a piacere’ passage on the other hand, in employing chains of running notes in the accompaniment (reminiscent of the characteristic guzheng glissando), largely avoids any emphasis on strong beats so as to diminish the sense of regularity and predictability. Secondly, this ‘a piacere’ passage features changing meters. But more remarkably beneath these changing meters, one notes how its rhythmic/metrical organisation within each 2-bar phrase gradually expands by one/two crotchet beats: 2+3 and 1+4 (bars 12-13) \rightarrow 2+3 and 2+4 (bars 14-15) \rightarrow 2+4 and 2+5, before culminating in the hugely expanded bar 18. Thirdly, fluidity in tonal language is brought about by sequential movements and enharmonic re-spellings. As illustrated in Ex. 25, melodically, this passage is largely founded upon whole-tone structural tones (with a clear directedness towards D) and connects with the preceding strict-pulsed \textit{Andante} passage via enharmonically-respelled common tone A\textsuperscript{b} /G\textsuperscript{#}.

The third \textit{san-ban}-like passage (bar 97) represents part of the transitory passage linking the \textit{Moderato} section to the contrasting \textit{Largo} section. Leading from the buildup which begins at bar 92, this \textit{san-ban}-like passage represents the peak in intensity, both in reaching the highest note and by encompassing the widest range between the highest and lowest pitches (from the
solo and accompaniment parts) across the whole Moderato section. In addition, notice how the climatic moment brought about by the augmented octave is contributed by increasing rhythmic density, gradually expanding pitch space between the melody and bass (with the bass G\textsubscript{b} linked by stepwise whole-tone descent from C at bars 96-97), as well as a dynamic built-up from the preceding bars. The energy level then gradually subsides towards the ensuing Largo entrance. This san-ban passage also carries forward the sense of tonal fluidity, passing through series of pentatonic collections related by T\textsubscript{2}/T\textsubscript{7} and T\textsubscript{2}/T\textsubscript{10}: B\textsubscript{b} C D F G \rightarrow E\textsubscript{b} F G B\textsubscript{b} C (bars 92-93\textsuperscript{1}) \rightarrow B\textsubscript{b} C D F G (bar 93) \rightarrow E\textsubscript{b} F G B\textsubscript{b} C (bars 94) \rightarrow A\textsubscript{b} B\textsubscript{b} C E\textsubscript{b} F (bars 94\textsuperscript{3}, 95\textsuperscript{1}) \rightarrow B\textsubscript{b} C D F G (bars 96-98) \rightarrow E\textsubscript{b} F G B\textsubscript{b} C (bar 98) \rightarrow D\textsubscript{b} E\textsubscript{b} F A\textsubscript{b} B\textsubscript{b} (bar 98), which again illustrate Wang’s preference for the common-tone property under transposition.

The fourth san-ban passage at bar 173 showcases the technical and expressive possibilities of the solo erhu as it explores the widest range thus far, from the lowest possible note d\textsubscript{1} to d\textsubscript{4} three octaves above. These technical challenges also offer new sound effects on the instrument through an array of bowing and plucking techniques. Coupled with the unaccompanied nature, this passage brings to mind the Western idea of a “cadenza” but with a Chinese “twist”, insofar as it additionally tests the player’s mastery of the san-ban style beyond mere technical showmanship. Apropos thematic references, although this passage does not specifically draw upon any theme from previous sections, it reveals an improvisatory manner in exploring the core motivic cells at various levels, with at least two levels of motivic embedding based on (027) and (0257) (refer to Ex. 35). Additionally, this passage is largely pentatonic [C D E G A] with an emphasis on D, E, A (027). The plucking of the dyad D-A clearly exploits the open-string tuning of the erhu. We also continue to see the rendering of the core motivic cells both in melodic and harmonic terms, including T\textsubscript{5} transpositions such as the sequential treatment of e\textsuperscript{1} - d\textsuperscript{2} and a\textsuperscript{1} - g\textsuperscript{2} from the 7\textsuperscript{th} to 8\textsuperscript{th} system at bar 173. The cadenza finally settles with a D-A double note acciaccatura that spans more than two octaves, with the sustained A connecting to the Presto section as an inverted pedal.

Ex.35: Segments of fourth san-ban-like passage illustrating two levels of motivic embedding
Having examined each of the *san-ban*-inspired passages individually, one notes some suggestive deeper connections between them. We notice that the first, third and fourth *san-ban* passages all climax with an augmented octave at the highest point after a crescendo. In the *ad lib.* introduction, the $E^\flat_1$ bass pedal supports the $e^5$ in the inner voice (system 1); in the third *san-ban*-like passage (bar 97), the $G^\flat_1$ bass pedal is set against the top voice $g^4$ five octaves above; finally in the fourth *san-ban* passage with lead-in from bar 172, the bass $A^\flat_1$ pedal is sounded against the $a^4$ in the top voice. In all three cases, the augmented octaves undermines any strong establishment of pitch centricity at climatic moments. Yet, curiously, we note that the bass pedals involve $E^\flat$, $G^\flat$, $A^\flat$ which form a (025) set.

### 3.4 Large-scale organisation

Similar to earlier rhapsodies, the fourth rhapsody adopts a freer multi-sectional design based on the modified *ban-shi* layout, this time progressing through “散—慢—快—中—广—散—急” (free-slow-fast-moderate-largo-free-presto) sections, with the core motivic cells permeating the melodies, harmonies and textures across all sections. Compared to the first rhapsody, it exhibits greater freedom in the application of *ban-shi* structuring concept, especially in its marked departure from the conventional progressive quickening in tempo as the piece progresses. Yet, the ordering of the tempi here is far from being random. The multi-sectional layout also does not lend itself to clear-cut deeper-level tonal structuring. We shall now discuss the modified *ban-shi* layout in relation to the rhapsody’s large-scale motivic and harmonic organisation.

Let us situate the four *san-ban* passages in relation to the other sections (based on the *ban-shi* layout). Ex. 36 illustrates the large-scale harmonic organisation across the whole rhapsody, with a purported harmonic hierarchy that partially draws from a neo-Schenkerian perspective. Tonal gesture, especially with respect to tonic-dominant motion within a G - D framework, appears to be structural tones at the background level. Nevertheless, one can hardly sense such tonal relations, as connections between deep-level G-D motions are highly embellished by the more surface manifestations of the pentatonic core motivic cells and whole-tone elements; more foreground Schenkerian composing-out is generally absent. Hence the ‘reduction’ graph in Ex. 35 should not be construed as Schenkerian structures. The use of square brackets indicate the more surface or middleground-level pitch content that are characterized by the core motivic cells, larger pentatonic collections (indicated as p/t) or whole-tone ones (marked as w/t). Often, the unstemmed note heads indicate salient pitches and/or transpositional

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137 Refer to discussion on the conventional practice of the Chinese *ban-shi* structural layout in Chapter 1.4.
paths. Besides pseudo V-I relations, the only exceptional ‘tonal’ element is the IV-V-I bassline in the *Largo* section.

Ex. 36: Large-scale harmonic structure across the fourth erhu rhapsody

Given this large-scale harmonic overview, we can easily see the *Moderato* section initiating the first major shift away from the overall G or D centricities, especially in leading towards the G♭ at the start of the *piu mosso* passage at bar 73. This G♭ then “unfolds” a 6th below by whole-tone steps (refer to Ex. 30). At bar 92, the bass appears to be anchored on C which we shall interpret as a divider symmetrically dividing the G♭ octave within the *piu mosso* passage. From a larger-perspective, this G♭ center (from *piu mosso* to third *san-ban*) can be construed as a chromatic neighbour to the deeper-level G center that is tied across the *Moderato* – *Largo* sections. The first *Largo* passage offers another instance of this symmetrical division of the octave, this time a G - D♭ - G frame. Thereafter, the music returns to a ‘plagal’ C - G framing till the end of the *Largo* section. Finally, in the *Presto* section, there is a larger-scale D-G (V-I) movement to loosely affirm G as the overall pitch centre.

Having examined the large-scale harmonic and thematic organisation, we can better appreciate Wang’s modifications to the *ban-shi* arrangements here. Table 2 (page 76) illustrates the various sections and their respective harmonic/thematic characteristics. From the introduction to *Allegro* sections, there is a gradual increase in energy-level brought about by a
quickening tempo, increased textural complexity and growing intensity in the accompaniment; there is also a greater sense of tonal fluidity (although still largely centering on G and D) across these sections. Subsequently, the *Moderato* section, with its greater harmonic departure (especially with the tonally ambiguous *piu mosso* passage), exhibits a more transitory role to link to the highly contrasting and expressive *Largo* section, despite bearing close thematic resemblances to previous sections. Among all the themes presented throughout the work, the *Largo* theme bears closest resemblance to the folksong style of China’s Northwestern region, especially with regard to its song-like manner, extended phrases and expressive flexibility. According to Wang, a skillful rendition of this section should capture the breadth, emotional depth and sonority of such folksongs. Though details of playing techniques are not explicitly scored, the erhu soloist is expected to use his/her imagination to apply appropriate techniques such as portamento and types of vibrato so as to vividly capture and evoke the singing quality of such folksongs. Furthermore, this *Largo* represents one of the largest section (encompassing three smaller subsections) within the rhapsody – so much so that it could even come across as a self-contained larger section (given its motivic departure and harmonic characteristics) if not for its being harmonically-open as it leads to the ensuing cadenza-like passage. This slow section is one of the most intense in expressions as it shifts to the ‘plagal’ region. The music eventually picks up pace again as it culminates in the virtuosic final *Presto* section. Therefore, even though the structural design of this rhapsody appears “free” in its multi-sectional modified *ban-shi* layout, there are still strong musical connections across various sections.

Evidently, this rhapsody reveals greater technical sophistication in the assimilation and transformation of the folk-inspired pitch materials and intervallic characteristics, based upon both Western and Chinese-influenced techniques. In terms of melodic construction, apart from transcending the *he-tou* concept in the deployment of the folk-derived cell as characteristic motif permeating the various themes, this work draws upon other techniques unique to the Chinese music tradition such as *cheng-di-shi* technique, as well as the four-phase melodic development concept based on initiation, development, deviation and closure. The folk-derived motivic cells also permeate most of the chordal sonorities and second or even third-level motifs. The importance of the inherent perfect fourths and major seconds are conspicuously highlighted in a variety of ways, as quartal/quintal elements, pentatonic and whole-tone series. In sum, we see the richness in Wang’s imagination and his technical sophistication in this mature work.

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138 Observation made through sitting in a rehearsal session conducted by the composer on the fourth erhu rhapsody on June 23, 2011, at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (Singapore); Details regarding the expressive interpretation of this *Largo* section by Wang can be found in 郭媛, “王建民，《第四二胡狂想曲》创作访谈录”, 24.
Table 2: Structural design of Erhu Rhapsody No. 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2-11</th>
<th>12-18</th>
<th>19-52</th>
<th>53-96</th>
<th>97-98</th>
<th>99-139</th>
<th>140-163</th>
<th>164-172</th>
<th>173</th>
<th>174-end</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tempo/Section</strong></td>
<td>散板 1</td>
<td>散板 2</td>
<td>Allegro</td>
<td>Moderato ➔ píu mosso</td>
<td>散板 3</td>
<td>Largo</td>
<td>Andantino</td>
<td>Largo</td>
<td>散板 4</td>
<td>Presto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of theme</strong></td>
<td>Introduce the basic cell, (027) and resultant superset (0257)</td>
<td>Basic shape of themes feature a pair of repeated notes, which subsequently dips by a 4th/5th and then back up by a 4th/5th</td>
<td>Opening melodic frame drawn from demisemiquaver anacrusis of the Moderato theme. Deviates from the basic contour in previous themes.</td>
<td>Extended quartal series</td>
<td>Return of Largo theme at T₄</td>
<td>Explores the core motivic cells in an improvisatory manner</td>
<td>(025) presented as intervallic contraction of (027)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improv.</strong></td>
<td>Largely rhythmic and resolute in character</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Centricity</strong></td>
<td>E♭ ➔ G ➔ (E)</td>
<td>Large-scale D ➔ G movement</td>
<td>Featuring E, A, D</td>
<td>G ➔ G♭ ➔ tonal ambiguity</td>
<td>G♭ ➔ (B♭)</td>
<td>Tonally fluid G ➔ D♭ ➔ C ➔ G ➔ (B♭) ➔ G</td>
<td>Extremely ambiguous</td>
<td>G ➔ C</td>
<td>A♭ ➔ D ➔ A♯</td>
<td>Featuring D, A, G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of harmonic path</strong></td>
<td>With vertical juxtaposition of E♭ vs. E♭ and bass pedal</td>
<td>Tonal fluidity with large-scale V-I mot. linked by (025) &amp; pentatonic collection</td>
<td>Bass structural tones based on (025) and pentatonic collection</td>
<td>Ambiguity esp. in píu mosso passage due to extensive whole-tone descent in bass</td>
<td>Largely pentatonic, with vertical juxtaposition of G♭ vs. G♭ and bass pedal</td>
<td>Tonal fluidity due to extensive whole-tone descent</td>
<td>Tonal fluidity due to extensive T₃ mot. and bass whole-tone elements</td>
<td>Harmonically open</td>
<td>Largely pentatonic, with vertical juxtaposition of A♭ vs. A♭ and bass pedal</td>
<td>Main harmonic tones revolve around (027). End with diatonic and chromatically-altered (025) chord juxtaposed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

Wang Jian Min’s first and fourth erhu rhapsodies each draw their basic musical materials from distinctive folk sources within China to integrate with more contemporary Western musical styles and techniques. The first rhapsody draws its inspiration from folksongs and folkdances from the Yunnan-Guizhou region, specifically the Miao tribe’s fei-ge, the peacock dance of the Dai tribe and the a-xi dance of the Yi tribe. On the other hand, the fourth rhapsody looks to folksongs from the Chinese northwestern region. As discussed in the preceding chapters, these two erhu rhapsodies share similar compositional approach towards assimilating elements from the Chinese and Western musical traditions. We have observed how Chinese music-aesthetic principles and Western harmonic structuring are applied within a modified ban-shi layout. On the material level, we have seen how Wang distills the folk-derived pitch materials in the form of core motivic cells, which are then applied melodically and harmonically in various guises. There are also instances of the Chinese melodic concept of he-tou and qi-cheng-zhuan-he.

Despite these general similarities, there are significant differences which demonstrate Wang’s growing maturity and creativity as a composer. The first and most notable distinction is the tonal fluidity and indeed ambiguity of the later work, which reveals Wang’s conscious efforts to differentiate it from the earlier rhapsodies. He extracted intervals representative of the northwestern folksongs (major second and perfect fourth) to be used as the basis for harmonic organisation in terms of chord progressions on the one hand and transpositional paths (by T_2/T_10 and T_5/T_7) on the other. Together with whole-tone and pentatonic elements, these folk-derived elements are cleverly interwoven into the harmonic fabric such that the fifth-based deeper-level large-scale harmonic structure is more conceptual than aurally obvious. By contrast, in his first rhapsody, despite the employment of a nine-tone synthetic scale, Wang’s tonal language still largely reflects strong tonal relations and a generally clear sense of pitch centricity. There are also more instances of tertian harmonies.

The second distinction concerns the kind of “chromaticism” used. In the first erhu rhapsody, the bimodal chromaticism within its core motivic cell involves the juxtaposition or superposition of a major and minor chordal third. This resultant (0347) major-minor tetrachord then permeates the melodic and harmonic fabric of the work. In the case of the fourth rhapsody, though the folk-derived basic intervals of major seconds and perfect fourths are in themselves diatonic, Wang manages to achieve the chromatic colouring by two means – chromatic

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alteration of the core motivic cell(s) and whole-tone-based chromaticism. In the former instance, Wang substitutes the major second with a minor second to chromatically transform his motivic cells; at times, he juxtaposes this chromatically-altered form with its ‘diatonic’ counterpart (as demonstrated in the accompaniment of the Allegro theme). With the latter means, Wang juxtaposes two different whole-tone collections in the middle-ground harmonic structure of various sections/passages, thereby deploying the complete chromatic aggregate. Instances can be cited at the a piacere passage within the Andante section (Ex. 25) and Moderato—piu mosso passage (Ex. 30), with the contrasting whole-tone series moving at different rates. In some sense, Wang’s approach in creating these “whole-tone-based chromaticism” seems analogous to Bartók’s method of “polymodal chromaticism” effected by the simultaneous polyphonic use of two different modes. Such whole-tone-based chromaticism contributes to the sense of tonal ambiguity in these passages.

The third difference lies in Wang’s approach to the use of common tones under transposition. In the first rhapsody, his nine-tone source set presents the potential for shifts in ‘centricity’ without changing the pitch collection, but Wang did not choose to exploit this transpositional property. Instead, Wang opts for transpositional levels that yield new pitch collections in creating his modal shifts. By contrast, in the fourth rhapsody, Wang’s choice of transpositional relationship between pitch collections (generated from the core motivic cells) often maximizes common tones between them. These common-tone connections are evident in the melodic construction (e.g. the unfolding of the Moderato theme which passes through various pitch collections that differs from the adjacent set by only a note); in imitative textures (e.g. the piu mosso theme within the Moderato passage, or the three-part imitative entries in the Andantino passage from bars 156-158); as well as in the accompaniment (e.g. the Allegro section from bars 45-52).

The fourth distinction concerns the structural design of the two rhapsodies. Besides a more radical departure from the conventional Chinese ban-shi layout, the sectional divisions of the fourth rhapsody also appear to be blurred, making the work more seamless in its structuring. This in part reflects Wang’s sophistication in assimilating the essence of san (散) at various levels. To some extent, such fluidity in structuring arguably resonates with the aesthetical ideals of traditional Chinese music, which rests on a humanistic (人文主义) rather than scientific foundation, where the portrayal of emotions (情), sensitivity, and the general spirit of spontaneity in structuring are central. As noted earlier, Wang’s conception of structural design in his erhu rhapsodies reflects his reaction against the over-used Western ternary layout

140 See Nelson, “Folk music and the ‘free and equal treatment of the twelve tones’: aspects of Béla Bartók’s synthetic methods”, 74-78.
141 For further discussion on the aesthetics of traditional Chinese music, refer to 李妹, “中西音乐美学的比较研究”, 53-55; and 王次炤, “音乐美学新论”, 244-249.
that was prevalent among modern Chinese compositions from 1949 to the 1970s. His fourth rhapsody shows his advancement in developing his personal responses towards structural design. Apart from the seamless integration of the ‘san’ element, the sense of connectedness is also enhanced by the general musical fluidity and harmonic ambiguity, achieved through an avoidance of strong cadential gestures at the end of passages/sections, and by creating a fluid succession of melodic ideas based on the germinal cell(s).

Additionally, Wang’s latest rhapsody also reflects greater skill towards achieving his ideal of a musical narrative that entails the gradual unfolding and blossoming of ideas as the piece develops—something he deems to be intrinsic to the Chinese narrative style. It is achieved through two means. First, the subtle ways in establishing the surface/structural salience of G instead of a straightforward establishment of home centricity right from the start, as in the case of first rhapsody. Second, it is the gradual evolution of musical ideas as it takes on increasing complexity. In some sense, one would only be able to fully appreciate its narrative logic so to speak only after listening to the whole piece, not least because there are specific reasons for every presentation of a new idea at various junctures.

In the first approach pertaining to the idea of “home centricity”, the importance of G is partly underscored harmonically through strategically-placed iterations of the chords with G as the root, and, more subtly, by virtue of the fact that pitch material for these chords are based on the core-motivic cell which includes G. It is further established by the placement of this pitch-class either at the beginning or end of each passage/section, which at times relate to the structural tones C and D through fifths. On a more abstract level, these deeper-level C–G–D structural tones (tonal materialization of [0 2 7]) across the whole work in some sense provide a balance around G based on the series of fifths, which further endorses G as the “home” center. The second approach with regard to the gradual development of ideas is also closely linked to the way Wang achieves long-range connections. For instance, we have observed how the Largo theme, despite deviating from the basic contour of previous themes, is still essentially derived from the head motif of the Moderato theme. Further, the circle of fourths first used to effect various harmonic shifts in the introduction later becomes a central feature of the Andantino theme, which is subsequently also used to generate a three-part imitation. Additionally, we have observed that the basic intervals are not only unveiled as core motivic cells, whole-tone or pentatonic elements, but the manner in which they engage local surface details and large-scale organisation gradually takes on more intricacy. Finally, as if to sum up the principal ideas, the last two bars of the Presto section feature a quartal approach towards G, affirming its importance and also reiterating the chromatic-diatonic juxtaposition of the motivic cell through this last chord.

Having extensively applied the various analytical tools and perspectives the study first proposed, we can now better affirm their advantages in the interpretation of these erhu
rhapsodies. These tools have in turn further shed light on existing researches that largely employ more traditional modes of analysis in their attempts to explicate Wang’s ‘east-west’ techniques. For one, the borrowing of more neutral set-theoretic labels in this study have lent convenience in labeling and referring to the respective ‘motivic/intervallic core’ and in explicating their multi-level appearances as melodic, harmonic and textural elements in both rhapsodies. In the process, it also reveals the manner in which these cells emerge as the primary integrative element across each rhapsody. To balance its downside in suppressing pitch-space and other surface saliencies, aspects of more traditional analysis in tracing the motivic variants and in elucidating the presence of tonal elements have been incorporated. In this connection, there is perhaps one issue relating to the perception of the listener that needs to be addressed—that is the employment of a neo-Schenkerian perspective in the harmonic reading of the fourth rhapsody. Admittedly, it is challenging and even impossible for anyone attempting to hear the postulated tonal relations solely from the musical surface, even for a listener who is musically trained in the Western classical tradition. Listeners may at best pick out fragments of tonal elements, but the piece largely comes across as tonally fluid or even ambiguous, with non-functional chord progressions characterizing the musical surface. Nonetheless, although middleground and foreground levels do not adhere to Schenkerian prototypes of composing-out, one notes the salient V-I movements in the fundamental structure that play an important role in contributing to the overall saliency of G. The neo-Schenkerian lens has indeed provided a means to better understand the harmonic hierarchy of the work, and in the process provide deeper insights into Wang’s harmonic-structuring logic. Whether the ‘tonal’ gestures are always aurally perceivable or whether the ‘reduction’ graphs deviates from orthodox Schenkerian norm is beside the point.

As a set of rhapsodies based on different Chinese folk and traditional musical elements, their musical syncretism creates different kinds of aural perception and reception. To audiences who have no prior knowledge of the Chinese musical materials referred to, this set of works may represent yet another endeavor of Chinese-Western musical fusion and the creation of an ‘interesting’ soundscape. On the other hand, for audiences familiar with the referenced sources or even Chinese musical culture in general, these rhapsodies provide an avenue to re-perceive the Chinese sources and aesthetics in new light, critically engaging them in a comparison between their original context and in this new instrumental and compositional setting. Evidently, Wang’s careful arrangement and rendering of folk materials also reflect his successful resolution of two at-first-glance discordant practices: the simple and spontaneous rendering of folk music, and the more sophisticated and deliberate crafting of art music. Wang’s basic musical materials manifest folk origins, but these are then subjected to an array of transformational and structuring techniques, some of which are not emanating from the folk genres. His transmutation of the folk idioms into more abstract sonic allusions, as well as his evoking of aesthetics related to Chinese traditional music whilst tapping on relevant Western
contemporary techniques evince his depth and creativeness of musical syncretism. It certainly “creates” a new folk character—something which Wang deems essential in creating works inspired by folk sources.\textsuperscript{142}

It is also fascinating to note that Wang still manages to stay true to his compositional philosophy back in the 1980s, even after more than twenty years. The more contemporary sounding fourth rhapsody may have reflected Wang’s stronger desire to focus on harmonic sonorities and motivic interplay, or perhaps a move towards more contemporary Western compositional soundscapes, which may then risk alienating listeners if not handled ‘skillfully’. However, Wang manages to retain sufficient “Chinese-ness” in this work through the element of “san” and the Chinese mode of “linear” thinking. The essence of san is reflected in his motivic/thematic handling and his application of “san-ban” to blur sectional boundaries.\textsuperscript{143}

Apropos the fundamental artistic concept of Chinese art built upon the basis of ‘lines’ (线), we observe the strong melodic character of his music. Technically, his melodic movements are largely constructed based on the two basic intervals/cells on the musical surface (then extending to the middle- and background levels), as well as the cheng-di-shi melodic development concepts. Transpositional relations on the literal level (between phrases or motivic units) and abstract level (between pitch collections) also characterize Wang’s harmonic structuring. It is noted that melodic crafting and expressivity remains a hallmark of all his rhapsodies. Wang himself has revealed that he spent a considerable amount of time crafting the melodies, especially since it is written for the erhu—a melodic instrument by nature. With the fourth rhapsody, one particularly remembers the deeply poignant Largo theme. Furthermore, Wang never seems to give up on tonal gestures, even though the latter may be highly embellished by non-tonal means on the musical surface. It is perhaps fair to say that his strong melodic writing, which retains certain Chinese essence, plays a big part in the work’s popular appeal.

In sum, we have observed several aspects of Wang’s East-West musical syncretism. Wang’s syncretism certainly has its own distinctness. His compositional ease in distilling and evoking various folk/traditional elements through techniques drawn from different musical cultures, as well as his ability to detail his conceptualizations and compositional rationale all indicate his depth of understanding with the traditions he has chosen to use as his compositional

\textsuperscript{142}郭媛, “王建民，《第四二胡狂想曲》创作访谈录”, 23-24.
\textsuperscript{143} Traditionally, the “san” concept when applied to Chinese modulatory techniques, results in a unique technique known as 移宫转调, which is distinct from the Western counterpart. It is largely built upon the horizontal dimension, focusing on the relationship and connections between tones (thus portraying the ideology of ‘lines’). Of course, this does not imply that all traditional Chinese pieces are monophonic, as evident in the instrumental accompaniments to Chinese operas (戏曲) or instrumental ensemble works; but even such vertical dimension towards sonority is usually built on the basis of melody (for instance 同宫异腔 or 异宫异腔) rather than for instance Western concepts of functional chord progressions or cadences. This musical phenomenon is later described as “以线为基础的立体化” by the Chinese music theorist Li Xi-an (李西安); see also 李妹, “中西音乐美学的比较研究”, 53-55.
points of departure. There is no doubt that his success here owes it to his being well-versed in the artistic and creative principles of both cultures, which is in part the result of his earlier training and in part owing to his industrious and intensive research into the musical tradition involved. Commendably, contrary to the common perception that contemporary works often alienate listeners, Wang’s rhapsodies illustrate the possibility of achieving some sort of ‘balance’ between the seemingly antithetical aims of artistic sophistication and popular appeal, which is very much Wang’s compositional concern: 雅俗共赏.

**Future investigations**

This study has focused on explicating Wang’s compositional treatment of pitch materials distilled from folk-sources and his structural design in the light of Chinese and Western structural elements based on the piano reduction scores for these rhapsodies. There is certainly room for investigating Wang’s instrumentation and orchestration in this connection. Although the piano accompanimental version for the first three erhu rhapsodies came before its orchestral counterpart, it was the reverse for the fourth rhapsody. This may perhaps contribute to its greater departure from the soundscapes of earlier rhapsodies. Furthermore, due to the limitation of this study, we have only managed to examine the two most contrasting rhapsodies within the set in an attempt to investigate Wang’s development as a composer between the earliest and later stages of his compositional career. Since Wang himself has revealed that each of his erhu rhapsodies represents significant advancements in his compositional thoughts and approaches, to obtain a more comprehensive overview of Wang’s musical syncretism as well as his evolving compositional style, his second and third rhapsodies should be examined next.

In the course of this research, preliminary investigations of Wang’s two other rhapsodies have been made; it seems that the analytical approaches developed for this study may prove viable for these works as well and hopefully even for his other instrumental (solo/chamber) works. Finally, there are definitely further areas for research, especially with respect to the Chinese concept of tonal modulation, which is uniquely distinct from the Western approaches to modulations. This will provide a more complete understanding of the composer’s underlying/intuitive approach in arranging the motivic cores/phrases, and better trace their influences/adaptations from the disparate musical traditions. Philosophical and aesthetic issues from both Chinese and Western musical traditions can also be further explored to understand his syncretic methods more deeply. Beyond understanding Wang’s music, it is hoped that some of these analytical perspectives and insights gained through this research can subsequently be applied to the study of other similar works or spark the inspirations of composers interested in musical syncretism.
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APPENDIX

Transcription of interview with Wang Jian Min (王建民)  
by author, Yick Jue Ru (易珏如)  
Date: 24 June 2011

Question 1:

易：《一狂》有四种伴奏形式—除了用民乐，和浓缩版的钢琴或扬琴伴奏之外，似乎还有管弦乐伴奏的形式（邓建栋在维也纳演出的版本）。请问其它狂想曲中也有配给管弦乐伴奏的形式吗？

王：应该是说，我设想的伴奏形式有三种。所有的狂想曲出来的第一个伴奏一定是钢琴伴奏，道理非常简单。因为作为一个乐曲来说，最方便的上台方式是钢琴伴奏，我们大多数学校都具备这样的条件。但是如果用乐队（不管是华乐队或管弦乐队），是要动用人力的，对于学生来讲，它的可能性都不是特别的大，除非有特殊的场合。所以对我来说我所有的东西出来一定会准备钢琴伴奏。

那么《第一二胡狂想曲》出来的时候我首先写的就是钢琴伴奏，但当然我写这个钢琴伴奏跟那个乐队一定有关。换句话说，我在写钢琴伴奏的同时，我在考虑乐队了。咱们一般的话，钢琴伴奏其实有两种写法：一种是我们的非常钢琴化的（完全不考虑其它因素的纯粹的钢琴伴奏写法）；还有一种伴奏写法，其实我们在学校里面可能学过作曲的同学都知道，我们有很多配器课里乐队谱子的配器练习，就是用钢琴曲来做配器练习的。所以我在写这个钢琴伴奏的时候大部分会考虑到，除了保持那个钢琴特点之外，也会考虑到乐队的因素在里面。所以这个钢琴伴奏已经具备了作乐队的基础，起码和声啦这些基本的要素都在里面。所以说，我先写好钢琴伴奏然后再考虑乐队，[但]考虑乐队还是要看需要。其实《一狂》的乐队版是管弦乐队在先。这个版本当初我记得是朱霖还没来新加坡之前，在中国音乐学院毕业的音乐会用这个管弦乐队（胡炳旭指挥），当时请我编的。民乐版本在管弦乐版本之后，也是根据需要。

后面的狂想曲出来也是钢琴伴奏在先，也有华乐版本，但这两首协奏版本里面没有管弦乐队的。因为没有谁提出需要管弦乐队伴奏版本。如果有演奏家需要而我正好也有这个机会，那我也会写管弦乐版本。其实民乐版本和管弦乐队版本之间差别一定不会过大。

《四狂》的情况相反，它是北市国乐委约我写的，当时写好提交给他们的版本就是民乐版本，09 年 9 月 20 号首演。前面三首先亮相的都是钢琴版本，但《四狂》因后来的需要，我也写了钢琴版在他们那儿出版。北市国一般演出完为了推广，他们会出版，同时也会征求作曲家的意见。我那时钢琴伴奏版还没写，而乐队版出版对他们来说负担会比较重一些，毕竟是比较大的总谱。

所以我也考虑到我们学生的需求。后来在 09 年底我就把钢琴版写完，北市国就决定出版这个版本。

易：先用钢琴或乐队来创作，对您的创作概念有没有影响？

王：没有任何影响。

易：民乐与管弦乐，哪种形式比较能够表现出您想要的意境？

王：如果说是要表现张力更强一点的，可能是管弦乐的。因为我的主奏乐器是胡琴，伴奏乐队是交响乐队，这是一种衬托，交响乐队有这个乐队的优势，这是毋庸置疑的，因为这个乐队毕竟是几百年科学的结晶。我们的民族乐队其实是交响乐队某种意义上的克隆版，因为我们历史上是没有真正意义上的民乐队，就是我们所指的管弦乐队的。我们以往的民族乐队在民间的形式也有人不少的，可能它多半是属于“吹打乐”呀，或者是江南丝竹这种东西。但是对于“滥竽充数”啦，那个时候可能一个吹竿的乐队就有上千人对
不对，然后又混在这么多人里面看不出来，所以会有“滥竽充数”这个说法。因为那个时候的乐队可能也会很大，我们现在没有正确的史料留下来所以没办法考证，包括我们看一些敦煌壁画或者一些石窟的壁画里面一些乐队的一种了解，各种各样的乐器都有，说不定那个时候的乐队也很大对不对？那就没办法考证了，但总之现代的民乐队实际上时间是不长的。就是海外的比如说华乐团，中乐团，那差不多都是从大陆的一个民乐队版本模式照搬的。所以这种情况底下，这个民乐队本身它有特色，但它在音响的发射方面，就合理的配备上面、物理学的各种共鸣方面不见得会很完善，所以有很多地方还值得探讨。其实这个话题我们每次都讲到这个东西都会探讨这个问题。西方的管弦乐队它已经有成熟的各种配器方法，成熟的结构方式，所以它的表现力是非常强大的。所以说如果你问我这样的话呢，我觉得管弦乐队跟一个中国民乐器的表现，这是一种反衬，说不定效果会更好一些。但是也不见得，有些细节方面的东西还是民乐队有长处。这么说吧，两个版本，各有长处。

Question 2
易：1988 年创作《一狂》时，是否有接触过梅西安的创作手法和理念？
王：有的。88 年我刚从上海音乐学院回来嘛，已经是南京音乐学院的老师。

易：在《一狂》中运用了苗族飞歌在宫音上方大小三度并存的特征，设计了 9 声音阶，跟梅西安的第三种“有限移位调式”在形式上是相同的。您在运用此音阶时根梅西安的理念或手法上有什么异同点吗？
王：那太不同了。梅西安的这个调式，它不是调式，而是一种模式。叫它调式不太合适的原因是：调式一般具有中心音和倾向音、主音、动音、近音等。特别是大调式：一级、三级、五级是中心音，其他音分为倾向音，原因是在这个调式上构成一个三和弦，所以这三个音是中心音。至少调式有中心音、主音的概念。但梅西安的这个模式，每个音并没有特殊的地位，也并不一定第一个音就是主音，在运用的时候，他把这组音打散了，可以随便混用。当然啦，他用的过程中也可能有不同的选择。

但我呢在排这个东西的时候，是为了抓住我昨天说的那个宫角大三度（宫音上面的大小三度）体现出宫羽交替的这个色彩。那么我首先把这三个音做为核心，在这个核心的基础上我们排出来的音比如说 1, 2, 3，因为我们用十二平均律只能用等音或非等音，所以说 1, 2, 3 或 1, 3, 5 都无所谓。因为在现代作品里面升降记号的作用已经不是那么重要了，不像调式音乐里面的升降号倾向性很强。那么这三个音我抓住了以后再排，我希望这三个音不是在原来的高度上上转。原来的高度上打转那就跟民歌一样了，那就没什么多大意思，那不是很乏味吗。我希望有扩张，有移位，在不同的高度出现。

于是我呢在排这么一个音阶，排来排去以后呢，我也是按照人工调式的分组音来排。因为我已经知道梅西安的这个人工音阶，已经学过了，那我排来排去以后呢发现刚好跟他的音阶完全相同，那正好相同也无所谓。因为音阶只是一个材料，你还是有自己的用法。

我的用法呢可以这么说吧，我的用法是采取在你这个音阶的基础上，调用它里面我认为可用的特性音列的某几个音，采取区域性的或者是片段性的这种移位的方式来组合我们的旋律。也就是说如果说我们南部地区的有些民歌实际上是三音列或者是四音列的。你知道阿细跳月吗？它就是三个音，只是节奏上比较活跃一些，但是它音上面就只是三个音。这种东西你不能说它是调式，它是调式有一点勉强，因为它只是个三音列，（13, 53, 0, 5, 3, 15, 31, 0, 5, 3等），就这三个音来回的变。那么这个音列再加上我们那个西南地区很多民歌就是在这个体系做的，所以它非常简单。那我就利用这三个音再加上小二度，音阶上面的大小三度交替（e.g. 5, 3, 2, 3, 5, 3, 2），就这三个音来回的变。那么这个音列再加上我们那个西南地区很多民歌就是这个体系做的，所以它非常简单。那我就利用这三个音再加上小二度，音阶上面的大小三度交替（e.g. 5, 3, 2, 3, 5, 3, 2）。
实际上我在运用这个音阶时肯定不是像梅西安的平均使用，不需要什么倾向音不倾向音，而只是一种色彩。我是从里面把音抠出来，为了是我那个特殊音调的需要。可是如果我只能抠出在原来我们所说的 5 1 5 3 2 3，那就一点意思都没有了，跟我们民歌里面经常有的旋律一样，那就单一了。所以在这个基础上我把音调抠出来以后，可以自由的在旋律上面延展，但是又可以控制我旋律的味道—有变化但又不觉得串味。

易：那在其它狂想曲中也有类似的概念吗？

王：其它狂想曲也有类似的概念。原来民歌里面有些很有特点的音调，我把它拿出来用。比如《二狂》里面有 6 5 3 6 5 3，它实际上跟我前面说的那个《一狂》里面两个音的交替对照还不太一样，它是上下对照的—上面它是宫色彩，低下是羽色彩；或者是和声小调色彩。它宫色彩和羽色彩是分程交替的，很奇怪。那我把这两个东西捏合在一起变成一个对照的和声上面可以是小二度，旋律上有减八度、增八度，从这里我也有很多的移位，能使旋律控制在我所需要的有特点的范围内。因为它是延伸出来的，如果我们按照主调或主调／主调和非主调的概念的话，我这个 6 5 3 是主调，3 4 2 7 或 2 1 6 就是非主调，但它是在这个调性里面，不是转调。

Question 3

易：《第三二胡狂想曲》有没有什么特性音调或音阶？

王：《第三狂想曲》准确的说，我是抓住了新疆音调里面的一些有特色的旋法进行。我自己也没有排一个音阶，如果每次都用相同的做法可能会死板一些，所以《三狂》呢我写的时候是划分它一个风格区域范围。当时想写带有西部地区的新疆风格，同时为了比赛需要可能比较俏巧，长度也是这几首狂想曲中相对比较短，也比较适合比赛。我看很多新疆民歌，对它的素材我都比较熟悉，所以我写的时候东西是我自己设定的新疆味道的曲。从身体里面就流出来的，根本就没有设定它什么调式。但这里面有不少调式交替的走法跟新疆民歌里面很多的调式交替是很相近的。新疆民歌如果仔细去研究的话，可以发现它里面有很多调式的交替，有时一首很短的新疆民歌里面甚至会有多达四五次的调式变化，非常丰富。所以我这个大概听上去有那个意思，但我并没有具体的局限于哪一首新疆民歌。

易：能不能具体地谈谈新疆民歌里的特性音调或音型？

王：新疆这个地方有很多调式的特性跟波斯、阿拉伯风格在某种程度上是接近的。调式色彩的话，它有我们经常听到的一种我们通常认为的一种和声小调，比如《天山风情》、《阳光照耀着塔什库尔干》。还有一个就是我们所说的“大调式”，还有经常见到的就是“商调式”，因为它有一些特殊的旋法进行，就是在它的开头、在它的重要的部位、在它的结束部分，它经常会出现在旋律的进行上，因为它很难用一两句话说清楚。比如我举个简单的例子，新疆如果是大调风格味道的这种进行，比如说“1 3 4 5”－这就是典型的新疆音调进行。“3 4 5 1 7 5”－顺口哼来就是这几个比较典型的。所以《三狂》里有“1 3 4 5”这样的音调。然后把它移位，在不同的高度进行，可能会出现“5 1 7 4 3 2 1 7 5”类似的进行。

Question 4

易：在创作中运用民间素材时，都是取出风格中的特质和神韵创造出“特性音调”，而并非引用现成的民间音乐素材。其实这也是匈牙利作曲家 Bartók（巴托克）认为是民间素材与西方创作手法结合的最佳方式。

王：对，可以这么理解的。

易：您这个创作概念是在怎样的情况下形成的？
王：其实也没什么特别明确的创作概念，只是觉得可能你写什么东西，大家欢迎的程度比较广一些，那你可能在这个方面，就花点力气多做一些吧。比如说，从学院的创作的角度的话，其实现在有一个基本的一种风气吧。学院派、现代派，写的东西越来越好，或者是越超现代越好，是吧，这实际上是当下学院派的一种时髦的做法。如果你不写现代的东西，你跟不上现代的步伐，你就是边缘化，不入主流的，不行的。所有的教师，所有的学生一窝蜂地在这个里面走。当然我是赞成学现代的技术，但所谓的技术呢，五花八门，非常多，到了你自用的时候呢，你就得考虑你怎么用。

那么我的观点很明确，非常明确。你给华乐的写东西，特别是给华乐系写东西，你不可能一下子从非常原始的状态跳到非常高的，你完全听不懂或大部分人听不懂的。你不能一下子这么来跳，你还得慢慢地过渡。大家就会觉得这东西挺好听，但是又有新意，我还能接受，我就是这么一个观点。我这个观点实际上在我写《一狂》的时候，就常在考虑我怎么写一个东西让它比较好听，但是又有一点技术的含量，又可以让那个演奏的人，特别是演奏家或者是听众，能觉得这个东西是不同于以往的东西。也就是说在原来的基础上注入一点新鲜的东西吧，在结构方法上面，在技巧运用方面，也是一般以往的东西不太多的那种用法，我就这么用了。结果它的反响不错，既然不错，那就说明这种方法大家比较喜欢，或者比较受欢迎，那就不妨再继续，再往上努力一下。而且事实证明通过这个努力，对这个学科有推动。因为我在学校里面嘛，我们在学校里所做的事情，我就希望对这个学科有推动。

易：那有没有特别受什么西方作曲家的启发吗？

王：当然有的，我们学的技术其实很多都是西方来的，比如说人工调式，还有各种各样的高叠、和声上的高叠。其实从三十年前的七、八零年代的时候，慢慢地，作曲系把越来越多的西方作品涌入大陆，那个时候我看过很多的书。那个时候比较早的，也到上海音乐学院去学习，那个时候接触的都是这些东西。所以说这些技术当然很重要的。

Question 5

易：在创作狂想曲中，您借鉴了西方的“狂想曲”体裁和中国音乐典型的“板式结构”，创造了一个非常独特的结构形式。

王：也不能完全说创造了一个非常独特的结构形式。我为什么会选用狂想曲的体裁形式，其实我是这么考虑的：一个就是说中国，特别是传统的民间器乐，本来就不是AB A，中国人的叙述方式不是A B A，中国语言的叙述方式是娓娓道来式的，小河淌水，慢慢地慢慢地，越流越粗，越流越大，是这种叙述方式。所谓“娓娓道来”就是说出现一点，再露出一点，出现一点，再露出一点，不是那种风快的或特别明显的。当然，很多中国“曲牌联”就是一段一段把它拼起来。中国音乐的叙述方式很多，包括中国戏曲的，我也没彻底地去做过很深的研究。但至少我知道中国音乐并非我们想像中，一度以来都是A B A的创作，这很糟糕的。所以说狂想曲呢，它正好有个特点：多段落、结构自由；还有一个特点就是为哪件乐器写的狂想曲，里面一定会有哪件乐器的炫技成分，就是技术展示成分。李斯特的《匈牙利狂想曲》就是这样一个典型的例子，他把匈牙利的民间音乐写成一套匈牙利的钢琴狂想曲，里面我们听到有很多匈牙利的那种舞蹈音乐，场景音乐等等。

那么我有两个初衷。一个就是我希望我们写的结构，不是那种死板的结构，是有中国特色的。而狂想曲中多段落、自由的这种结构方式，我觉得刚好跟我们中国的某些器乐曲的结构方式有近似之处。比如说《十面埋伏》有很多的段落，刚好符合我所要的那个意思。

还有另外一层意思，我们有一段时间，音乐主题表述过于直白，就是中国音乐里面比较喜欢取一个很实在的名字，比如《打起锣鼓唱丰收》，过于直白，过于主题化的，里面内涵的东西不太多。其实音乐还是比较抽象的，它这个东西弄起来你给它取很多名
字，你可以《打起锣鼓唱丰收》，又可以变成另外一个东西，其实差不多的意思。它不是特别具体的音乐描述。我用狂想曲的体裁，一方面我要写可以体现这个乐器的炫技成分，又复合我们中国音乐多段落的结构方式，可以自由地在里面展延。还有一个很重要的特点，我不太喜欢用一个很具体的名字来描述一些具体的事，我想描写一种中国的精
神，我们民族的精神，或者我们民族的风貌，所以我用了这么一个狂想曲的体裁。

**Question 6**

**易**：那您觉得应该怎样看您的狂想曲的结构形式？

**王**：自由结构形式。我在结构上的感觉，一直是强调结构上自己掌握的一种分寸感，我很难用一个具体现有的名称来形容。但是如果硬要来套，中国的唐大曲，古代唐大曲的结构，基本结构形式是“散-慢-中-快-散”，有很多琴曲可能也是这样的结构。“散-慢-中-快-散”，一开始无形，慢慢地慢慢地引出来，加速加速。我为什么说它是娓娓道来式呢？对吗？越来越快越来越快，越来越激烈，然后煞住！然后一个小小的尾巴散的，跟头上呼应的散状的尾巴来收一个尾。这个结构好像比较符合我的那个《第一二胡狂想曲》的结构，我是多是“散”然后“慢-中-快”呢，我可能“散-慢-中-快”，往里面换个次序，但“快”永远是最后的。我最后永远没有“散”，我把那个尾巴的“散”剪掉了。如果我最后再有“散”，那么这个叫狂想曲就不太对了。为什么？狂想曲的最后一段一定是炫技的，你必须符合这个体裁特性，否则你叫它狂想曲就不对了。所以尾巴上那个“散”就没有了。所以通常我认可的结构形式呢，我觉得是可以自由调配的，我比较喜欢多段落的自由结构方式。但是多段落有一个麻烦，段落一多，可能结构力会松懈，明白吗？特别是段落越多的情况下，结构力就会松懈。你的结构力到底在什么地方，这是个问题。那么西方的结构方式，它有的是段落一多的情况下，它会采取比如说回旋曲的 A，加一个 B，你再来一个段落 A，再出现一个 B，然后再加一个 B，再加一个 C，再出现 A，再加个 B，它这个多段落，有一种摞起来的三部方式来形成一种多段落的结构形式。所以说在西方的一些曲式结构方式，它是很严谨的。它的结构比较相对复杂的就是奏鸣曲式：主部，复部，展开部，它那个结构方式都非常严谨的。

那么中国的音乐呢，有很多的结构方式，可以用个“散”字来形容。可它这个“散”只是一种怎么说呢？我们可以理解成为“散文”的“散”，而不是“松散”的“散”。我觉得应该这样来理解。你散文难道就没有结构了吗？散文有的时候信手拈来，可是散文有的非常漂亮，也许散文的结构要求并不那么的强。它的核心是一个“散”字，可是这个“散”绝不能意味它是松散的散。如果散文散的散话就算完了，所以我觉得可以用一个“散”字来体现。那么我在结构的时候，我觉得自己得掌握一个分寸感，到什么情况下，你觉得这个差不多了，你就得换一个结构，换一种陈述方式/表述方式，这是我喜欢多段落的衔接。那么我刚才不是说段落一多，可能会松散吗，怎么办呢？我在主题设置前面的基本材料，我使得每个主题之间跟这个基本材料有极大的关系。像在《一狂》，只有一个主题是对比主题，里面有两个基本材料，一个就是我昨天说的那个人工音阶，还有一个三度叠置方法/高叠模式。

**Question 7**

**易**：其中，除了开头的散板，其它的“散板”布局并非典型民乐中常见的散起、散放和散收模式，而在板式之间的衔接处和华彩段落。能不能说说“散板”在您的狂想曲中扮演着什么角色？

**王**：我其实用的散板并不多，但散的写法有不少，比如说引子我们经常会用散板。衔接部用散板你说的一点也没错，这是我比较喜欢的做法。因为这是为这件独奏乐器而写的，我把衔接部的功能通常就交给这个独奏乐器。一般情况都是让乐队来衔接，我是反过来的——因为散板是乐器经常喜欢用的一种演奏方式，所以我比较喜欢用独奏乐器散板作为桥梁，来衔接下一个主题。这个时候反而喜欢把伴奏停掉。所以我里面有很散板实际上是桥梁、过渡、走句、承上启下的做法。只有在比较大的乐曲的最后，我们有一个类似 *cadenza* 的写法也是散板。在西方的乐曲里面，只有协奏曲的再现部之
前有这么一个 *cadenza*，但我不一定要照他们这么做。所以我会把 *cadenza* 的意思留着，其它我用散板作为连接，用来过渡。

**Question 8**

**易**：您觉得“散板”与西方的“*rubato*”的差异是什么？

**王**：我也没准确的查过西方“*rubato*”的正确含意。西方的“*rubato*”好像是在一个固定的音乐上面稍加自由。直接用“*rubato*”代替散板好像不太合适，所以我现在比较喜欢用“*ad lib.*”作为散板的标记。我后来查了一下，也没办法很准确的解释，但我觉得为了避开“*rubato*”，“*ad lib.*”好像更适合一些。但像我们在用这种术语的时候，其实只有一个作用，就是为了使这个谱子能国际化的通用。

**Question 9**

**易**：在西方古典音乐中，转调的布局跟音乐结构有密切的关系，但中国音乐的板式结构似乎跟西方的调没有直接的关系。

**王**：这么说吧，中国的板式结构跟西方的调概念，我觉得基本没有关系。但是中国的板式结构，如果是在戏曲里面，南河腔、羽腔，我们可以这么理解，它就是有角色转换的功能，比如说戏曲里面男腔换到女腔，京胡要倒弦的，比如 5 2 变成 2 6。我也没仔细研究过，但是女的音区跟男的音区不同，女的板男的板不同，也就是我们通常理解的调式不同。它到女的时候就换成另外一个调，到男的时候又回到那个调，经常这样来回倒，这个就是戏曲里面比较常见的。

**Question 10**

**易**：所以您在这套狂想曲中，如何结合中西方对于调性布局与结构的差异？

**王**：调性布局我在运用的时候是比较自由的。其实到了比较近现代的调性布局，不像传统古典的调性那么考究了(按照 T – D – S – T，和声功能按照 T – S – D – T 这样的进行)。曲式展开的逻辑因该是按照这样的逻辑，然后返回部分等。调性结构到了浪漫派后期，被一些浪漫派后期的作曲家砸碎了，到了现代音乐以后就崩溃了。然后到了二十世纪初，出现了一些十二音序列音乐和无调性作曲家，这种情况是人所周知的。那么换句话说，你在那个年代：古典、浪漫年代，如果你不遵循这么多作曲家总结出来的经验、这么一套体系的布局，那么你可以说他不正规。到了后来二十世纪，或者后来越来越自由，怎么说都可能，那也不会说他不正规。因为已经到现代，接近现代这个年代了，再后面没有调性了，我觉得就连控制力都很难达到。因为它是脚踩西瓜皮，你没办法知道自己的滑到哪里。所以，古典的传统的那个几百年产生的体系是有很强大的力量。要不然的话贝多芬他为什么永远不会倒？就是这个原因，莫扎特跟巴哈为什么会永存，就是这个道理。就是说，他们构出来的这个大厦是非常坚固的，它不会倒。只是现代音乐以后产生了风格上的变化，又起了另外不同花式的建筑，但谁知道这些建筑的牢度有没有像古典音乐的这个大厦，或者是贝多芬的大厦那么坚固？现在无法评说。

所以调性布局呢，我觉得是可以比较自由一些的，比较自由的原因也不是说你要脚踩西瓜皮乱滑。首先有一点，我在写这个调性的时候，必须考虑到这个调性对这件乐器的演奏方面是不是方便的，我不能胡来。特别是我们民族器乐的调，木调乐器的调，比如说管它筒音一定是 do re mi sol la，你硬要把那个筒音变成 faith, 或者它很难过的。那么二胡的定弦 2 6，变成 1 5 也可以，但变成 4 1 就稍稍有点难过了，变成 3 7 也说不过去，因为毕竟是出音在内弦，也还说的过去。可是你把这个定弦，把它变成中首调上面的 faith，就会很难过了，就是演奏习惯会很不舒服的。所以我的主调一定是这个乐器相对来说比较方便演奏的，我所有的狂想曲都是这样的。但我中间会走出来，原因是一方面体现出你陈述方面的非单一性（肯定要有调性变化）；另一方面也可以体现一定的难度，体现一定的展开和紧张度，需要调性来推动。那么在这种调性推动的过程中也不一定是空穴来风，比如说我就不太会用过多的西方浪漫时期，连续三度的调性变化，比如说降三级，
降六级连续不断的调性变化。我用这种调性变化会特别小心，因为我觉得这种调的色彩变化有太强的西方印记，所以我的调性变化多是二度变化。

**Question 11**

**易：**在《四狂》里比较难追踪不同段落的调性或主音，在写这首曲时您对调的概念是什么？

**王：**调性这个东西有时候很难说得特别明白。因为我们所说的调性概念，其实是从西方过来的，对吧，所以我们的调性概念只要找到主音，就是确定调性；或者说找到属七和弦，上主和弦至少可以确定调性。我们现在不能这样看问题。其实就是这样，因为中国的那个传统音乐里面有很多四音列，你是没办法真正的确定它的调式，但是可能会确定它的调性。其实所谓调性，就是当某一个音占据主要位置的话，这就是一个调性的一个中心所在，我觉得应该是这么理解的，明白吗？调性实际上我浅白的说，就是一个高度。调式情况就复杂了，你在同样的高度你可能会有不调式的调式。这个很简单的理解，就是我们传统音乐里面同组大小调的这个关系，对吗？它是 C，同样的调性，可是它是不同的调式 — 一个是大调式，一个是小调式，所以调式可以自由的让我搞来搞去。有的人会喜欢把调性和调式搞在一起，其实它不完全是一回事，调性通常是指一个主音的高度，这就是传统理论给我们下的定义，就是你这个主音的高度所在，就是调性，准确地说就是高低。调式除了高低以外，它还有色彩，可能有大，有小，是这个意思。

那么你说那个《四狂》找不到调性，不会的。中国音乐有一个很大的特点，它不是在一个我们所设定的某一个调式里面一杆子到底的。一个表述就是我们传统音乐的理论：这个就是大调，要不我就转调到小调去；或者开头是大调，中间会转到小调，又回到大调，它变化也挺多的，那通常呢，它大小调这个分辨是很清晰的。我们中国的音乐不一定，我们中国的音乐里有很多的是含糊的。道理非常简单，中国人的表达方式有时候就比较含糊，就是讲的话不一定是正面的东西，或者讲的话没有完全表达出来，后面还有另外一层的意思，这种情况很多。所以中国的很多的曲调，旋律的表达方式非常的复杂。这么说吧，有很多的情况底下到最后一个落音，才能确定它的真正的调性调式。因此当在分析这些东西时，你必须以段落，以结构作为一个衡量的标准，以片断的截取作为一个衡量的标准，以片断的截取是比较困难的，片断的截取，你只能根据你的感觉去找这个片断大概是在什么宫系统，不能说一定是调式，很难，对吗？这个到了什么宫系统，这个可能又到了什么宫系统？或者简单的说，这个到了什么调，我们所叫的“调”，就是宫音在什么位置上的调，可以这么理解的。比如说这个到了 C 调，就是 C 宫系统；这个到了 A 调，不能说是 C 调，A 大调 — 这个在解释中国音乐不是特别的准确。所以《四狂》里面你很难找到明确的，你所认可的主调或调性，这个正是我想要的东西。如果你让我很清晰的找到，那么我就是跟传统东西完全是太相近的，那意思就不是特别大了。

那在调性有点含糊的情况怎么办，宫音为先，你学过这个理论吗？四个音列你不能确定到底是 1256，还是 5623 的情况底下，因为它可能是 1256，也可能是 5623 对不对，就是宫音为先 - 1256 为先。

**Question 12**

**易：**在文革时期，您在音乐学院里学习长号，大提琴之余，还有接触其它的音乐科目吗？比如音乐历史，作曲方面？

**王：**作曲方面吗？那个时候学过长号，学过大提琴，后来嘛，对作曲方面会有点兴趣，慢慢自己开始学点乐理吧，学点和声，就是这样。然后我就具备了一定的基础，学校南艺招生我就考进去了，就是这样，就这么简单呀。

**易：**那个时候，学院有没有教西方的乐理？
王：和声都是西方的，尽管没有公开的教，但我们上一辈的老师学的不也是那个东西吗，对吧。因为那些人不是还在嘛，所以一辈教一辈。虽然那十年时间没有教这些东西，可是上面在十年之前的老师不也是学了这个东西吗？他可以私下里教你，他不是还是用了这些东西吗？所以我说我们学的那个和声，也就是四部作品的和声，非常简单的。我们通用的四部作品的和声教材，也可能会看一些Piston的和声什么的，都是一些比较经典的作曲，绝对也还是这些东西。写曲子嘛，也会从最基础的钢琴曲写起，写变奏曲啦，比较重要的都会写。其实我钢琴的写作功底，就是从那个时候开始练起的，练出来的。所以我的钢琴的写作功底，你只要看看我几个狂想曲的钢琴伴奏就知道了。

Question 13

易：您昨天在南中的作曲座谈会上有提到，在中国音乐的特性音调进行方法，其实跟西方的模进进行方法是不一样的，而且中国音乐特性音调的进行方法有不同种类，可以解释一下吗？

王：这个东西其实呢，比如说我们把一个主题，或者说就是个动机吧，我们这么解释：我们这个特性音调，我为什么这个特性音调不把它叫做动机？动机有的时候可以变形，但是这种变形不是打散的变形，它形状可能是短一点或是长一点。但西方的主导动机，它的变形的可能是和声上的变形，它真正的变形不是特别多的，你去找一些西方作品，[如贝多芬第五交响曲]，这就是特性音调，可是这是个动机。但是这个动机你怎么把它变形，很少。在贝多芬的命运交响曲，全曲的控制就是这个动机在控制，这个谁都知道对吧。但是如果我们中国的，我所说的特性音调用这种方法来做的话，那么这就是跟动机的模进是一样的做法，0553，这就是特性音调。但是这个动机你怎么让它变形，很少。在贝多芬的命运交响曲，全曲的控制就是这个动机。但是我讲的特性音调呢就像是一盘。。。怎么形容它。。。在一条路径上面做上不同的记号，这每一个记号都是一个。。。比如说我们走一条路，我们可以走一棵树上系一个红手块，再走一段时间，再走一棵树，再系一个红手块，再走再系。在这一条路上面，这是一个标记，我讲的特性音调可能是有点类似这个意思。就是过一段时间出现一次，过一段时间出现一次，我不要把这些东西堆在一起，这是一种方法，还有一种方法，我是把它在这个里面，把这些糖化在那杯水里面，让你觉得先吃过糖以后，你喝了那杯水，然后发现这不就是前面那个糖的味道吗？你能感觉到糖的味道。所以说特性音调是“散”的。我又说“散”字了，特性音调可以把它打散的，但这个打散你不能打完全没有形了，那不行。它这个“散”可以散得比较[自由]。比如说《一狂》里面我讲的那个主题音调，其实就是个特性音调，也可以叫主体音调，也可以叫作动机。我们把这东西只是跟西方的展开不一样，我喜欢把它变形懂吗。比如说，但再现的时候跟这个毫无关系，再现是什么，钢琴。
法还是很多，可以采取路标式的做一点，撒一点，做一点，让你在这个旋律的上面，你时时有这个印记，不至于迷路。

那么我昨天不是提到合头合尾式吗？其实这是中国旋律中写作在结构上面的一种很有效的方法。如果那个《二泉映月》不是每句开头 1 6 1，不是因为这个每个头是这个头的话，这个《二泉映月》就是一盘散沙了。《春江花月夜》不是因为 2 3 2 1，不是因为这个尾巴的话，这个《春江花月夜》也很可能是一盘散沙。所以它能非常有效地在某一个部位，给你吃一粒定心丸。可是这种特别独特的旋律方式，为什么我们要去写那个该死的 A B A 呢，你知道我说的那个意思吗？

这个 A B A，按照我的看法就是汉堡包，上面一层面包，下面一层面包，中间夹一个饼，这是一个垃圾食品，我觉得这是垃圾食品。当然我不是否定三部结构，三部结构其实结构力是非常非常强的。只是我们厌倦了天天吃这个汉堡包的味道对吗，因为我们原来不吃汉堡包的，为什么现在天天吃汉堡包。这不是活见鬼吗？就是这个意思。

Question 14

易：所以中国音乐里面还有什么变奏方式吗？昨天您有提到老六板，改头换面的变奏。

王：中国的传统的变奏里面就是以一个骨子里面加上无数的枝芽把它撑开来。比如《二泉映月》就是这样的，它也不是记得特别牢，但大概是这个意思。就比较简单。加上枝芽，这是加花，但长度是一样的。它可能会变化。32 32 32 32 32，这不就是加花？

我们这么形容，我先用树枝扎了一个形状，然后上面添添树叶，过了一会儿，上面又添添其它东西，最后你这树枝完全看不见，变成一个非常花团锦簇的一个东西。但是不能因为这样，它花团里面的树杆就没有了，它藏在里面，是支撑的骨架。其实旋律里面有很多的情况是这种情况，中国传统的变奏就是繁简变奏，其实这就叫加花，减字，其实就是这种东西。但这种东西呢，我觉得还是非常行之有效的，对吧，是一种非常管用的变奏方法，我们可以在现代音乐运用这种方法。现代音乐有时有一种叫偶然音乐，是现代音乐非常时髦的词语，偶然到什么程度呢？偶然到没有任何章法的情况下出现一段音乐，所谓“偶然”，大概就是这个意思，可以去 Grove 词典查。简约派-把一个东西写得非常简单，反复一个动机。其实我说活见鬼，[因为]这两样东西中国的传统音乐里面早就有了。

偶然音乐就是一种即兴表述方式，对吧。我们有很多的工尺谱里面，古琴的谱里面，没有打出来的谱不就是偶然音乐吗？还有工尺谱所表现的没有节奏的东西，它有的东西不是很偶然吗？它有固定的地方，它根本没有节奏，没有形，偶然成分极大。比如说我们要这么理解的话，其它里面有些东西我们都有了。还有一些简约派，非常简单的东西在反复，可我听中国的戏曲音乐，不是就有这样一个动机在反复吗？一个动机，一个段落，在反复，反复了以后，下面出现不同的画面，出现这个老生，或者女声，或者花脸，在这个反复的物体，那么还有节奏的变化，复杂的节奏因素，递增递减的原则等等，中国的十番锣鼓里面早就有了递减递增的原则。但这些东西呢，我不是很赞同的，我说现代的东西，很可能就是古代的东西。你转了一圆以后，螺旋的转了一圆以后，其实有些东西是契合的，只是你没发现而已。譬如我们现在不要被别的西方技术完全的蒙住眼睛，这些东西有它的可取之处，但是这些东西的原理，说不定中国的传统音乐里面就有，只是我们有没有发现，这一点。

第二点，不要迷信西方的一些技术，我们自己很好的东西自己还没有挖掘，你还没发现，就去追人家的东西，这是一个很糟糕的事情，我觉得。

第三点，我是觉得当你自己的产品还没做到自给自足的时候，你为什么去生产别人的产品种类呢？这个问题谁都应该想明白。我这个产品生产了以后，我还没满足我自己的需要，为什么我们要写出口的产品，去生产出口的产品呢？问题是你写了这个出口的产品，你出口的概念有多大？是不是能百分之一百的出口呢？又
没办法做到。所以作曲家应该写自己的产品，先满足需要。比如说华乐就很简单，我们每个华乐器都在呼吁，哎呀没有东西可以演奏，技术发展得很快。可我们的作曲家，或者我们学院里培养的学生，他不来关注这一块，我们还去拼命的写那些现在所谓的现代的东西。[其实]我不反对，一点都不反对的。但你最终能达到什么目的呢？最终你很可能就是说那些东西昙花一现，演出过了以后，很快的就丢弃了。所以我一直是这么觉得，一个作曲家的价值在什么地方？不见得你一定写出技术上有多高超的东西。其实他的真正的价值所在，在于他的作品能不能让大家喜欢，能不能得以流传。我觉得这是一个非常重要的因素。哪怕这流传的是一首歌，是一首小歌，它要能流传几十年，或者流传几代，它这首歌的价值，很可能就大过那些一大堆没有流传的大作品，现代作品。没流传的东西，那个就是废纸了。