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Music, Globalization, and the Chinese Self¹

A draft by

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Introduction

In September 2006, I toured China with a group of highly educated and musically sophisticated American businessmen, professionals, and retirees. During the tour, we took a boat ride going upstream The Agricultural Progenitor's Stream (Shennongxi), a tributary of the Yangzi River. There and then, we witnessed boatmen's calls, female tour guides' singing of Chinese ethnic songs and American favorites. Prompted by the tour guides, we also sang, creating American echoes in scenic and tourist China.



Illustration 1. Shennongxi boat ride

I found the boat ride an authentic and inspiring experience of musical globalization, as it raised many questions.² Are the Chinese songs authentic?³ Why do they sing American tunes? Do American songs become Chinese when they are sung by Chinese girls in Chinese land? What is traditional and contemporary in globalized China or America anyway? What is at stake and being negotiated?

As an attempt to understand globalized Chinese music,⁴ this paper posits the following interpretation. Music is a medium with which contemporary Chinese people

negotiate their empirical and imagined Chinese self with the non-Chinese others in this globalized world. Chinese have urgent needs to reconstitute their self because their recent successes in global politics and economy have prompted them to assert China as a global superpower. Thus, Chinese engage in many global discourses, one of which is music, a medium that appeals to people's hearts and minds alike. To render Chinese music an expressive and efficacious discourse of the Chinese self, Chinese music practitioners, namely all who are involved in the production, consumption, interpretations, and negotiations of Chinese music, shape globalized Chinese music with historically and culturally rooted ideologies and practices, which help define and project their subjectivities and imaginations. The remembered past not only guides but also authenticates the Chinese self constructed in the present but for the present and the future.

In other words, as globalized Chinese music embodies particularized Chinese ideologies, practices, biographies, sites, and temporalities, it vividly manifests a multifaceted and multivalent Chinese self, one that blends collective realities and imaginations. It is also a self that alloys a collection of native and foreign elements. Declaring this alloyed self as authentically Chinese, Chinese downplay its heterogeneous nature, disciplining the foreign as something universal, learned, and owned, and highlighting the native as being the fundamental and salient. This self-serving strategy smoothly operates in globalized Chinese music. Rather than denying the foreign origins of some of the elements in their globalized music, Chinese declare that the foreign elements have become Chinese after their being used in China for a substantive length of time and after their being adjusted to cope with Chinese needs and aesthetics. Chinese also assert that the Chinese nature of their globalized music is fundamentally and saliently defined by what the music signifies, not how some of its sounds reference the non-Chinese.

To illustrate this nature of globalized Chinese music and how it subjectively and imaginatively represent the Chinese self, this paper presents nine samples of Chinese music discourses. To theoretically and factually contextualize the discourses, this paper begins with an overview of China's globalized present and past, highlighting their interrelations. Then, the paper briefly analyzes nine music works that represent specific facets of the Chinese self, demonstrating the ways musical features, performance contexts, and cultural-historical ideologies and practices collectively generate negotiations of the Chinese self.

Given that globalized Chinese music can be investigated with different perspectives, I choose to discuss it with the following heuristic definitions. Chinese music is music that is essentially produced for and consumed by Chinese people of the present, expressing and addressing their artistic, ritual, economic, political, and social subjectivities, experiences, and needs. This broad and inclusive definition underscores the diversity and complexity of Chinese music. The word "essentially" implies that some Chinese music practitioners may not consider themselves Chinese. Globalized Chinese music is music that involves not only indigenous elements but also those that have originated from faraway lands, referencing non-Chinese peoples and cultures; despite that the production and consumption of such music transcend the geographical, political, and social boundaries of China, it is embraced as Chinese music by its practitioners.

China's globalized present

There is no secret that Chinese music has been globalizing in Chinese ways. The question to ask is how the global and the Chinese interact, and what results and meanings the interactions have generated. To investigate the phenomenon as merely a result of globalizing forces denies agency for the Chinese people who subjectively and actively construct who they are, manipulate globalizing forces to serve their agendas, and effectively negotiate their self with the others. Globalized China is an alloy of diverse elements which can hardly be meaningfully split from one another, a phenomenon that can be poignantly experienced by visiting China and experiencing her tourism and media.

Many cities in China are in some ways confusingly similar to New York, London, Paris and Tokyo and in some other ways poignantly distinctive.⁵ In Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong, for example, one finds gigantic airports, extensive transportation systems of subways and highways, spacious parks and plazas surrounding governmental office buildings, museums and other civic institutions that showcase national and local treasures and prides, glassy and tall skyscrapers with logos of international corporations or mammoth TV screens announcing current news and advertisements, posh shopping malls and rows of restaurants serving world cuisines. Shuttling among these globalized Chinese locations are people, many of whom are talking at the cell phones held close to their ears, and wearing suits, jeans and other globalized costumes.

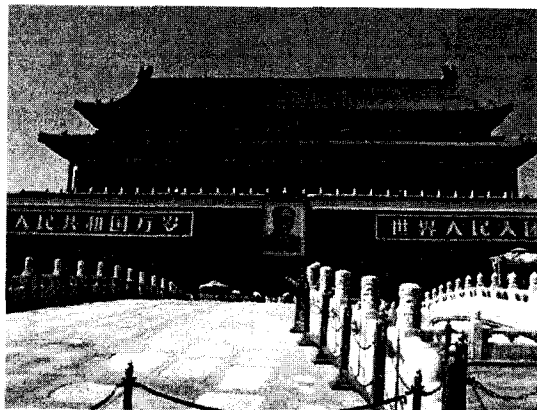


Illustration 2. Tiananmen and Chairman Mao

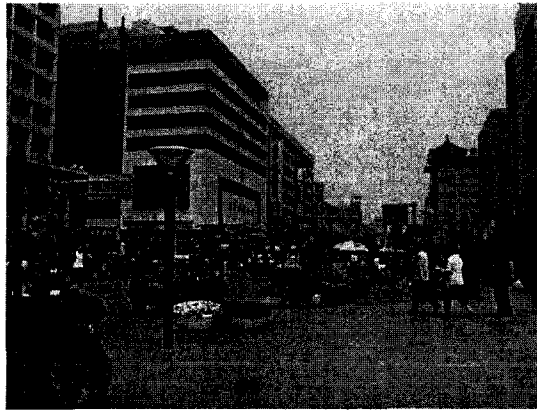


Illustration 3. Wangfujing shopping area, Beijing

If one examines the cities and the people a bit closer, however, one finds many local and distinctive elements, challenging us to ask what is global or Chinese, and whether such analytical splitting of the elements explains what one sees, and what is being imagined and negotiated. In Beijing, for example, one finds the Forbidden City, Chairman Mao's Mausoleum, the *hutong* of old Chinese houses that non-Chinese tourists shuttling in rickshaws gaze at, and the Panjiayuan bazaar of antiques where all kinds of remnants, mostly fake, from historical China can be purchased for meager sums of cash. And just outside Beijing, one finds the Great Wall, the Ming Tombs, the Chinese Minorities Park, and other sites where the global, the local, the old, and the new blend into a new and postmodern China.

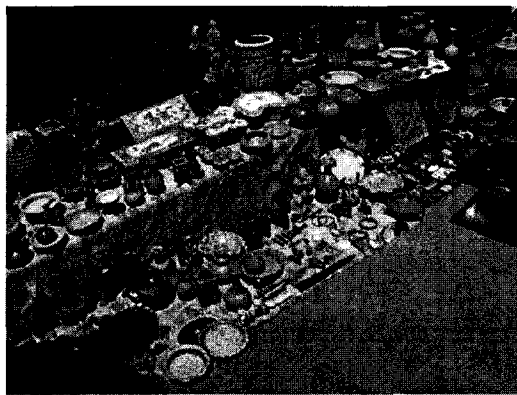


Illustration 4. Panjiayuan antique bazaar, Beijing

In Hong Kong, one finds the tallest (85 feet) outdoor Bronze Buddha in the world sitting on a hilltop in Lantau Island, Disneyland, and rows and rows of skyscrapers in

Central, one of the top five financial districts in the world. Several buildings there are particularly striking. The sharp silhouette of the China Bank designed by I.M. Pei cuts like a dagger, symbolizing perhaps the cutting-edge of the new socialist-capitalist China. The avant-garde HSBC Group building features a ground floor that has no walls, an open space marked by a pair of bronze lions. The building projects proud history of the past and confidence for the future. HSBC Group grew out of the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited, a British financial firm that was first launched in colonial Hong Kong in 1865, but subsequently matured in semi-colonial and early 20th century Shanghai and in internationalized Hong Kong of the mid and late 20th century; currently headquartered in London, the firm has its financial arms spread to all over the world. Many clients doing business with HSBC Group own commercial business and factories in China, which literally stretch along coastal China, from Hong Kong in the south to Shenyang in the north.



Illustration 5. An overview of Hong Kong

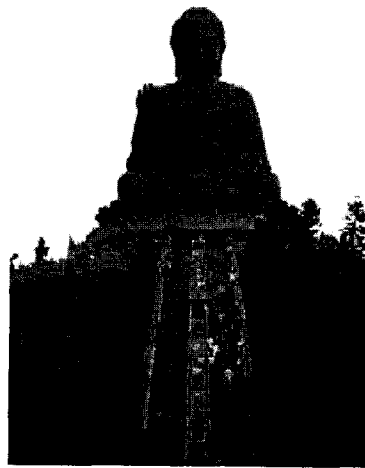


Illustration 6. Bronze Buddha in Lantau Island,

HongKong⁶

It is obvious that globalized China is driven by diverse elements, be they Chinese and non-Chinese memories, realities, subjectivities, and imaginations. How the elements interact can be probed through the example of Chinese tourism. Inside Chinese cities are many hotels built to accommodate national and international travelers. In these homes away from homes that offer all kinds of global and branded luxuries and desires, Chinese and non-Chinese people conduct their out-of-town business, or comfortably enjoy their encounters with China. As much as the hotels reveal foreign investments, technologies, and other global dreams that contemporary China has learned, hotels do not by themselves suppress or invalidate what appears or is believed to be Chinese and local. In fact, hotels provide many launching pads for tourists to journey into Chinese hearts and minds, which cannot be accessed otherwise.

As a matter of fact, it is from hotels, most tourists board tour buses or limousines to visit natural and historical vistas that monumentalize China. Traveling along congested roads, the tourists would sit in their comfortable vehicles, breathe cleansed air, and listen to their guides' introduction to the sites; sometimes they get mini-lectures on Chinese culture and history—some tours guides are highly educated specialists who have joined the tour industries for financial survival. Between the guides' talks, the tourists would rest with soft Chinese music specifically packaged to soothe their bodies and souls. In addition to their sightseeing and exploring activities, tourists would also attend cultural performances. These range from shows of Chinese folk songs and dances, to traditional operas and ensemble music, and to acrobatic stunts accompanied by popular and Westernized music. In short, if globalized Chinese tourism essentializes Chinese people and culture, it also stimulates imaginations about them.

For this reason, one cannot categorically characterize touristic images and messages about China as inauthentic and devoid of Chinese meanings. One should note that many tourist sites in China, especially those built as theme-parks or entertainment centers, are created to satisfy Chinese dreams and desires. The case of Song Cheng (Song City) in Hangzhou provides a fascinating case, demonstrating how the global and the local joined their forces to stimulate memories about a historical time and place in China, which is Lin'an, the capital of the Southern Song China (1127-1279). Hangzhou is where Lin'an once stood. Built as a miniature of the historical city, complete with streets, temples, shops, restaurants and homes, the theme-park sells dreams with a catchy slogan: "*Geiwo yitian, huan ni qiannian.*" Literally it says "Give me one day, and I will return to you a thousand years"—the promise of making huge profits with a minuscule investment underscores the current Chinese gestalt of getting rich quickly and dramatically. In less emotive language, what the slogan claims is: "If you come to visit this theme-park for one day, you will leave with memories of the Southern Song dynasty of a thousand years ago."



Illustration 7. Postsign, Songcheng, Hangzhou

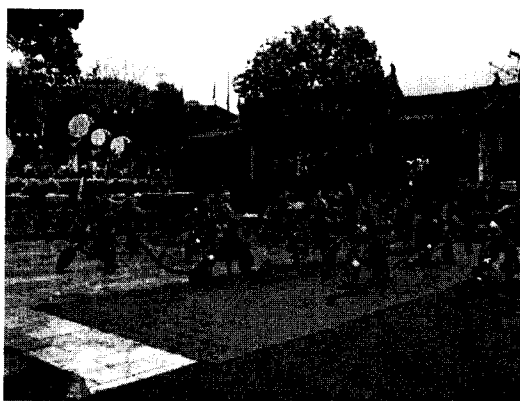


Illustration 8. Drum and ribbon dance, Songcheng

Lin'an of thirteenth century China was a culturally creative and socially dynamic metropolis with a population of over one million. It was where romantic scholar-officials and beautiful courtesans frolicked around its famous and scenic West Lake.⁷ To help Chinese people get in touch with such a romantic past of the Southern Song—one that Chinese operas glamorizes, the Song Cheng was launched in 1995; needless to say, the theme-park was also launched to promote tourism in Hangzhou,⁸ and to make money for the investors. In addition to manufacturing “Southern Song” objects and sights, the theme-park programs many daily activities and musical shows, such as the escorting of dignitaries with drum and wind processional music, and drumming by energetic young men at the city gate. Featuring catchy melodies and dynamic rhythms, the music is created to help visitors experience the exotic past of Southern Song China. Jaded world travelers will probably find nothing artistic and significant in these manufactured sights

and sounds. Some would not hesitate to criticize them as bastardized sounds of global tourism. Nevertheless, one should remember that Chinese music practitioners choose mix facts with fiction to make dreams. Their choice, needless to say, reflects not only their intellectual and emotional beings, but also the practical realities in their daily lives.

The merging of realities and dreams in globalized China is propelled and reflected by her media. Like their Western counterparts, Chinese TV, radio stations and music corporations trace consumers needs, design fashions for them to follow, and produce and sell the products that they desire. The music products thus marketed significantly overlap with what the consumers experience in tourist vistas, theme-parks and entertainment centers. Listening to the commercially packaged music, consumers can relive the pleasures they have experienced in the tourist sites or through movies and TV shows. As Chinese consumers purchase music of their desire, they support a rapidly expanding market of music cds, vcds, and dvds. In major Chinese cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, there are multi-storied music shops that sell all kinds of music products. These include, for example, Chinese and western musical instruments, manuals on how to compose and perform all kinds of Chinese and Western music genres and styles, books on music histories and biographies, and so forth. The variety of choices available attests to the fact that the Chinese consumers have some agency in making music the way they do: many make the music to specifically negotiate who they are or hope to become.

What makes globalized Chinese music media a critical channel of music discourses is the fact that it arguably provides the only officially sanctioned public and available stage for Chinese to musically negotiate among themselves and with their national and international other. China has relatively few public music performance venues, and most live performances are programmed as events in large-scale cultural festivals that the Chinese government controls. China does not have philanthropic and civic foundations that sponsor regular and affordable concerts for the general public. Few Chinese universities have music departments and established concert programs that are open to the general public. Large-scale and commercial concerts of popular music have recently become an accepted practice in China; such concerts are, however, still occasional and expensive events that most Chinese consumers can hardly afford. Many genres of popular music, especially those that involve musically creative and politically bold performers, can only be heard in small cafes or bars.

Such government controlled media, nevertheless, did not stop Chinese music practitioners from effectively projecting and negotiating their memories and imaginations. For the first time in Chinese music history, Chinese people can freely and strategically choose and engage with a variety of historical and contemporary genres of Chinese music.⁹ Visiting different music stores in China or global websites, consumers can, for example, purchase bell-chime music associated with the ancient Warring States (475B.C.E.-221 B.C.E.); *pipa* (four-stringed lute) music notated in thousand years old manuscripts that were once archived in the Dunhuang caves and are now held by museums outside China; lyrical *ci* songs written by Jiang Kui (1155-1221), a thirteenth century Chinese musical genius; virtuosic *qin* music that Zhu Quan (1378-1448), a Ming prince, has collected and published in his anthology of 1425; flowing melodies of Kun

arias that Wei Liangfu (1522-1572), a medical doctor, first developed in Taicang in Jiangsu Province; festive ensemble music of gongs, drums, and flutes that flourished in 17th and 18th century Jiangnan; masterpieces of Peking operas that Mei Lanfan (1894-1961) created in the early decades of the 20th century; ‘timeless’ ethnic musics heard in contemporary Yunnan and other ethnic enclaves/autonomous regions; and avant-garde concert music composed by Chinese composers trained in the US and in Europe. The list can go on and on.

This diversity is significant, and its representation of Chinese memories and imaginations cannot be underestimated. As different genres of historical and contemporary Chinese music flourish in particular contexts, they embody particularized Chinese times, places, aesthetics, peoples and events. Thus, when Chinese audiences individually, collectively, selectively, or sequentially consume these different expressions of Chinese music, they are finding different musical roots and platforms to construct and negotiate their Chinese self. In a sense, globalized media has allowed Chinese to musically exercise their individual agency and to better construct and communicate who they are and want to become. Chinese people know how to deal with hegemonic forces, a wisdom that is encapsulated by their saying that if the authorities have controlling policies, the mass have their counteracting strategies (*shang you zhengce, xia you duiche*).

This does not mean globalized Chinese media do not blur differences and create new homogeneities, the cultural, political, and artistic ramifications of which can be controversial. One among many of such homogeneities is a contemporary and popular sonic texture that can be found in many genres of globalized Chinese musics, popular, ethnic, or elite. It generally features melodies played by some Chinese string or wind instruments to the rhythmic, harmonic, and contrapuntal accompaniments played by *pipa*, the dulcimer (*yangyin*), the expanded moon-guitar (*ruan*), cello or other bass instruments. The harmonic appoggios, short counterpoints, and deep bass lines of the texture are very distinctive, and evocative of Western concert music of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe.

Music example 1. An aria from the Peony Pavilion, the Young Lovers’ Edition

Historical sources and recordings render it clear that such a sonic texture has only become a homogenized and homogenizing standard since the 1960s. Needless to say, its musical and cultural merits can be debated. Rather than analyzing how the texture is Western or Chinese, global or local, artistically empowering or suffocating, it is perhaps more constructive to investigate how the texture embodies Chinese ideologies, practices, experiences, and desires.

To do so, one needs to review the development of contemporary Chinese instrumental music since at least the 1950s, a complex story that vividly tells how Chinese manipulate the global and the Chinese to musically negotiate their Chinese self.¹⁰ The sonic texture being discussed comes out of Chinese instrumental music that is flexibly labeled *minyue* (commoners’ music), Chinese instrumental music (*zhongguo qiyue*), or Chinese music (*minzu yinyue*). Played with mostly Chinese musical

instruments, such as *erhu*, *pipa*, *guzheng*, and *yangqin*, and featuring melodies and rhythms that evoke traditional China, contemporary Chinese instrumental music is sonically quite distinct from Western and other world musics. This does not mean that it includes no non-Chinese and global elements. As a matter of fact, the music is essentially a result of the extensive and drastic music reforms that the socialist Chinese government launched since it took control of the Chinese nation and culture in 1949. Vigorously implemented between the 1950s and the early mid 1980s, the music reforms were propelled by both international and national forces, political, cultural, and musical.

Imperial China collapsed in 1911, after being invaded by Western gun power and scientific and technological might since the 1830s,¹¹ and downgraded into a backward and semi-colonial nation and culture. To revive and modernize China, China imported all kinds of Western ideologies and practices, including those of music. In fact, many leading early twentieth century Chinese intellectuals and officials, such as Xiao Youmei (1884-1940), openly argued that traditional Chinese music was backward, and that musical China could only be modernized by emulating the West.¹² To materialize their musical vision, the modernized music intellectuals and officials adopted not only western music language of tonal harmonies and orchestral textures, but also promoted Western music in the newly established schools and conservatories.

Before musical China became totally westernized, however, China became a socialist nation-state that asserted her own independence and identity. To project her musical independence and self, socialist China promote commoners' musics at the expense of elite and westernized genres. This is to say that since 1949, all genres of traditional Chinese musics produced and consumed by Chinese commoners, ranging from folksongs to narrative singing to operas, were nominally "liberated" and performed as musical expressions of the new China.

This musical liberation was significant, because it politically and nominally removed the social and cultural stigma associated with Chinese commoner musicians and their music. In imperial China, commoner musicians enjoyed little social prestige; they mostly operated as music entertainers and music servants, and their music was delegated as vernacular, if not vulgar and undesirable, games and hobbies. Historically speaking, Chinese played a lot of musical instruments in ritual, processional, dramatic, and leisure contexts, but they hardly performed concerts of instrumental music—only the elite could afford to play their *qin* and *pipa* in their private studios for dedicated listeners.

To totally liberate Chinese commoners' music and to render it a proud expression of the new China, it has to be transformed. Music of the new China cannot sonically remind its audiences of the "feudalistic" and "backward" China. In musical terms, this demands a new type of sounds that is both Western and Chinese. The new sounds should, on one hand, favorably compete with Western music, the international standard, and on the other hand, sonically projects China as distinctive and independent. Traditional genres, especially the operatic and narrative ones, and their heterophonic textures may sound distinctively Chinese, but they cannot serve the modern and westernized needs of socialist China. They do not have powerful harmonies and sophisticated counterpoints.

And they have Chinese lyrics which are only intelligible to Chinese. In this context, contemporary Chinese instrumental music, and the sonic texture of melodies, counterpoints, harmonies and rhythms played by Chinese musical instruments rapidly emerges.

It is a development that has significantly benefited from westernized music education in new China. Even though a number of commoner music masters were invited as professors to teach traditional genres and music practices in the newly established conservatories and music academies, the westernized institutions were staffed by many musicians and administrators who grew up in republic China and admired Western instrumental and concert music as a “universal language” that is not limited by national linguistics or regional dialects. Thus, out of the conservatories, creative and imaginative contemporary Chinese instrumental music arises. That it has arrived is vividly confirmed by the institution of professional Chinese musical orchestras; since the mid 1970s, all Chinese cities have their own Chinese orchestras,¹³ just as Berlin, London, New York, and Paris have their philharmonic enterprises.

As demand for Chinese instrumental music increases, and as the potentials to make money with the music presents themselves since the late 1980s, new forms of teaching, learning, and marketing have emerged, all of which combine to homogenize Chinese instrumental music directly and indirectly. Thus, many individual master instrumentalists have set up commercial studios to teach private students. With the advance of vcds and dvds, enterprising teachers have compiled and produced printed and electronic tutors for students to learn at home and on their own, transmitting Chinese instrumental compositions and performance techniques wide and far.¹⁴ Some teachers and their educational institutions have in the last five or six years begun to promote “distant learning,” that is teaching and learning via TV programs and internet. Such electronic outreach programs, needless to say, not only affirm the diversifying and homogenizing forces of the Chinese media, but also reveal the cultural and social dimensions in globalized Chinese music.

In fact, the development of contemporary Chinese instrumental music and its typical sonic texture would not be so successful if they are not supported by all kinds of music practitioners. Realizing the charm of music, their cultural and social meanings, and potentials for making profits or social climbing, many Chinese parents make their children learn to play musical instruments. The parents’ top choices of musical instrument always involve piano,¹⁵ violin, *guzheng*, *erhu*, and *pipa*, the most popular western and Chinese musical instruments in China. It is significant that the piano and violin figure prominently in this cultural and social discourse; it underscores the hegemonic position of Western/westernized music in China. Anyway, growing up with years and years of music lessons, many become dedicated audiences, if not skilled amateurs. Some even go on to conservatories to try to become professional musicians. Many would give up their dreams before or after their graduation, learning new trades.

If such trades or the necessity of finding new means of livelihood trades prompt them to emigrate out China, they bring their globalized Chinese instrumental music to

their new homes in North America, Australia, and Europe. As a result, throughout the globalized world, wherever there are Chinese people, there is Chinese music, which often means contemporary Chinese instrumental music, whether it is played on the piano or on the *guzheng*. And in many overseas Chinese communities, there are always a number of professional or semi-professional Chinese music ensembles perpetuating and spreading their arts and Chinese self privately or publicly. Many collaborate with local and non-Chinese artists, creating music that fuses diverse genres ranging from blues to concertos, and from jazz and to world music. Through the efforts of the overseas Chinese musicians, many non-Chinese audiences have become exposed to Chinese music, traditional, contemporary, or fusion. When their understandings of such sounds are confirmed by their visits to China or viewing of Chinese hit movies, such as Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragons*, they learn to imagine China through the instrumental sounds that they have experienced.

The interactions of global and local elements and the operation of Chinese agency in contemporary Chinese instrumental music constitute an unique discourse of the Chinese self. It is nevertheless not an isolated negotiation; related discourses can be found with other genres of Chinese music, the compositions of which include many examples of the sonic texture being discussed here. To illustrate, the genres of Chinese concert music, Chinese *tongsu yinyue*, and Chinese minority music can be briefly discussed here.

Chinese concert music, namely music that Chinese composers create with the language of Western or international concert, holds a particularly valorized niche in Chinese musical imaginations of the Chinese self and the Western other. To appeal to both Chinese but non-Chinese audiences, Chinese concert music closely emulates Western concert music—many Chinese artists perform the two genres interchangeably.

To engage with this discourse, Chinese conservatories devote a lot of energies and resources to train generations of Chinese pianists, violinists, singers, conductors, and composers who can musically compete with their Western counterparts. In return, whenever these Chinese musicians achieve international successes, they certify China's musical prowess. This is why when Chinese performers won international competitions, they make national history, and why the winners are national heroes. Li Yundi, who won the grand prize of the International Frederick Chopin Piano Competition in 2000, is, for example, a shining star among such heroes. Chinese admiration of musical heroes extends to overseas Chinese. To cite but a few, these include Chinese or Chinese-American composers like Tan Dun, Bright Sheng, Chen Yi, and Zhou Long who have had musical training in China before their immigration to the West and earning international fame there; their individual glories are collectively claimed by Chinese people. And their individualized and westernized musical styles become models for those struggling to achieve international fame.

Another unique music discourse of Chinese realities and desires can be found in Chinese *tongsu yinyue*,¹⁶ a particularly type of popular music that the Chinese government and government controlled media have engineered and promoted, one that

highlights localized expressions and competitions among Chinese people. When China opened her doors in the early 1980s, Hong Kong and Taiwanese popular music promptly flooded Mainland China. With new sounds and styles, which have significantly emulated Western and Japanese popular musics, the music of peripheral China captivated Mainland Chinese audiences by satisfying their needs for musical expression. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), one should remember, Chinese music audience listened to only revolutionary songs and operas, music that rigidly followed official guidelines. Socialist China of the early 1980s had no popular music in the western and current sense of the term.

To counteract the “invasion” of Chinese musical imports, Mainland China promptly developed a new controlled version of popular music. Subsequently known as *tongsuyinyue*, it features sounds more stylistically varied and innovative than what mainland Chinese audience knew in the recent past. To fight for audiences, it actually incorporates musical elements from the West, the Westernized Asia of Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, and from other exotic lands and peoples. To serve its political and social goals, however, the music has to make stylistic and compositional compromises. As a result, while *tongsu yinyue* has successfully appealed to a large number of Chinese music consumers, it does not satisfy the musical needs of the young and adventurous. It also does not tempt those who have studied in the West and have returned to China to make their fortunes. They would prefer actual imports from the West; some would also engage with more challenging and more hybridized genres of Chinese popular music, such as *yaogun yinyue*, a genre that mixes American rock n roll practices with Chinese aesthetics.

The young and challenging genres have already critically impacted musical China, and in particular they have encouraged Chinese minority musicians to sing their own tunes. Nominally, socialist China embraces her minority peoples as equals, but gives them, in reality, only controlled rooms for self-expression and representation. Until recent years, when Chinese ethnic music is heard outside its own homeland and inside Mainland China, it is often adjusted and packaged with Han aesthetics and practices. With China being globalized, and becoming politically and culturally more and more open, government control has loosened. And as tourism opens exotic and ethnic Chinas to the world, and as national policies and traffic stimulates dialogues, Chinese ethnic minorities begin to sing more openly, mixing the global and the local in their own ways, and negotiating their Chinese and ethnic self.

China's globalized past

Collectively, contemporary Chinese instrumental music, Chinese concert music, Chinese *tongsu yinyue*, Chinese minority music, and other traditional as well as new genres evidence a very complex Chinese musical present, and a very distinctive mixing of the global, the local, the new, and the old. What drives such a phenomenon involves the Chinese practitioners' human rights to acquire for themselves the empirical or

imagined identities and lives that they covort. Thus, whenever that self is factually or psychologically threatened, the efforts to preserve and to adjust the treasured self promptly emerge. As successful as Chinese are today, they feel “threatened.” They have many painful and shameful memories from recent and semi-colonial past, and they know that the others are watching and competing.¹⁷ They have to construct a new Chinese self that allow them to establish themselves and to successfully complete with the other.

Such a construction and renewal need guidance and authentication, and Chinese look everywhere for models and lessons. Oftentimes they look back to China’s past insights: they know that, in broad terms, their ancestors have experienced and successfully addressed what they are experiencing nowadays. A multitude of people, ideas, and objects have moved across diverse temporalities, great distances, contrasting cultures and rivaling social units in historical China, generating tensions and negotiations, producing particularized needs and results, and satisfying and crushing particularized desires and dreams. Empirically speaking, historical Chinese regularly and actively engaged with peoples and cultures stretched across the Eurasian continent, and along its long coast line. Needless to say, the speed and scale of the negotiations and transformations were slower and limited, when comparing to what is happening in the 21st century world. The negotiations and transformations were, however, global in many senses of the term.

As Chinese examine their history trying to learn from their ancestors, they found perspicacious lessons that demonstrate how a tenacious and powerful Chinese self can be constructed in particularized place and time, and how change and continuities can be authenticated and justified to advance Chinese causes and interests. Many of these lessons, it should be noted, involves music. To review these lessons, their ideologies and practices can be summarized and discussed in general and musical terms.

Chinese believe that their self is tenacious and well-defined because it is richly and empirically supported. Chinese have written and preserved a sea of documents about their past, projecting an official and continuous history of a people who have produced a distinctive civilization. Complementing this history are many unofficial but cherished oral histories and personal memories. And confirming such histories and memories are many historical sites and monuments, among which the Chinese live their daily lives, and upon which numerous expressions of the Chinese self have been inscribed. In other words, Chinese are constantly reminded of their Chinese self by their material and non-material environment. And they see themselves in such a context.

Chinese always know who they are because they know their family genealogies. They respectfully worship their dead ancestors, filially serve those who are alive, and tenderly nourish their children. This does not, however, mean that the Chinese self is largely a matter of DNAs. In addition to biological and racial matters, the Chinese self has always been constructed along religious, cultural, ethnic, and social fissures. Many Chinese believe they are Chinese because they practice Confucian, Daoist, or other ideologies and practices that are distinctively associated with the Chinese culture and

people. Chinese know that they always live in a geographical or intellectual home called China.

Such firm beliefs in the Chinese self are, however, very much a response to the other. If China proper is geographically defined as the land marked by natural boundaries, such as the China Sea, the Gobi Desert, the Himalayan Mountains, and if Chinese people is understood as Han Chinese, China is surrounded by a diversity of non-Han peoples living in lands along the Chinese border. Throughout Chinese history, Han Chinese have been threatened by these non-Han peoples. In fact, it is because of such geographical, historical, and ethnic realities that Han Chinese have stamped on their cultural minds the evaluative dichotomies of the Chinese (*hua*) versus the non-Chinese (*yi*),¹⁸ the inner (*zhong*) versus the outer (*wai*), and the civilized (*ya*) versus the vulgar (*su*). Given their constant interactions, especially those cross-ethnic and cross cultural marriages, the grey areas between the polarities are, nevertheless substantive and change as needed. There are always questions whether a person can be racially a non-Han but culturally a Han. And given the fact that Han Chinese have for the most part negotiated from a dominant position, they subjectively believe that they are strong enough to absorb and sincize anything that they take from the non-Han and non-Chinese. This is why Chinese declare that whatever enters China, it eventually transforms or is transformed into something Chinese.

Such rhetorics work for the Chinese, because their temporalities can flexibly expand or shrink, and their past and present are often deliberately and strategically intermingled. When documenting the past as events that happened, Chinese meticulously trace its beginnings to primordial times, and minutely mark its long process as a continuous series of dynasties, individual reigns, and chronological years when influential individuals performed significant acts, or expressed seminal idea. As a contrast, when Chinese engage with the past as what it means to them personally, the chronological age of the past hardly matters. The past becomes something that is vividly remembered and close at hand, and the differences between the past and the present can be easily dissolved. An artistic expression of such Chinese sense of time is their operas, which often tell historical stories with anachronistic aesthetics, costumes, practices, and other details. Another testimonial is the fact that Chinese have collected an abundance of antiques which they display for themselves and for the other. Indeed, with the help of antiques and archeological finds, Chinese can always claim that they can reconstruct the lost and forgotten past, no matter how chronologically old it is and how little its physical presence has been preserved. Given their respect for the meritorious ancestors, and given their survival instinct to forget the painful past, Chinese have no problem remembering the past fondly. This is why throughout Chinese history, Chinese have often attempted to return to the glorious past, emulating the ancient ancestors' institutions and expressions. The *fugu* (return to the past) literary movement of Han Yu (768-824) and other Tang and Song authors, is, for example, not an isolated phenomenon. It echoes many court efforts to emulate/reconstruct perfect music of ancient sage-kings; one particularly grand example of these efforts is the Music of Great Brilliance of Huizong of the Northern Song.¹⁹

Being informed and pragmatic, however, Chinese know that they cannot literally and comprehensively reconstruct the past; thus they strategically focus on reconstructing its essence or spirit. This ideology and practice is philosophically and empirically grounded. The world manifests itself as a myriad of peoples, institutions, and animated and unanimated objects; they are constantly changing, but they do not render the world a chaos; beneath the constant changes are unchanging principles, namely the Dao or the Way, which explains everything. *Yijing*, or *The Classics of Change*, eloquently explains and demonstrates such changes and principles with its constantly mutating trigrams and hexagrams.

Listening to their musical ancestors, Chinese music practitioners find many musical implementations of the above ideologies and practices. They understand that music helps distinguish the self from the other: similar and different sounds embody different peoples and cultures from different lands. It is an understanding that guides Chinese to classify their music according to lands and the people who live there. The *Classic of Poetry (Shijing)*, for examples, classifies the folksongs registered in its pages according to the fifteen nations from where they originated. Chinese music history has many labels of musical genres that identify peoples and lands. These include for example, Songs from the Wu area, Songs from the Western land, and the Xu school of *qin* music in the Zhejiang area (Xumen zhecao).

Organizing their musical memories, Chinese chronicle the origins, developments, and repertoires of their music. Thus they describe the *Shao* and *Wu* of the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1066 BCE-771 BCE), the Chamber Music (Fangzhongyue) of the Han (206 BCE-220CE), and so forth. To evaluate the music they have experienced, however, Chinese ask whether the historicized genres of music are *ya* (civilized and civilizing) or not.²⁰ All music that cultivate people's virtues and promote their social harmony are civilized music, a more or less monopoly of the elite Chinese. Hardly any music of the commoners, regardless of whether they are Han or no, were accepted as civilized; they could only become civilized when they had been disciplined by the Chinese elite. Lamenting the corrupted and confused states of music in their own times and places, Chinese musical elite in historical China often called for a return to ancient music by emulating perfect compositions of the sages and their harmonious societies, and by using authentic musical instruments of the past.

Chinese musicians can always reconnect with past musics because they emphasize fundamental and salient features that have been preserved through the ages, or that can be reconstructed in the present. Zhang Zai (1020-1077) of Northern Song China,²¹ for example, argued that people should not try to find ancient music through only technical details, such as measurements of pitch standards and tuning; they should also understand and reconstruct the musical pasts through the fundamentals of why and how ancient people make music to serve their personal and social needs like they do. With such a personal and pragmatic view of musics past and present, Chinese can connect the musical past and present with a minimum of verifiable evidence. In the 1840s, Xie Yuanhuai, for example, reconstructed Song dynasty *ci* melodies with the

understanding that their singing practices directly developed from those of Tang and Song times.

Such a broad view also allows Chinese to claim all kinds of music their own, and especially those that had foreign origins or were inspired by external forces. They know that over time, musical differences can become blurred, and musical associations of people and cultures can shift. Supporting this view are many well-documented and well-known cases in Chinese music history. These include, for example: Zhang Qian's (195BCE-114 BCE) introduction of drum and wind music from central Asia into China, a tradition which subsequently took root in China and blossomed among Chinese commoners; Cao Zhi's (192-232) creation of Chinese chanting for Indian and Buddhist sutras, sounds that eventually permeated religious China; central Asian musicians' importation of the *quxiang pipa* (pipa with bent neck) and musical modes into Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-907) China, which transformed Chinese music model theories; the localization and sincization of ethnic entertainment music in the Tang court; the rise of stylistically robust northern aria in Yuan China (1271-1368) that the Mongolians and northern Chinese ruled; the performances of non-Han ethnic musics in early sixteenth century Ming court; Emperor Kangxi's (reigned 1661-1722) embracing of European culture and music. The list can go on and on, registering how the Chinese have embraced and appropriated music with foreign origins and elements.

The critical thread in the Chinese embracing of different music is their ability to selectively and imaginatively remember and forget complex musical exchanges in the past so that they can meaningfully construct a musical self in the present. Realizing the dynamics of change and non-change, and the permanent truth of the Dao, Chinese adopts a music aesthetics that handsomely serves their subjectivities and realities. Rather than conceptualizing music as objects, Chinese theorize and practice music as a discourse. Music, as a genuine expression from and communication between human hearts, should serve as a means of self-cultivation and governance. This is why Confucius asks: Oh music, music, does it mean only the striking of drums and gongs?

In other words, as long as music expresses the participants' hearts and serves their agendas, the music is theirs. Musical elements incorporated from outside China do not shatter the Chinese self, as long as they have been embraced and sincized. Because Chinese have to constantly interact with the non-Chinese, they cannot stop non-Chinese elements from seeping into their music, and they can never purge foreign impurities. And they also embrace "foreign music," if it is the universal language that they need to speak to survive.

In the 1910s and 1920s, Mei Lanfang (1894-1961), the legendary Peking Opera performer and cultural diplomat, transformed the genre as he adjusted his performances for his American, Japanese and Russian audiences.²² To communicate the Chinese self to his foreign audiences, a self that was constructed in one of the most difficult, if not shameful, time in Chinese history, Mei boldly learned from the West. To ask what is Chinese and what is Western or what is authentic and inauthentic in his Peking opera trivializes his Herculean efforts. One should ask what he was negotiating, and how he

constructed the Chinese self of his time through his operas. He declared that he had merely moved the steps of Peking Opera; he had not altered its shape (*yibu bu huanxing*).

Musical Discourses of the Chinese Self

Following Mei Langfan, many Chinese music practitioners, especially those in socialist China, have boldly transformed Chinese music as a medium to negotiate the Chinese self that they imagine for themselves and for the other. Remembering selected Chinese pasts, implementing native ideologies and practices, and sinicizing foreign and global elements, they have produced many musical works that represent a multi-faceted Chinese self, an alloy of diverse elements. Nine examples of such works and nine facets of the Chinese self that they represent can be discussed here—for the convenience of discussion, each musical work will be discussed with one facet of the Chinese self; in reality, a Chinese musical work can simultaneously project one or more facets. The facets discussed are: the historical and spectacular, the civilized and expressive, the religious and social, the populist and regional, the imperial and orderly, the modern and international, the gendered and sensuous, the exotic and ethnic, and the young and lovable.²³

In October 2005, I attended a concert at the Tropical Museum in Amsterdam, one event in a month-long celebration of Chinese culture in Holland. The star of the concert was a replica of the ancient, gigantic, and world-renowned Marquis Yi bell-chimes,²⁴ which was specifically transported to Holland for the occasion. The piece that drew my attention in the performance was the “Plum Blossom (Meihua sannong),” a favorite composition for the *qin*, the Chinese seven-string zither. As performed in the Dutch museum, the piece was a global and schizophrenic mix of musical elements, temporalities, sites, aesthetics, and agents; it simplifies the exquisite and complex *qin* composition into a short and hummable tune played on a modern Chinese zither (*guzheng*) accompanied by the bell-chimes and other Chinese musical instruments. The zitherist wore a costume that evoked images of princes or noblemen acting on Chinese operatic stages. The deep sounds of the big bells echoed in the large and domed hall, generating sonic confrontations between ancient and modern Chinese pitches, and between Chinese musical instruments and European edifice.

Some cultural critics would chastise the performance as tourist, inauthentic, and fractured. Given the global interest in the bell-chimes as an ancient musical instrument and given contemporary Chinese musicians’ efforts to incorporate its distinctive sounds in their compositions and performances, it would be more meaningful to interpret the special rendition of the “Plum Blossom” in Amsterdam as a musical and globalized discourse of the historical and spectacular Chinese self. The physical being of the sixty-five bells, and the technologies that minted them in ancient times and replicated them in the present constitute a statement of Chinese historicity and technology, one that few can refute. The musicians’ anachronistic use of young tunes on ancient musical instruments or their replicas is rooted in the Chinese ideology and practices of returning to the past. The

Amsterdam performance was no accident but a deliberate and international negotiation of what is historically and spectacularly Chinese.

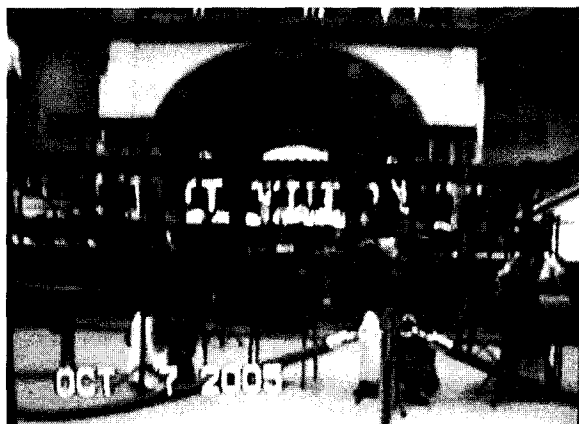


Illustration 9. A performance of bell-chime music
At the Tropical Museum, Amsterdam

Music example 2. The “Plum Blossom,” performed with bell-chimes, zithers, and other Chinese musical instruments.

As the “Plum Blossom” echoed in the Tropical Museum, it reminded me of many other performances and recordings of the piece, and of the scholarship about the genre. As documented in traditional China and discussed nowadays, *qin* music is the music par excellence of the traditional Chinese elite, namely scholar-officials, land owners, and socially privileged artists.²⁵ To illustrate how *qin* music evokes the civilized and expressive Chinese self, one only needs to listen to the “Plum Blossom” in its musical and historical contexts. Allegedly, the piece was first composed by Heng Yi, an elite who lived in the late fourth century, as flute music; then it was rearranged into a *qin* composition. By 1425, Zhu Quan, a Ming prince, declared it as a classic from thirteen century China, and had its music notated and explained.²⁶ Since then, the piece appears in many *qin* handbooks, attesting to the vibrancy and continuity of the *qin* tradition, and the civilized and expressive Chinese elite it projects. This evocation is sonically anchored: as demonstrated by the “Plum Blossom,” *qin* music features nuanced pitches, subtle rhythms, elaborate melodies, complex and developing structures.

If one takes *qin* music as merely music of traditional Chinese elite, however, one misses its contemporary and globalized timbres. Although it is still performed in the private homes of many *qin* connoisseurs and amateur players, many of whom are highly educated, socially privileged, and internationally connected, *qin* music is more often performed in concert halls and with metal-strings wrapped in silk—the traditional silk strings, which easily go out of tune, cannot produce sounds that can reach audiences

sitting in the back of large auditoriums. And to appeal to the globalized audiences who listen to recorded *qin* music to seek temporary relief from their fast and mundane lives, many long *qin* compositions have been abridged and condensed, and their unexpected tonal dissonances and “white noises” produced by the performers’ fingernails scraping silk strings have been sanitized. If so, what do sanitized versions of “Plum Blossom” negotiate? The civilized and expressive Chinese self of the 20th and 21st centuries is an answer that debates about the music obviously suggest.



Illustration 10 . An elite *qin* party; an excerpt from Du Jin’s (active ca. 1465-1509) “Eighteen Scholars.”

Music example 3. Li Xiangting plays the “Plum Blossom” on the *qin*.²⁷

In April and May of 2007, I visited Singapore, trying to learn something about multi-cultural and multi-ethnic music in that former British colony, which is now a center of global finance and electronic technology. The hybrid sounds or avant-garde sonorities that I experienced there were impressive, but none overwhelmed me as the traditional chanting in Thian Hock Keng (the Temple of Heavenly Bliss). Through the sounds, I experienced the religious and social Chinese self. May 9 was the birthday of Mazu, the Chinese Goddess of Sea worshipped by numerous Chinese, especially those who live along coastal China, and those who have immigrated to Southeast Asia and North America. One performance among the chanting particularly contrasted with the hybrid sounds I heard in Singapore. Accompanied by the minimalist accompaniment of a tinkling bell and a wooden-fish (*muyu*), the rhythmic and monotonous chant of repentance by the monk and his congregation had no easily identifiable traces of globalization or hybridity.

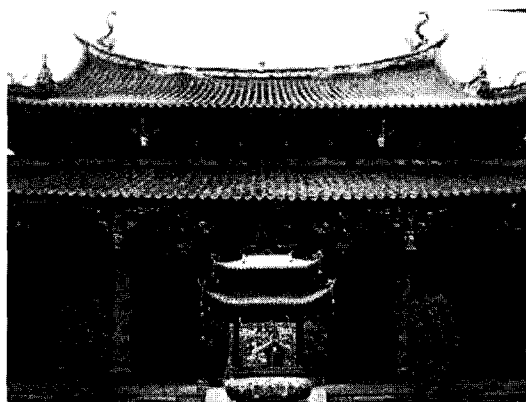


Illustration 11. Thian Hock Keng Temple in Singapore

Music example 4. Chanting in Thian Hock Keng Temple, May 9, 2007

Nevertheless, a brief conversation with the temple secretary promptly confirmed that a global and highly intricate network operated behind the “timeless” Chinese chant. As I learned, the 2007 celebrations at the Thian Hock Keng Temple represented a renewed practice of hiring local Singaporean Buddhist and Daoist monks to perform the required rituals and chants. For the last decade, clergymen from Mainland China, were hired. The local monks are, however, not without Chinese connections. They constantly communicate with their colleagues in Meizhou Island in Fujian Province, China, the hometown of the goddess, who once lived there as a woman named Lin Mo. Many Chinese Singaporeans shuttle between China and Singapore, demonstrating the ways overseas Chinese negotiate their Chinese self with the rest of the world, influencing national and international politics.²⁸ The administration of the Thian Hock Keng, one should note, represents a local institution which has significant financial and civil holdings in Singapore, and which works with the Singaporean government to generate a Singaporean identity.²⁹ The Thian Hock Keng chants beg the question what drives the Chinese Singaporean monk and congregation to chant the way they did. One obvious answer is that they want to and can afford to sing as Chinese as they can imagine, an observation that many writings on Chinese religion, overseas Chinese, Chinese politics, and identities confirm.³⁰ When they sing in that way, they not only transport themselves to a religious and social China that they desire, but also connect themselves to all Mazu worshippers living inside and outside China.

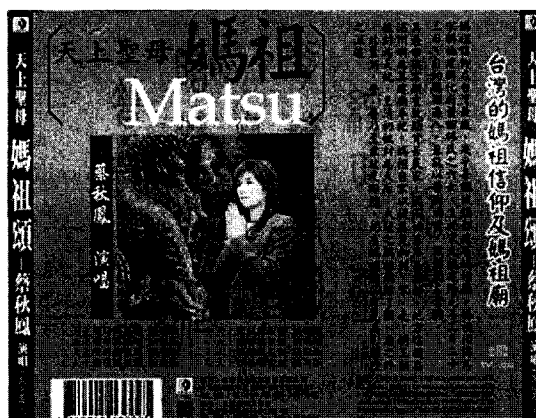


Illustration 12. Cai Qiufeng prays to Mazu

Music example 5. Cai Qiufeng sings “Praise to Mazu.”

Many of these Mazu worshippers have ancestral roots in Fujian, and they are proud to present themselves as Fujianese or Hokkien people, a cultural and social identity that attests to the populist and regional in the Chinese self. A musical representation of this globalized regional self is the “Praise to Mazu” (“Mazu song),” a recording of which I purchased in Singapore. It features a Chinese female vocalist singing a religious text in the Taiwanese/Hokkien dialect—the melody closely match the linguistic tones of the lyrics—and to the accompaniment of Chinese woodblock, gong, synthesizers and other globalized musical instruments. Listen to the music, one asks what kind of Chinese would consume such a populist and religious song in Singapore. They are apparently Chinese or Chinese Singaporean with Hokkien heritage who live in Singapore or any contemporary and globalized Chinese city. They honor Mazu with traditional and sacred chanting in her temple, but they can also engage with the goddess in private sites with modern and secular music. As the music store devoted to Chinese Buddhist and Daoist music that I shopped in Singapore attests, the boundary between their sacred and secular worlds is penetrable. They do not see why they should not communicate with their goddess in their daily dialect and in popular styles—a practice that generations and generations of religious Chinese have perfected, and demonstrated with their musical and religious documents.³¹ This is particularly the case, if populist and regional praises to Mazu can generate financial profits: the singer and the producer did not cut the recording of the “Praise to Mazu” in Taiwan for nothing—the island is a center of Mazu worship and worshippers.³²

Shopping music in China and Hong Kong in the last couple of years, I have found quite a number of reissues of the “East is Red,” a de facto sonic symbol of Chairman Mao, and of the imperial and orderly Chinese self. The song was originally composed in 1943 by a farmer in Yan’an but was subsequently transformed into a revolutionary statement. As the theme song of a political and multi-media spectacle of the early 1960s, the song was regularly and prevailingly performed all over China during the Cultural Revolution

(1966 to 1976).³³ The song was also broadcasted to the world by the first Chinese satellite, when it orbited around the earth (April 24 to May 14, 1970).

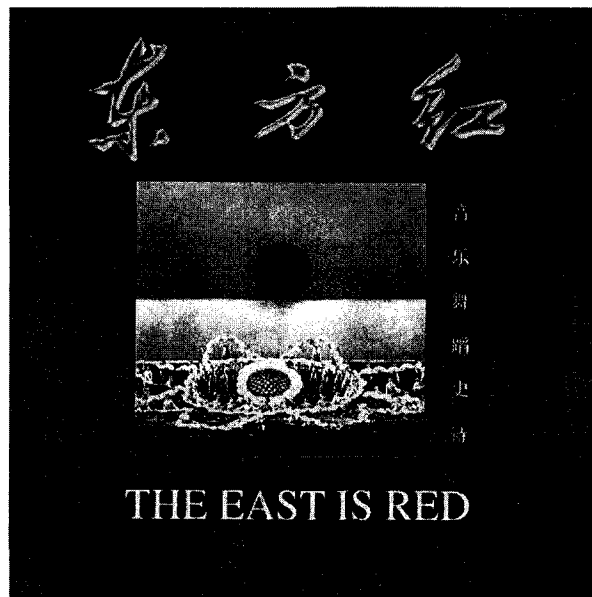


Illustration 13. VCD jacket for "The East is Red"

Music example 6. The "East is Red."

Featuring a folksy melody and a Chinese lyric, and often performed with vocal solos and choruses with orchestral accompaniment of Chinese and Western musical instruments, the song is an anthem of contemporary China. Chinese of the 1960s and 70s sang "East is Red" as a political statement. 21st century Chinese, who are now more concerned about making money than doing politics, engage with the song for more intellectual and cultural reasons. They are probably nostalgic of a recent past, a time when they survived great tragedies and misfortunes, and a time when China appeared to be united and orderly. Like their ancestors, they remember spectacles—in imperial China, founders of new dynasties always had grand spectacles performed to celebrate unification and new order.

Current studies of Chinese politics and collective psychology have suggested that Chinese crave the imperial and orderly Chinese self,³⁴ when they face difficult present and uncertain future. At such times, historically and culturally rooted ideologies and practices would powerfully prompt them to imagine that a new and great leader would emerge, bring order to their world, and teach them how to compete with the West. When Chinese consumers listen to the "East is Red" they hear echoes of the imperial and orderly Chinese self, do they not? Despite signs of great economic progress and material gains, contemporary China is plagued with social, environmental, and political problems.

This is why as Chinese indulge themselves with grand echoes, they remind themselves to act modern and internationalized, a representation of such a Chinese self vividly emerges with Tan Dun's *Symphony 1997*. A contemporary and unconventional work commissioned by the Chinese government to celebrate Hong Kong's return to China in 1997, the symphony features a variety of sounds that reference diverse peoples, cultures, sites, and temporalities. The symphony includes, for example, ancient sounds played on the original set of the Marquis Yi bell-chimes, echoes of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, field recording of a street performance of a classical Cantonese opera, innocent voices of Hong Kong children, and mesmerizing cello solos performed by Yo-yo Ma. And with the Western orchestra sounds providing a grid for all the mixed timbres, the symphony projects Chinese and universal dreams about heaven, earth, mankind, and the human spirit. Like the multi-media spectacle of "The East is Red," Tan Dun's *Symphony 1997* is a political statement and imagination that the Chinese government penned with the hands of an international star composer, one whose global preeminence is attested by his Oscar Award. To represent the modern and international Chinese self, and to reach international audiences, especially the Western elite, what would be more appropriate than a globalized symphony? The symphony generated more Western reviews than Chinese ones.³⁵

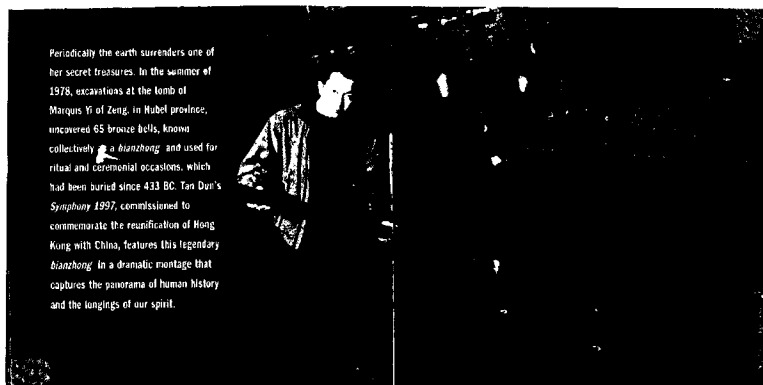


Illustration 14. Tan Dun, Bell-chimes, and a statement³⁶

Music example 7. Excerpts from Tan Dun's *Symphony 1997*.

How the average Chinese commoners would respond to the *Symphony 1997* is not a long-term issue for the Chinese government.³⁷ That they probably prefer more pleasurable sounds is attested by the international success of the Twelve Girls Music Band, and their projection of the gendered and sensuous Chinese self. Featuring beautiful and virtuosic young Chinese women musicians playing a mixture of Chinese and Western tunes with Chinese musical instruments in a style that can only be described as global and popular, the band, which was launched in Beijing in 2001 and then marketed worldwide with Japanese help, has attracted many Chinese and non-Chinese audiences inside and outside China.³⁸ It has also attracted a lot of criticism among Chinese audiences and critics, just as gendered and vernacular Chinese music did in traditional and Confucian China. Many critics find the girls' blend of Chinese, Western

and world musics, as demonstrated by their performance of the “Liu sanjie(Sister Three of the Liu Family)”tune, superficial; and many would object to their sexist marketing of Chinese music. The moral underpinning of many criticism of the band is a Confucian ideology and practice: music should be used to cultivate virtues, not corrupt people’s aspirations and topple nations with sexy women performing vulgar sounds.



Illustration 15. The Twelve Girls Band

Music example 8. “Sister Three of the Liu Family,” played by the Twelve Girls Band.

To refute such criticisms, supporters of the band and their music argue that Chinese people had a long tradition of men hiring women to entertain their male eyes and ears. That the Twelve Girls Band continues such an entertainment tradition and satisfies the desires of not only Chinese but also global men is precisely why they are successful. In short, the music of the Twelve Girls Band encapsulates the politics that the engendered and sensuous Chinese self generates. One can hardly deny that sexuality and profit are involved in the Twelve Girls Band phenomenon. One can neither deny that the phenomenon reflects women actions in 21st century China—they are taking the initiatives to better their feminine lives. Professionally trained and amazingly virtuosic, members of the Twelve Girls Band have vigorously competed for opportunities to play in the band, which bring them fame and riches. In socialist China where men and women are nominally equal, men, and especially older men, have managed to dominate their society and control most of the riches. Young, smart, and talented women realize that to advance their own interests, they have to act womanly and globally.³⁹ They know that if they can charm non-Chinese men, they can promptly demand respect at home. They know that the gendered and sensuous Chinese self inscribed on their bodies and sonically projected by their music is controversial but marketable.

When Wang Huiran (born 1936) composed, in 1960, “Yi People’s Dance Music” (“*Yizu wuqu*”), a classical composition of contemporary Chinese instrumental music, he probably did not anticipate anything controversial; he just musically projected the exotic and ethnic Chinese self as he knew it then, and as the use of *pipa* would elicit. Featuring melodic motives evocative of Yi people’s folk songs, traditional *pipa* performance techniques, and an European ABA structure, the *pipa* masterpiece now evokes different responses from contemporary and globalized audiences.⁴⁰ When Han Chinese listen to the piece among fellow Han people, it confirms a cultural and historical image that they have internalized, namely the non-Han minorities are indeed skilled in their singing and excellent with their dances (*nengge shanwu*). It also confirms that Han Chinese have perfected the *pipa* and its music by blending the imported *quxiang pipa* with a native Chinese plucked instrument. When “Yi People’s Dance Music” is played among non-Han or ethnically sensitized audiences, however, it might provoke political and emotional debates of representation, ownership, and authenticity—as demonstrated by global discussions about Tibet, Chinese governmental treatment of non-Han minorities is a now international concern.



Illustration 16 . Yi people dancing at the Torch Festival, August 6, 2007⁴¹

Music example 9. “Yizu wuqu” performed by He Shuying.

When Wang composed his *pipa* piece, he lived in a world that hardly discussed ethnic unease in China. Like his contemporaries, he probably wanted to musically project the Chinese self that is young and lovable. Who among Chinese wants to see himself or herself as old and ugly? This projection and negotiation of the Chinese self as young and lovable, I would argue, is a driving force behind the current and international success of Kenneth Pai’s production of the *Peony Pavilion, the Young Lovers’ Edition*, an observation that the Chinese media reports.⁴² Classic Kun music/theatre and the *Peony Pavilion*, the masterpiece of Chinese literature and drama that Tang Xianzu authored in 1598 make no unknown topic in international debates of Chinese culture and politics—in

2001, the UNESCO proclaimed Kunqu as a masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.⁴³ Between 1998 and now, three of four large scale presentations of the romantic story have attracted international attention; these include the international productions by Peter Sellers, Chen Shizheng, and Kenneth Pai.

Peter Seller's international production is a theatrical mix of traditional Chinese and Western avant- garde aesthetics, music, and performance practices. In addition to traditional Kunqu aria and acting, the production features Tan Dun's multi-cultural and fusion music. Chen's production for the Lincoln Center was billed as a back to the "authentic" enterprise, but it caused a minor international crisis. Attacking the production as a serious misrepresentation of Chinese culture, the Chinese government blocked the actors' travel to perform in America by impounding their stage set and costumes. When it was finally performed at the Lincoln Center in 1999, its production could no longer be viewed as a Chinese-American artist's effort to return to the theatrical past of late Ming China. It has become a mirror of individual and international struggles over Chinese culture and its representation. The Chinese government and many Chinese and non-Chinese audience definitely did not like the vulgar and bawdy Chinese self reflected in Chen's mirror. To counteract such an offense, the government ordered the Shanghai Kunqu company to launch a new production, one that produces a more traditional and flattering image of the Chinese. Beautiful as it is, it has not attracted international attention, as it was performed only inside China and in Hong Kong.



Illustration 17. A publicity photo of *Peony Pavilion, the Young Lovers' Edition*⁴⁴

Music example 1. An aria from the *Peony Pavillion, the Young Lovers' Edition*

Then Kenneth Pai's edition emerged in 2004 in Taiwan. Exercising his artistic sensitivity and literary skill as an internationally known author, relying on his experiences of teaching Chinese language and culture to college students in America and Taiwan, Pai has condensed the long story of fifty-five scenes into an expressive drama of twenty-five scenes. Identifying two young and talented performers to play the male and female protagonists of the romance, and having them trained by the best Kunqu teachers, Pai has the drama performed by a cast who are young and lovable as the characters they portray on stage. Having raised a great amount of public and private money, Pai can afford to hire the best stage designers, technicians, and musicians to produce an opera that is as artistically sophisticated and technologically advanced as any theatrical production in the first world. The result is an international hit: wherever and whenever Pai's *Peony Pavilion* is performed, it creates positive feelings about Chinese people and culture. Dissonant criticisms are not unheard, but they can hardly challenge the young and lovable Chinese self that appeals to both Chinese and non-Chinese audiences. Pai's production has been embraced by the Chinese public and by the Chinese government.

Concluding Remarks for the Future

How long those positive feelings and artistic impact will last is for the future to tell. For the time being, Pai's success echoes many achievements that many young and lovable Chinese persons have performed on the global stage. To cite but a few, one can register those of Ang Lee, the movie director; Lang Lang, the pianist; Tan Dun, the composer; Wei Wei, the popular singer; Yao Ming, the NBA player; and Zhang Ziyi, the movie star. Pai's success is also something that many other Chinese artists will want to emulate and duplicate. Singularly and collectively, these artists and their creative works demonstrate that the Chinese self that Chinese people negotiate with the global other is multi-faceted and fluid. It is a response to the reality that Chinese now live in a globalized world where peoples, cultures, and commodities rapidly crisscross among diverse sites and temporalities, blurring boundaries and identities, and generating critical competitions and productive collaborations.

To navigate their living in such a globalized world, Chinese people project and negotiate their Chinese self, imagined and empirical, with all kinds of discourses, and music constitutes a particularly effective and fundamental one. Being temporal and malleable, music can be creatively and effectively adjusted to the Chinese self that is being constructed and negotiated. Realizing such a nature of music, and having constant interactions with the non-Chinese other from lands close by or far away, Chinese people have developed specific ideologies and practices to justify the ways they musically discourse. Chinese music, they would argue, sonically expresses their Chinese self, even if the sounds include elements that are not native and still reference the non-Chinese. To their ears, the foreign elements have been sincized, a fact that only attests to the creativity with which they imagine and construct the Chinese self of the 21st century

¹ This essay is developed for the Macalester International Roundtable of 2007 at the Macalester College, Saint Paul, Minnesota. Thanks to the invitation to participate in the intellectual celebration, I have taken the opportunity to organize my thoughts on Chinese music, Chinese music history, and globalization—I am particularly interested in the interactions among Chinese music history, sinology, ethnomusicology, Western music history, and world history. The result is a rather large project, which I summarize here. To focus on discussing the broad issues of globalized Chinese music and the Chinese self with the roundtable audience, I will gloss over many historical and cultural details, which I will describe in detail in a future monograph entitled “Chinese Music and Its Global Discourses.” I will also keep footnote entries and materials to a minimum here.

² My thoughts about globalization have benefited from the writings of many authors, and discussions with many friends and colleagues. The following works have, however, provided a theoretical anchor: Arjun Appadurai ed., *Globalization* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001); Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Frederic Jameson and Masao Miyoshi ed., *The Cultures of Globalization* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998); and Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake ed., *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imagary* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996).

³ Many ethnomusicologists have asked similar and related questions about world music, music identities, and styles in their writings. These include, for example: Peter Manuel, *Popular Musics of the Non-Western World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Jocelyne Guilbault, “Interpreting World Music: A Challenge in Theory and Practice,” *Popular Music* 16/1 (1997), 31-44; Martin Stokes, “Voices and Places: History, Repetition and the Musical Imagination,” the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 3 /4 (1997), 673-91; Timothy D. Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Veit Erlmann, “How Beautiful Is Small: Music, Globalization and the Aesthetics of the Local,” *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 30 (1998), 12-21; Derek B. Scott, “Orientalism and Musical Style,” *The Musical Quarterly* 82/2 (1998), 309-35; Ingrid Monson, “Riffs, Repetitions, and Theories of Globalization,” *Ethnomusicology* 43/1 (1999), 31-65; Patria Roman-Velazquez, “The Embodiment of Salsa: Musicians, Instruments, and the Performance of a Latin Style and Identity,” *Popular Music* 18/1 (1999), 115-31; Helmi Javiluoma, “From Manchuria to the Tradition Village: On the Construction of Place via Pelimanni Music,” *Popular Music* 19/1 (2000), 101-24; Tony Mitchell ed., *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-hop outside the USA* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001); and Jonathan H. Shannon, “Sultans of Spin: Syrian Sacred Music on the World Stage,” *American Anthropologist* 105/2 (2003), 266-77.

⁴ There is a substantive literature on Chinese popular culture and globalization. Works that have stimulated my thoughts include, for example, the following: Joseph B. Tamney and Linda Hsueh-Ling Chiang, *Modernization, Globalization and Confucianism in*

Chinese Societies (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002); Xudong Zhang, "On Some Motifs in the Chinese "Cultural Fever" of the Late 1980s: Social Change, Ideology, and Theory," *Social Text* 39 (1994), 129-56; Liu Kang, "Popular Culture and the Culture of the Masses in Contemporary China," *Boundary*, 24/3 (1997), 99-122; Sean Metzger, "Ice Queens, Rice Queens, and Intercultural Investments in Zhang Yimou's *Turandot*," *Asian Theatre Journal* 20/2 (2003), 209-17; John V. Langdale, "East Asian Broadcasting Industries: Global, Regional, and National Perspectives," *Economic Geography* 73/3 (1997), 305-21.

⁵ This description of Chinese cities and tourism is based on my travels to China in the last five years. A wealth of information about the historical and cultural vistas mentioned here can be accessed by googling the proper names and Chinese tourism.

⁶ The picture of the buddha is taken from <http://www.celestial-china.com/blog/2006/12/25/hong-kong-lantau-island-po-lin-monastery>.

⁷ For an introduction to famous historical figures of Hangzhou, see Sun Yue 孫躍, *Hangzhou di mingren* 杭州的名人 (Celebrities of historical Hangzhou) (Hangzhou: Hangzhou chubanse, 2003).

⁸ For a brief survey on Hangzhou tourism, see <http://www.asia-planet.net/china/hangzhou.htm>. For a video-clip on the music activities in Song Cheng, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvAGk-TXKYQ>.

⁹ I will supply a comprehensive discography of these recordings in future publications. Basic information on the music genres and Chinese music personalities is available in standard works on Chinese music and music history, such as Robert c. Provine, Yoshihiko Tokumaru, and J. Lawrence Witzleben eds., *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, vol.