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Interpretation and expressive imagery in The Butterfly Lovers violin concerto on double bass: transcribed by Yung-Chiao Wei

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INTERPRETATION AND EXPRESSIVE IMAGERY
IN
THE BUTTERFLY LOVERS VIOLIN CONCERTO
ON
DOUBLE BASS: TRANSCRIBED BY YUNG-CHIAO WEI

A Monograph

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

In
The School of Music

by
Min-Tzu Chao
B.M., Taipei National University of the Arts, Taiwan, 2002
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May, 2011

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research paper is to show the interpretation of the Chinese piece—*The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto—through expressing imagery. The concerto is composed by Chen Gang (陳鋼) and He Zhan-hao (何占豪) in 1959. In 2004, Yung-Chiao Wei, a double bass professor at Louisiana State University transcribed the piece for double bass. It is a very useful repertoire for double bass players to experience Chinese music through the plot's expressing imagery. The Chinese musical language is different from Western music language in the concept of pentatonic scale, tone color, and tempo. I believe that double bass players can effectively execute Chinese music through the transcription. This research paper is divided into seven chapters. The Chapter One commences with background information about *The Butterfly Lovers*. As a legend, the story remains as a landmark significance in Chinese culture. Knowledge of the tragedy and the composers' backgrounds life experiences are valuable for refining the interpretation. Finally, this chapter examines the compositional background information of the concerto. Before focusing on the performance practice, Chapter Two will provide readers with background information on the transcribed work. A brief introduction of the Chinese musical aesthetics will be mentioned in Chapter Three. The chapter will then go on to reveal the relationship between the tragic story and the music. From the background information of the composition, the concerto is allied with the traditional instrument, the *erhu*, on its timbre, special vibrato and unique sliding sonorities. In Chapter Five, I will give a brief introduction of the Chinese instrument, the *erhu*, and then point out the techniques that relate to the double bass playing. Chapters Six and Seven, focus on transcription issues, performance awareness, and the performing interpretation on the double bass. The intent from the result of this study will eventually benefit bassists and facilitate progress in performing interpretation with this transcription.

INTRODUCTION

As literature indicates, unlike the violin or cello, only a small amount of the original or transcribed solo double bass works existed before 1950 due to the instrument's intrinsic physical considerations and perceived limitations. For this reason, some argue that the double bass is basically a standard member of the string section in a symphony orchestra and not a solo instrument. Because of the lack of significant major compositions by master composers, the compositions and transcriptions written by bassists or transcribed from other instrumentalists in recent years have had a particularly important role in developing the double bass as a solo instrument. Double bass technique has been greatly developed since the 1950s¹, and the art of double bass playing is expanding due to the multitude of newly commissioned or transcribed works, which enrich the double bass repertoire tremendously. According to Slatford, Gary Karr composed and commissioned more than 30 concertos, and Bertram Turetzky, a former UCSD professor, has commissioned over 200 works. Turetzky has even developed his own particular style of playing with extensive use of pizzicato and non-traditional bow techniques.² As a result, by embracing all repertoires, bassists since the second half of the twentieth century are no longer considered fundamentally orchestral performers. Hence, double bass players have been able to present their depths of artistic expression and various styles.

Professor Yung-Chiao Wei reminds me countless times about the importance of being creative and to always search for a variety of tone colors in order to express the true meaning of

¹ Rodney Slatford, "Double Bass: Repertory and Performers," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online.
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/46437>
(accessed March 20, 2011).

² Ibid.

the music one is playing. In 2004 Professor Wei, at Louisiana State University School of Music, premiered a virtuoso piece that she transcribed from a Chinese concerto named *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*, based on a tragic Chinese story. Inspired by Professor Wei's phenomenal performance, I decided to choose this transcription for double bass of *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto* for my research topic. Because there are many aspects of the piece that I can elaborate based on Chinese music to discuss apart from western classical music and bass playing techniques.

This transcription that Professor Wei revised, *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto* composed by He Zhan-hao and Chen Gang in 1960, is based from the solo violin and piano version arranged by Guan, Sheng-you. It gives double bass players an opportunity to introduce the Western audience to a new attractive color through the specific timbre of the Chinese cultural music. Being a bassist and well-practiced student for almost 18 years, I am proud to add this famous concerto to my repertoire. Professor Wei is the first bassist in the world to perform and record this fine concerto on the double bass. The New York Concert Review of Professor Wei's Carnegie Hall solo recital debut of her phenomenal playing said:

Bass players with great technique and supreme artistry are non-existent. Well, there are a few exceptions: the legendary Gary Karr, of course, Eugene Levinson of the New York Philharmonic, and now Yung-Chiao Wei, a young, multi-talented female bassist from Taiwan.³

The audiences were impressed with her expressive interpretation when she performed the concerto for the International Society of Bassists and the 2010 double bass convention in Berlin. She made the huge bass look like a violin and sound like the traditional Chinese instrument *erhu*.

This violin concerto is replete with operatic structure and dramatic effects as well as traditional Chinese instrument characters such as *pipa*, *gu-zheng*, and *erhu*. As discussed in

³ School of Music, "Yung-Chiao Wei," Louisiana State University, <http://music.lsu.edu/Faculty/faculty.asp?i=437> (accessed March 20, 2011).

Chapter Five, this concerto is most influenced by *erhu*, which is a two-stringed bowed instrument without a fingerboard that can create both specific and desired pitches as well as sliding effects. Referring to *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*, it is constructed by special vibrato (the traditional *erhu* vibrato) and with sliding sounds—*huayin* 滑音—which is the main idiosyncrasy of Chinese music.

Huayin is the fundamental feature of Chinese music that is decorative (the decoration of principle notes) and usually imitates human emotions, the song of everyday life, and the nature of the cosmos. Grasping the feeling, nuance, timing, and depth of *huayin* it is difficult to teach and to adopt. Stylistic utilization of *huayin* will reflect a musician's inner artistic expression. Understanding the history of aesthetic aspects greatly helps in precisely interpreting this style.

Edward Ho's article, "Aesthetic Considerations in Understanding Chinese Literati Musical Behaviour," deals with the concepts of *qiyun* and *yijing*. Also, in Ming-yue Liang's book, *Music of the Billion: An Introduction to Chinese Musical Culture*, states that the music is mostly related to *xin*, the heart's mind. "Music is to please the heart mind (spirit) rather than the ear (auditory sense)."⁴ These are the concepts for bringing music to a higher level and transcending the physical difficulties of performance. I have also used the work by Ming-hui Lin, titled *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu"* to analyze the piece's imagery, structure, tonality, and melodies. This book is the result of a research paper in which he provided a very detailed examination of the piece. He based his conclusions on his personal experiences, interviews, and collections of resources about the myth. These resources such as articles, magazines, audio recordings, and performance notes are from

⁴ Ming-yue Liang, *Music of the Billion: An Introduction to Chinese Musical Culture*, (New York: Heinrichshofen edition, 1985), 171.

China and Hong Kong. The book establishes the legendary story behind *The Butterfly Lovers* in philosophic history, literature, folk opera, movie, and violin solo performance. This information supports understanding of the concerto and its place in Chinese culture. Through the discussion of the Chinese traditional instrument, *erhu*, one can become more knowledgeable about how *huayin* techniques are employed in performance, as well as how closely it is associated with the left hand technique in double bass playing.

Ultimately, due to unique human characteristics, each performer may encounter difficulties and tension when facing a variety of highly technical passages. To reach the higher level of performance noted above, an enhanced understanding of the body and how to best use and care for it is critical to the performance. This learning process is slow with regard to musical context, but entails a new way of facing interpretation. With focused attention, bassists can steadily improve their ability to avoid muscle-related troubles such as tension, stress, pain, stiffness, head-neck body muscle, or tendonitis of the fingers, hands, wrists, neck, jaw, shoulders, and back.

Professor Wei provides a detailed technical approach to the performance of this concerto with an emphasis on breathing, inner power, proper coordination, and use of body weight. Maintaining endurance throughout the entire concerto does not simply happen through learned technical processes such as breaking the difficult passages into sequences, while at the same time, reducing complex figurations of their basic elements. It also requires combining these processes with both the breathing, and the body itself. This more holistic approach to learning a piece of music allows technical processes to ultimately flow more naturally and easily.

In the end, this is a great piece to introduce Western audiences to Chinese music. It allows them to experience its unique character and cultural timbre through a Western instrument,

the double bass. I also hope that the valuable perspective Chinese music offers through its aesthetics, expressive imagery, and the aforementioned usage of *huayin*, either on the double bass or *erhu*, will inspire more Eastern and Western musicians with profound learning experiences. Moreover, every bass player can benefit from being touched by this tragic but beautiful legendary story through performing this unique transcription of He and Chen's violin concerto.

CHAPTER ONE: *THE BUTTERFLY LOVERS*

This chapter introduces the story of *The Butterfly Lovers* and the composers of the violin concerto based on this story. The composers of the concerto tried to use Chinese folk music and operas to make Western instruments appeal to the Chinese people. The first section describes the story and its plot, and the second section explains how the composers come to create this concerto.

Overview of *The Butterfly Lovers*

The Butterfly Lovers is a Chinese legend and romantic love story about two lovers, Liang Shan-bo (梁山伯) and Zhu Ying-tai (祝英台). The narrative is formally titled *Liang Shan-bo and Zhu Ying-tai* (梁山伯與祝英台), but more commonly known in English as *The Butterfly Lovers*. It is also commonly referred to by the lovers' last names, *Liang-Zhu*, in Chinese. To Western audience, *The Butterfly Lovers* is regarded as the Chinese *Romeo and Juliet*. The story of *Liang-Zhu* has been arranged into many different artistic forms: mainly music, and also into theater, opera, film, television drama, and animation. *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto was composed by Chen Gang (陳剛) and He Zhan-hao (何占豪) in 1959. The concerto was considered significant with its refined usage of Chinese folklore to music and opened a new opportunity for the Western audience to appreciate the Eastern music.⁵

The Butterfly Lovers violin concerto has represented the contemporary symphonic style of China and has been popular ever since. In recent decades, it has been broadly performed in

⁵ Samuel Applebaum and Henry Roth, "Lim Kek Tjiang," *The Way They Play 2*, (Neptune City, N. J.: Paganini Publications, Inc., 1973), 27.

China and in countries and districts such as Canada, England, France, Germany, Japan, Mongolia, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, the United States, and Vietnam.⁶ Numerous performances and large numbers of recordings are testimony to its popularity.⁷ Also, the concerto has received many awards including the Golden Gramophone Record Award in several successive years, the Platinum Gramophone Record Award, and the Gold Violin Crystal Gramophone Record Award. The concerto has also been transcribed for other Chinese instruments, including the *erhu*, *gaohu*, *pipa*, *guzheng*, *liuqin*, and guitar.

The Plot

During the Jin Dynasty, women were not allowed to study in a school, however a teenage girl, Zhu Ying-tai, went to Hangzhou, a southeastern city in China to pursue an education. By disguising herself in a man's costume, she entered a school, where she met Liang Shan-bo. They became best friends, but Ying-tai had never revealed her true identity. After three years of study, it was time for Ying-tai to return home. By then, Ying-tai had already developed her admiration for Shan-bo, but could not tell him her true feeling. She then asked Shan-bo if he would be willing to take her sister as a wife, which was a customary practice for close friends who are two well-educated gentlemen (considered as Confucius disciples). This was in order to establish a

⁶ “Autobiography of Hui Composer Chen Gang,” *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Musicians’ Biographies* 4, ed. Tingge Wei, trans. Elaine Chew, (Shenyang, China: Spring Wind Cultural Press, 1994): 535-543, http://www-bcf.usc.edu/~echew/projects/ChineseMusic/composers/chen_gang.html (accessed March 10, 2011).

⁷ Chan-Fai Cheung. “Western Love, Chinese *Qing*: A Philosophical Interpretation of the Idea of Love in *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Butterfly Lovers*,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 26, no. 4 (Hawaii, Honolulu: International East-West University Press, December 1999), 473.

closer bond by marrying each other's family member. Not knowing that Ying-tai had no younger sister, Shan-bo willingly accepted her invitation to visit her in her hometown.

A year later, when Shan-bo arrived at Ying-tai's house, he was surprised yet happy to know that the younger sister that Ying-tai promised was in fact Ying-tai herself. However, the parents of Ying-tai tried to separate them by forcing her to marry a wealthy man, Ma Wen-cai, and asking Shan-bo to depart. After Shan-bo returned to Hangzhou he fell ill from a broken-heart and died shortly after.

On her wedding day, Ying-tai received the news of Shan-bo's passing away, and she rushed to his grave. At the grave, she cried with great sorrow, and the heaven was so moved that the rain poured and earth trembled. The grave was cracked open by the tremble, and she jumped into the grave to be united with Shan-bo. Miraculously, they were transformed into butterflies and flew to freedom, united forever.

As mentioned above, this story is similar to the Western romantic love story of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Hong Xin, a contemporary Chinese scholar, compared the content of the two love stories and found out that there are many similarities between them. He states: "1) the hero and heroine met accidentally and fell in love of their own free will; 2) there were hidden conflicts and crises in their love; 3) someone came along and helped them in the realization of their love; 4) the lovers were crushed and destroyed by a 'reactionary' force; and 5) their lives ended tragically."⁸ Therefore, through the resembling relationship between *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Butterfly Lovers*, the spirit of their love remains immortal everywhere in the world through generations. Many centuries passed by, the stories have inspired young people to pursue their own romantic love. Due to the condition in the Chinese feudal era, young people

⁸ Chan-Fai Cheung, "Western Love, Chinese *Qing*: A Philosophical Interpretation of the Idea of Love in *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Butterfly Lovers*," 472.

did not have the right to marry for love. Their parents arranged most of the marriages. For Ying-tai, her desire to pursue her love for Shan-bo was so strong that she could not live without him.

The Biography of Composers: He Zhan-hao and Chen Gang

The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto was composed in 1959 by He Zhan-hao and Chen Gang while they were still students at the Shanghai Conservatory School of Music. The concerto's success was derived from both composers' skillful use of combining musical material from the West and the East with their background and life experiences.

He Zhan-hao: The Background and Life Experiences

He Zhan-hao is a world-renowned composer, a professor at the Shanghai Conservatory School of Music, and the Vice-President of the China Musicians Association in Shanghai. He was born in 1933, a native of Zhuji (諸暨縣) in Zhejiang (浙江省) Province, in the easternmost part of China. Zhuji is about 80 km directly south of Hangzhou, where the story of *The Butterfly Lovers* took place. In his early years, he was influenced by the music of his hometown. In 1950, he joined the Zhuji Provincial Cultural Troupe and worked in the troupe and studied the *erhu* and tried to be an actor, as well. In 1952, he became involved with *yueju* opera⁹ (越劇 also called *Shao-xing* opera 紹興劇) as an accompanist. During that time, he also began learning the violin. While an accompanist in the *yueju* opera, he had the opportunity to perform *Liang Shan-bo and Zhu Ying-tai* and was impressed by its elegant melody and dramatically emotional singing style.

⁹ *Yueju* Opera is the most popular folk opera in Shanghai and Zhejiang. It morphed from its traditional all-male form into an all-female actress including those who performed male characters. The melody, in general is elegant and exquisite through varied tone colors and operatic singing.

He was accepted by the Shanghai Conservatory School of Music as a violin student in 1957. During his study there, he and several classmates formed an experimental group to discuss technique and compositions for the violin in the traditional Chinese style. *The Butterfly Lovers* emerged as a creative product of those efforts. After graduating in 1960, he transferred to the composition department in order to study under Ding Shan De (丁善德). Inspired by the mastering of foreign techniques and familiarity with traditional Chinese music, his motto of composing—nationalization of foreign formality, and modernization of traditional folk music—has been adapted for his entire composition life.

He has many important compositions containing the string quartet *Martyr's Diary* (烈士日記), the symphonic poem *Longhua Pagoda* (龍華塔),¹⁰ and a number of *erhu* works transcribed for the violin, including the most famous *The reflection of Moon on the Er-quan Spring* (二泉映月 *Er-quan Ying Yu*). Some of his selections of orchestral works were recorded and published by a recording company in China and Hong Kong EMI.

Chen Gang¹¹: The Background and Life Experiences

Chen was born into a musical family in 1935. His father Chen Ge-xin (陳歌辛) was a well-known composer in Shanghai. He started playing the piano when he was ten years old with a Hungarian teacher named Walla. At 14, Chen discovered his talent for composition and published his first attempt in a year. At that time, he realized he had never studied harmony, so in 1955, he went to the Shanghai Conservatory School of Music to be a composition student under Ding Shan De (丁善德), taking harmony lessons and music theory with other professors. In

¹⁰ Naxos.com, “He Zhan-hao,” http://www.naxos.com/person/Zhanhao_He/24412.htm (accessed: February 23, 2011).

¹¹ “Autobiography of Hui composer Chen Gan,” trans. by Elaine Chew.

1957, Chen Gang and He Zhan-hao, classmates of the orchestration class, composed *Liang-Zhu* and modernized the folk music with a joint force. In 1960, after graduation, Chen taught harmony in the composition department at the Shanghai Conservatory. Since 1964, Chen has mainly taught composition. During 1973~75 (the final years of cultural revolution 1966~1976), he composed several pieces for violin and piano, such as: *The Sun Shines on Tashkent* (陽光照耀著塔什庫爾干), *The Golden Glowing Furnace* (金色的爐台), *The Dawn in the Miao Mountains* (苗岭的早晨), *I Love Our (Fatherland's) Taiwan* (我愛祖國的台灣), and *The Drum and Song* (鼓與歌), etc. Chen was really thankful of surviving from difficult circumstances. It was music that brought ambition and consolation to him to help him endure those times, which in turn inspired him to compose music continually.

Chen Gang is currently on composition faculty at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and the artistic director of the Shanghai Chamber Music Ensemble. He has been elected twice as the president of the Chinese Musicians Society. His output includes works for solo instruments, concertos written for Western and Eastern instruments, and symphonic poems.

The Compositional Background of *The Butterfly Lovers*

He Zhan-hao and Chen Gang composed *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto in their twenties. Their joint assignment was to compose Chinese music using Western instruments in order to celebrate Tenth National day under the new communist party in 1959. The concerto was composed over six months of collaboration.

Sheila Melvin and Jin-dong Cai interviewed He Zhan-hao at his home in Shanghai in January of 2000, which is featured in the book, *Rhapsody in Red: How Western Classical Music became Chinese*. Zhan-hao mentioned that he wanted to "nationalize" the violin by playing

traditional Chinese opera with violin, so that ordinary Chinese people would enjoy this Western instrument. Besides studying Western techniques in school, he exposed himself more to local folk songs and operas. With support from his advisor, Ding Shan-de (丁善德), he and his classmates made some experimental pieces and played to people in various places like villages and factories. Below is an excerpt from the book. All the quotes coming from the interview were on the background of *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*.

Chen Gang and He Zhan-hao finally completed *The Butterfly Lovers* in 1959. The music they composed was unique in the way the violin uses the singing technique of *yueju* opera, which involves much *portamento* and a different form of vibrato. They also adapted many other instrumental techniques from Chinese instruments and applied them to violin.

Originally, they changed the ending of the story, when the two star-crossed lovers die and then turn into butterflies and fly off together, because they thought it was silly and superstitious, but their professors told them they were wrong to do this, since it was a romantic legend that came from the people. In May, *The Butterfly Lovers* was performed for the public in Shanghai's Lyceum Theater. 'And then suddenly everyone liked it' recalled He Zhang-hao. 'The people welcomed it. People's Daily wrote an article called, 'Our Own Symphonic Music' on May 27.' Of course, not everyone liked it as some considered its way of harmonizing Chinese melodies to be too simple and sentimental while some leftists decried the use of the 'feudal' legend as inspiration. Nonetheless, audiences did love it, and the piece has stood the test of time. It is now a standard in the repertoire of Chinese orchestras and has also been performed by many orchestras around the world.¹²

During the Cultural Revolution, the government criticized this concerto by claiming that after listening to *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*, the laborers would become too weak to work with the machine; the farmers would be too weak to hold their hoes; and the people's liberation army would miss the targets. The concerto did not achieve mainstream status until

¹² Sheila Melvin and Jin-dong Cai, *Rhapsody in Red: How Western Classical Music Became Chinese*, (NY: Algora Publishing, 2004), 210-211.

China loosened its restrictions on music after the Cultural Revolution. It eventually became a cultural icon. Chen recalls in his biography as follows:

The ‘unprecedented’ ten years of Cultural Revolution had befallen, the violin concerto has been admonished as the ‘big toxic grass’ in which ‘every note harbored anti-party poison.’ [The composers were] ...sentenced to ‘special correction’ in the ‘little niugui [小牛鬼]’ (lit. cow ghost) group.¹³

Even at that time, people still tried to listen to it secretly or stored it very carefully and performed it outside the country such as in Hong Kong. The concerto has never fallen.

The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto debuted in Shanghai with eighteen-year-old violin student Yu Li-Na (俞麗拿) in 1959. In 2009, at the “Concerto of Ancient Love Story Turns 50” at CCTV (May 30, 2009)¹⁴ Yu Li-Na noted: “I was the [violin soloist]... at the premiere. When I finished the first performance, there was total silence from the audience. We were anxious for a moment, and then there was a thunderous applause. I felt relieved and motivated, so I played the second time.” After various performances and introduction to broader audiences around the world for many decades, it has become tremendously popular. The recordings from the premiere violinist Yu Li-Na, Japanese violinist Takako Nishizaki (西崎崇子), and the winner of Paganini Violin Competition Lu Si-qing (呂思清) offer very authentic and phenomenal playing. Gil Shaham is probably the first violinist from the U. S. who made a recording of the concerto.

¹³ “Autobiography of Hui composer Chen Gang,” trans. by Elaine Chew.

¹⁴ CCCTV.com, “Concerto of Ancient Love Story Turns 50,” ed. Zheng Limin, May 30, 2009 09:23 BJT. <http://english.cctv.com/20090530/100838.shtml> (accessed February 23, 2011).

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE TRANSCRIPTION WORK

This chapter introduces the information regarding the transcribing process of *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto gathered from the transcriber—Yung-Chiao Wei, an associate professor of double bass at Louisiana State University School of Music and Dramatic Arts. The chapter is organized in two subsections: background toward the process of transcription and the technical concerns towards a bass player. As for the process of transcribing *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto into double bass, she brings up her studies and her culture.

Motivation for Transcribing the Concerto

With a Chinese background, Professor Wei started to work on the transcription of *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto as a means of searching for her own identity. The story in the concerto is well-known and the folk-tune like melody is hummable by almost every single Chinese. In her opinion, *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto is truly a signature Chinese piece.

Her first experience with performing a Chinese piece on the bass was *The Reflection of Moon on the Er-quan Spring*, which impressed her mentor and also raised her consciousness as a person with Chinese heritage even though she had been working with Western music for years. *The Reflection of Moon on the Er-quan Spring*¹⁵ is also an extremely popular piece in China written for *erhu* by Yan-jun Hua. Imitating the *erhu* technique on the bass, she felt such a strong inner connection with a piece of music for the first time.

¹⁵ *The Reflection of Moon on the Er-quan Spring* (二泉映月 Er-Quan Ying Yu) by Yan-jun, Hua (華彥鈞 1893-1950), nickname Abing 阿炳. It is a very well-known Chinese *erhu* piece throughout the world, especially after Seiji Ozawa's conducting a string ensemble version in Chinese. The piece is about the composer's life, its ups and downs, and his suffering.

In her opinion, *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto is a great piece to be played on the double bass, because it is full of beautiful and stirring melodies. In the process of studying and practicing, she discovered how fascinating the world of color and imagination is when imitating techniques of *erhu*, in which she found many different features that she was able to elaborate compared to western classical music. For example, in expressing its emotional content with the unique sound of *erhu*, she was able to apply a variety of techniques, including using different kinds of slides and changing the right hand sensibility of the bow control to express anything from crying and whimpering to bawling, screaming, or shouting. She also discovered a creative left hand technique: usage of a different part of the finger's flesh, flexible finger joints in the left hand, a flexible wrist for sliding sound, and usage of the shoulder. The operatic structure and dramatic effect of *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto enabled her to differentiate among emotions, such as feelings of upset, melancholy, sorrowful, mournful, grief-stricken, and enraged. It brought her an extremely beautiful and phenomenal experience.

For preparing the work of transcribing the concerto, she began to listen to a great amount of Chinese music, especially *erhu* music. Its musical language is quite different from the one in the West. Once she got used to the language of Eastern music, she was able to match the character on double bass. It was still a great learning experience for her, because she received training in a pure western classical music style and techniques from an early age. She needed to listen as much as possible to the subtle differences.

Technical Concerns on Double Bass Players

Professor Wei further explains the right hand and left hand technique. She suggests that the most important idea is to put aside the conventional Western left hand technique which

requires a firm wrist, curved hand position and firm pressure from the fingertips to make clean and pure tones in a focused contact point. Each section in the concerto has its own character, such as the first cadenza passage measure 50—the right hand has to be light. Similarly, the left hand shift has to feel as light as a feather floating to the ground. For the allegro passage at *Studying Together for Three Years*, it has to have *yun* (pulse) while also being clear, vivid, happy, and fast. The right hand should not be heavy, and the left hand should remain free to be able to articulate the phrasing with clarity.

The melody in Chinese opera has many tiny changes of pitch, called *yi-yan-dun-cuo* (抑揚頓挫) which is to speak in measured tones. In music, the melody oscillates in pitch and rhythm as in Chinese poetry, shown most clearly in the concerto's lyrical passages, particularly the sorrowful passages, such as *Farewell at Pavilion*, recitative sections at *Opposition to an Arranged Marriage*, *Meeting in the Chamber*, and *The Death of Shan-bo*, *Ying-tai Throws Herself into the Grave*. The fluctuation of melody is formed by *huayin*, which is frequently applied in those tragic sections. The left hand technique has to apply an extremely flexible wrist and finger pads in order to maintain a lively circular and rolling motion, while still applying sensitive control in the right hand. In the sad passages, there are three different degrees of crying: *Farewell at Pavilion* is Ying-tai's weeping emotion; *Meeting in the Chamber* is sorrowful and tearful; and *The Death of Shan-bo*, *Ying-tai Throws Herself into the Grave* is an extremely bawling, shouting, and heart-broken passage. Therefore, delicacy of technique is the key to clearly articulating each of the three nuanced emotions.

On the performance by a musician, she quotes from William Pleeth, the mentor of a famous cellist Jacqueline du Pre, about 'oneness':

The act of playing—physically and spiritually—must be one of relative balance and completeness in our whole being, for each aspect is carrying the other aspect

and all must travel together along the same wavelength. Everything causes everything, everything gives birth to everything, everything feeds everything—‘the oneness’ of you, your instrument and the music should be so perfect that all three marry into one entity in the end: one seamless whole in which one cannot see where the one part leaves off and the other begins. ...

At all levels of playing, from the very first lesson to the concert platform, this concept of ‘oneness’ has to be encouraged and cultivated to the point where it becomes one’s second nature

‘Living the music’ means that all the various aspects- the cellist, his instrument and the music come together in a perfect and mutually supportive union. If we mishandle the growth and development of any one aspect, then we shall undermine or even destroy the ‘oneness’ and produce something which is musically and cellistically still-born.¹⁶

In short, this concept of ‘oneness’ is the highest form of art in musical performance.

On the topic of choosing fingerings and bowings, Professor Wei said that she tried many different fingerings and bowings. Her choice of fingerings is based on a common logic for all string players:

1. in fast passages, choose fingerings that are more convenient with less shifting for more clarity,
2. in slow and lyrical passages, always find fingerings that can best express nuance of color.

To capture the special sound of *erhu* on the bass in *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto, she uses 1st (index finger) and 2nd (middle finger) fingers frequently on the high register passages, and sometimes, the 2nd finger is placed on top of the 1st finger for greater strength. Since the 1st finger and 2nd finger are naturally stronger than other fingers, it is easier to use the stronger fingers on high register passages when unnatural physical posture is involved.

¹⁶ William Pleeth, *Yehudi Menuhin Music Guides: Cello*. Compiled and Edited by Nona Pyron. (London & Sydney: Macdonald & Co Ltd, 1982), 3-4.

She goes on to discuss the bowings. Well-thought bowings are absolutely essential for all string players. When making decisions on bowings, it is crucial to understand composers' intention on marked bowings, phrasings, tempo markings, and dynamics and to associate emotional content with it. When performing transcribed music from other instruments, the bassist needs to change bow direction more frequently to make the tone fuller and project better. The double bass bow is the shortest and heaviest out of the entire string family. It does not mean double bass cannot shape the phrases as well as other string instruments. By understanding the true meaning beyond notes, one is able to communicate through music no matter how often the bow is travelled back and forth.

In choosing bowings, she emphasizes the importance of considering how varieties of articulation project in different register on the bass. She then gives an example of bowings that is different from the original violin score. The original bowings notated in the opening passage of *Studying Together for Three Years* in the concerto are hooked on the two eighth notes. The hooked bowings are notated throughout the same pattern in the whole *Studying Together for Three Years* part. Professor Wei changes the hooked eight notes in higher register to separate bows for better clarity and control.

Furthermore, she discusses the importance of acquiring physical strength in performing the transcription of this masterpiece. Since it is a violin concerto, Professor Wei transcribed most of *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto in higher register on double bass to best capture color and character of the story. Particularly in the most painful passages where Ying-tai wept in front of Shan-bo's tomb, she transcribed them in the highest register possible, which means playing close or at the edge of the fingerboard. Playing in extremely high register on bass is technically challenging because it produces an unnatural body posture, especially for shorter bass

players with smaller hands. She suggests having regular exercises like yoga and the Alexander technique to help with playing. As a small size bass player herself, she also has extremely short and abnormal pinkies. Her physical disadvantage has created a constant struggle throughout her studies. To incorporate yoga and the Alexander technique on playing the bass makes performing possible for her. Not only does it help with body balance, breathing, and relaxation, it also strengthens one's body and mind.

On playing in the extremely high register in unnatural body posture, she instructs to center in the core, imagine the tail bone as a pivot point, use the legs to create a horse stance for shifting body weight, and always apply the energy coming from the whole body to produce a full and rich tone. The shoulders need to remain relaxed at all times, so that the “wings” (upper arms) can be raised easily to transfer the arm weight into the hands at the contact point on a string through a finger and through the bow. One is free to make any subtle color changes. Furthermore, she stresses the importance of focusing on playing with imagination until becoming a part of the story. For example, in the tearful and heartbreaking passage before *The Death of Shan-bo, Yin-tai Throws Herself into the Grave*, one should inhale with a big, deep breath to visualize Yin-tai's thought before she decided to throw herself into the grave.

In the end, Professor Wei gave some advice for musicians who do not have a conceptual understanding of Eastern music. “Use your imagination! Listen to similar style of music until your body and heart can catch subtle nuances of its special musical character. Always find your own inner connection with whatever style of music you are playing. Most importantly, use your instrument to speak to your audience. Tell them who you are.”

CHAPTER THREE: CHINESE AESTHETICS

Music is inarguably a powerful influence on society that can be traced through human history as a commonality between cultures. Music is sometimes more expressive than words. Familiar pieces like *Songs Without Words* by Felix Mendelssohn, *'Trout' Piano Quintet* by Franz Schubert, *Má Vlast* by Bedřich Smetana, and *Four Seasons* by Antonio Vivaldi are good examples. There is no doubt that music has the power to present and communicate emotions of the occurrences in nature, human, and daily life. Music in ancient Chinese cultures was strongly believed to hold a moral and ethical power of music.¹⁷

Understanding ancient Chinese attitudes about music can inform the musical performance of any musical instrument. In this concerto, understanding Chinese culture will facilitate a more complex level of interpretation in double bass playing.

The concept of *yun* (韻) is believed to be most important in Chinese music. Using Edward Ho's definition, *yun* is the tone in phonetic studies, rhyme in poetry, rhythm in painting, and "resonance, residual feeling, melodic motion or musical expression" in music.¹⁸ *Yun* is the soul and spirit of Chinese music at its highest level. Contributing to *yun* is each instrument's special character and unique way of making *yun* express the music. The concept of *yun* is expressed differently by each instrument's unique sound and means of expression.

In Chinese music aesthetics, *yun* can be expressed as two related ideas *sheng* (聲) and *yun* (韻): *sheng* is the changing of timbre, pitch, or dynamic, *yun* is the leaving of a residual

¹⁷ Eaton, David. "The Influence of Music on Self and Society—Values in Music in Eastern and Western Cultures," http://www.tparents.org/library/unification/talks/eaton/eaton_influence.htm (accessed March 20, 2011).

¹⁸ Edward Ho, "Aesthetic Considerations in Understanding Chinese Literati Musical Behaviour," *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 6 (1997), 38.

impression on the mind.¹⁹ *Yun* and *sheng* are the concepts that are connected to each other, but different facets of a oneness that shapes the art of traditional Chinese music.²⁰ *Yun* conveys unification reflected in the renowned concepts of *yin* (陰) and *yang* (陽).²¹ Deng claims that “only by fully mastering this oneness can the art of Chinese music be comprehended.”²²

This chapter focuses on fundamental aesthetic concepts embedded in traditional Chinese culture and musical practice, including *qiyun* (氣韻), *xin* (心), and *xu-shi-yijing* (虛-實-意境). Almost all Chinese classical art forms are associated with Chinese calligraphy, poetry, painting, and folk opera.

The Concept of *Qiyun* 氣韻

Qiyun is the basic aesthetic principle in many Chinese art-forms.²³ *Qi* can be described as air in motion or energy with the power to transmit force to sustain a motion and to communicate between realms.²⁴ It is a form of vitality and essentially involves breathing. In *A Companion to Aesthetics*, the concept of “Chinese Aesthetics,” Marthe Chandler describes *qi*:

[*Qi* is as] sound and the air or wind... carries it. Wind and sound are powerful forces that influence faraway things with no visible connection between them. Music seems particularly powerful in the respect, since notes from one instrument

¹⁹ Edward Ho, “Aesthetic Considerations in Understanding Chinese Literati Musical Behaviour,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 6 (1997), 39.

²⁰ Haiqiong Deng, “Musical Change and Continuity of *Huayin*: the Essence of Chinese *Zheng* Music,” (master’s thesis, Florida State University, 2006) 13.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Edward Ho, “Aesthetic Considerations in Understanding Chinese Literati Musical Behaviour,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 6 (1997), 37.

²⁴ Ibid.

can resonate with distant instruments causing them to produce the same tone. Like the air we breathe, sound penetrates the human body, creating a harmony between sounds in different places in the world.²⁵

In his book, *A Song for One or Two: Music and the Concept of Art in Early China*, Kenneth J. DeWoskin translates *qi* as “configured energy.”²⁶ According to Ho, *qi* is a way of breathing that transmits sound and energy, resulting in an inner power from the human body.²⁷ He then goes even further by saying, “all Chinese musical behavior can be related to *qi*.”²⁸ In other words, *qi* is the first concept of making art in Chinese culture, which flows through every individual person and, therefore, leads to a unique interpretation of music. *Qi* can be observed through playing the *qin*, or called *guzhen* in the modern era, an ancient Chinese seven-stringed instrument that is played by plucking the strings. Similar to guitar, the instrument has a soft, tranquil sound and has been widely recognized as a symbol of high society status in China for over three thousand years. It was reserved only for a few elite members of the Chinese dynasties, including the ancient philosopher Confucius, who was known as a virtuoso on the *guzhen*. Consequently, the *guzhen* is revered as an instrument of mastery and dedication. Playing the *guzhen* requires a great emphasis on the build up and control of *qi*. The quote from the ancient music score, *Chun Caotang qinpu* gives a great amount of instructions describing the great distribution of using right breathing and wrong breathing:

²⁵ Marthe Chandler, “Chinese aesthetics” *A Companion to Aesthetics* 2nd ed., ed. Stephen Davies, Kathleen Marie Higgins....(Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2009), 188.

²⁶ Kenneth J. Dewoskin, *A song for One or Two: Music and the Concept of Art in Early China*, (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan 1982), 17.

²⁷ Edward Ho, “Aesthetic Considerations in Understanding Chinese Literati Musical Behaviour,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 6 (1997), 37.

²⁸ Ibid.

It is essential to manipulate *qi* when playing the *qin*. *Qi* is incorporated with sound. Often we see *qin* players at a snail's pace, indicating the *qi* of depression and discomfort; or playing hurriedly, indicating breathlessness, so that one's breathing becomes noisy and one's face becomes red, which are all results of bad manipulation of *qi*. If one can change one's *qi* while playing, better manipulation will be possible. *Qi* should be renewed with each change of tone.²⁹

In the art of Chinese painting, the way of developing a master is mentioned in David Blum's book *Casals and the Art of Interpretation* that *qiyun* is the First Principle.

..... the artist must prove himself in the following skills: vitality of brushstroke, accuracy in portrayal, versatility in colouring, care in arrangement of composition, transmission of tradition through copying the works of earlier masters. But the foremost task lay in the fulfillment of the First Principle, which has sometimes been defined as 'breath-resonance life-motion.' For only by coming into harmony with the vital cosmic spirit or breath could the painter convey through the movement of his brush the mysterious vitality of life itself.³⁰

In other words of music playing, proper breathing at the proper moments will transcend the melodic line into a natural phenomenon; whereas, the music turns into meaningless notes and the painting turns into irregular brush strokes. *Qi* is also influenced by emotion and state of mind as well. It is the place that energy comes from while playing music. Therefore, how to manipulate *qi* is the most important consideration in the technique of performance instead of thinking about fingerings or worrying about notes.

In terms of art, Ho states "*qi* is the creative force that begins, sustains and completes a work of art, without which there is no life. It forms the root for *yun*, which is the felicitous

²⁹ Edward Ho, "Aesthetic Considerations in Understanding Chinese Literati Musical Behaviour," *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 6 (1997), 38.

³⁰ David Blum, *Casals and the Art of Interpretation*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 1.

expression of *qi*.”³¹ *Yun* is as the spirit and feeling of the Chinese art works. The feeling of *yun* in music is able to leave a residual impression in one’s mind. The literal meaning of *yun* is the continuing affect that happens after striking a bell, the lasting resonance with its characteristic enchantment in the air.³² In Ho’s article, he quotes the explanation of a *pipa* player, Wong Ching-Ping, from his performer’s perspective of how *qi* and *yun* are realized in musical terms. *Pipa* is a traditional Chinese plucked instrument. *Yun*’s concept is more important while playing the *pipa* due to the pizzicato sound.

Qi: the beauty of *yang*

Melodic Skeleton—hidden in macro/extrinsic melodic movement; active, energetic and powerful in nature, revealed through the application of various strengths of right-hand finger techniques, including phrasing, intonation, tempi and breath control.

Yun: the beauty of *yin*

Single tones as musical entities—hidden in micro/intrinsic movement; passive, gentle and soft in nature, created by various left-hand slide gestures and other embellishments; also includes timbre, which is determined by different plucking angles, plucking speeds, and plucking positions of a string with different right-hand finger actions.³³

In short, *Qiyun* encompasses both philosophy and aesthetics, and can be applied to every facet of Chinese communicative art. The balance of *yin* and *yan* is reflected in the power of *qi* and sensitivity of *yun*, respectively. The reflecting of *yin* and *yan* also often explains in musical performance. For instance, the right-hand plucking in *guqin* (*qin*) or *pipa* playing with all the dynamics demonstrates *qi*, while the left hand vibrato and sliding movements rebound the beauty

³¹ Edward Ho, “Aesthetic Considerations in Understanding Chinese Literati Musical Behaviour,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 6 (1997), 38.

³² *Ibid.*, 39.

³³ *Ibid.*

of *yun*.³⁴ Yet for the string players, all the articulation goes with the right-hand, while the left-hand uses vibrato and express movements that reflect the sensation of *yun*.

The Concept of *Xin* 心

Xin, or “heart’s mind” in early Chinese psychology, refers to “enjoyment—a tranquil and restrained state well beyond either extremes of emotion and intellect.”³⁵ Frederick Lau explains *qin*’s philosophy in his book—*Music in China: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture*:

It was generally believed that the proper playing of the *qin* could lead one to spiritual enlightenment. According to Confucianism, purity of mind is one of the accomplishments of a complete person and cultivation and rectifying one’s mind can lead to this state. Thus the *qin* became a symbol of literary life and playing the *qin* was seen as a purifying sort of meditation.....³⁶

Therefore, “the *qin* not only serves as a vehicle to broaden our knowledge of music in previous periods, but its music exemplifies the most sophisticated of the Chinese high art solo genres.”³⁷ It is recorded in the *Analects of Confucius* that Confucius was so touched after listening to *guqin*’s music that the good taste of meat meant nothing for him for the next three months. The reaction of Confucius toward the music of *guqin* resembles the fact that “[m]usic is to please the heart’s mind (spirit) rather than the ear (auditory sense).”³⁸

³⁴ Edward Ho, “Aesthetic Considerations in Understanding Chinese Literati Musical Behaviour,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 6 (1997), 39-40.

³⁵ Mingyue Liang, *Music of the Billion: An Introduction to Chinese Musical Culture*, 171.

³⁶ Frederick Lau, *Music in China: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 123.

³⁷ Mingyue Liang, *Music of the Billion: An Introduction to Chinese Musical Culture*. 197.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 171.

There is a statement from *Yueji* (“Annotations on Music”) in the *Liji* (“Book of Rites”) that exemplifies the artistic meaning of *Xin* in Liang Ming-yue’s *Music of the Billion: An*

Introduction to Chinese Music Culture:

Music is formed in the heart. Tones (pitch, timbre) are the shape in which music is expressed. Elegance (ornamentation) and rhythm are the decoration of the tones. The Superior Man takes the feelings in his heart as basis; he gives them shape in music; and then he gives this music its final form. (trans. Van Gulik 1940:24)

In other words, the process of musical expressiveness and creation emanates from the condition—needs and desires—of the heart-mind (spiritual, inner self) and becomes realized or objectified through tangible elements, that is, pitch, timbre, rhythm and form.³⁹

Based on the explanation above, it is obvious to know that ancient Chinese music is very important for musicians to perform sincerely from the heart. The *xin*’s true implication is presenting the music naturally from the heart’s mind; otherwise, music will be lifeless. Marthe Chandler explains the heart’s mind in the concept of Chinese aesthetics:

[This] human heart-mind is in a [perpetual] state of tranquility until it responds to something outside itself in poetry, song and dance. Musicians, poets and dancers move audiences to respond in similar ways, creating a human community. Because the social harmony between people contributes to harmony between humanity and the cosmos, the relationship between the arts, morality and cosmic order are an enduring theme in Chinese aesthetics.⁴⁰

This is so called “blending emotions.”⁴¹ It is when the reflecting of emotion gets caught up in the emotions of the performer and mixed together with the audiences, meanwhile their

³⁹ Mingyue Liang, *Music of the Billion: An Introduction to Chinese Musical Culture*, 171.

⁴⁰ Marthe Chandler, “Chinese aesthetics,” *A Companion to Aesthetics*, 188.

⁴¹ Victor L. Wooten, *Music lessons: A Spiritual Search for Growth Through Music*, (New York: Berkley Trade, 2008), 100.

emotions are blending together.⁴² This is one of the highest levels of interpreting music. It is hard to present music to touch the heart of each individual in audience who may come from various backgrounds. But when it does, the music must be truly beautiful and phenomenon.

The Concept of *Xu-shi-yijing* 虛-實-意境

Xu, *shi*, and *yijing*, are another three key aesthetic concepts in ancient Chinese art and music.⁴³ Ho writes that “the quintessence of Chinese classical music is the feeling, mental image, inner vision, or artistic conception that is communicated.”⁴⁴ The meaning of *xu* refers to a void or empty sensation, and *shi* stands for something substantial or solid.⁴⁵ These two aesthetic concepts together represent *yijing*, a spiritual state vital in the classical arts.⁴⁶ In order to understand how the concepts are reflected in music, it is helpful to discuss *xu* and *shi* that come together to bring the light of *yijing* in other forms of Chinese arts. In music, *shi* reflects notes, and *xu* indicates rests. The title of the program music indicates *shi* and music in the program music indicates *xu*; pure music *shi* and the imagination that performers add *xu*; and principle

⁴² Victor L. Wooten, *Music lessons: a Spiritual Search for Growth Through Music*, 100.

⁴³ Edward Ho, “Aesthetic Considerations in Understanding Chinese Literati Musical Behaviour,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 6 (1997), 43.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Haiqiong Deng, “Musical Change and Continuity of *Huayin*: the Essence of Chinese *Zheng* Music,” 18.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

notes *shi* and passing notes or decoration *xu*. Here are some images that can provide some insights:⁴⁷

1) *Sleeping duck* (眠鴨圖) hanging scroll by the Qing Dynasty painter Pa-ta Shan-jen (清朝 1644-1911 CE, 八大山人 1624-1705 CE). For most of the traditional Chinese paintings, painters draw greater attention on the empty spots in order to give the whole painting life (Fig. 3-1).



Figure 3-1. *Sleeping duck*⁴⁸ by Pa-ta shan-jen 八大山人

⁴⁷ The notion is from Haiqiong Deng, “Musical Change and Continuity of *Huayin*: the Essence of Chinese *Zheng* Music,” (Master’s thesis, Florida State University, 2006), 18-21.

⁴⁸ *Sleeping duck* by Pa-ta shan-jen,
http://wenhua.youth.cn/yis/hh/201002/t20100210_1151490.htm (accessed March, 8, 2011).

At the bottom of the scroll, there is only the simple image of a peacefully sleeping duck (*shi*) in the boundlessness of quiet water (*xu*). Deng comments that “this may be seen as evoking unrestrained spirit in an infinite and shapeless universe.”⁴⁹ In contrast, if the empty spots are filled with anything, the viewers will be affected with less freedom of imagination.

2) *Night-shining White* (照夜白圖), hanging scroll by Tang Dynasty painter Han Kan (唐朝 618-907 CE, 韓幹 706-783 CE). Using a horse as its subject, this painting is another good example of the key aesthetic concepts, where the horse is *shi* and the spirit conveyed behind it is *xu*.

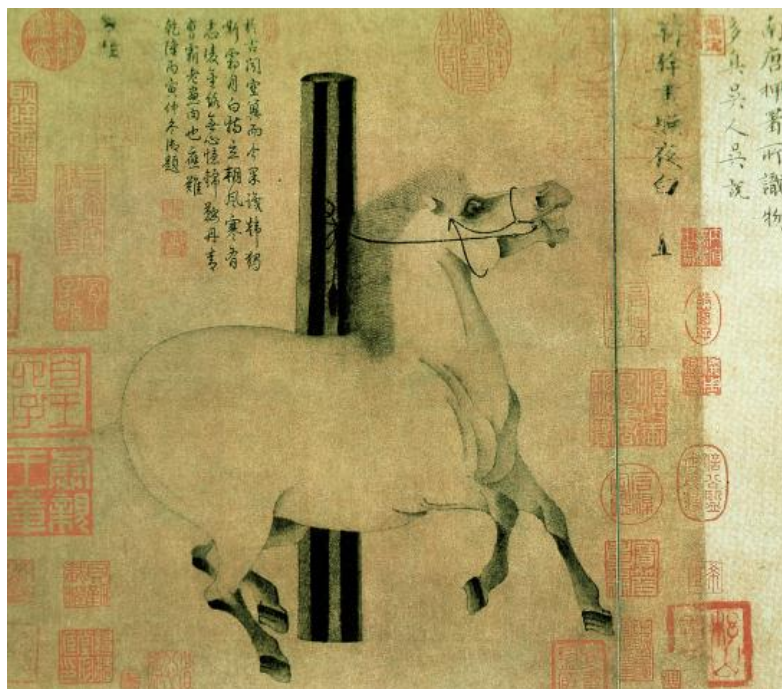


Figure 3-2. *Night-shining White* by Han Kan⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Haiqiong Deng, “Musical Change and Continuity of *Huayin*: the Essence of Chinese *Zheng* Music,” (Master’s thesis, Florida State University, 2006), 18.

⁵⁰ *Night-shining White* by Han Kan, <http://vr.theatre.ntu.edu.tw/fineart/painter-ch/hangan/hangan.htm> (accessed March 8, 2011). The real painting is now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The *shi* of the horse is its physical appearance, but understanding the *xu* needs to know the background behind the painting. Horses, especially the prized horses were considered having great characters that are expected in well-educated scholars or soldiers. Han Kang, as the most famous painter of horse portraits, used his painting to deliver his messages behind a well-portrayed horse. In this specific painting, we can even feel its urge to the freedom that is shown in the expression and the posture of the horse. The painter may also imply this message of freedom possessed by all human beings.

3) *Celestial King Delivering a Son* (天王送子圖卷), a scroll by Tang Dynasty painter Wu Dao Zi (吳道子 680-759 CE). Chinese paintings not only can express painter's subjective feelings, but also the painter's moral and test of artistic sense can be represented from their works.



Figure 3-3. *Celestial King Delivering a Son*⁵¹ by Wu Dao Zi

⁵¹ *Celestial King Delivering a Son* by Wu Dao Zi, <http://vr.theatre.ntu.edu.tw/fineart/painter-ch/wudaozi/wudaozi-01-01x.jpg> (accessed March 8, 2011). The real painting is now in Osaka Municipal Museum of Art.

Being a very prolific painter, Wu's vivid compositions used hundreds of refined lines to present body shape, movement, clothing, facial expressions, gestures and characters. The painting consists of Wu's ink painting of typical Chinese royal artistry—naturalistic, majestic, and elegant—and imagination of Chinese god's fantasy. The *yijing* is presented by the brush's stroke and brings out the reverence toward deity in human nature.

4) Characters in Chinese operas. This particular photo is an excellent demonstration of a key Chinese artistic aesthetic called *sing shen he yi* (形神合一 shape-spirit-fuse one) which also affects classical Chinese opera.



Figure 3-4. Character in Chinese opera by Bawu⁵²

⁵² Character in Chinese opera by Bawu, 2008-09-23 at The National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts. <http://www.yupoo.com/photos/w85824/albums/785898/1092899/> (accessed March 8, 2011).

The Chinese opera has been more focused on eye and facial expressions, certain makeup for certain role, costumes, very subtle hand and body gestures than the stage settings and stage casts. For instance, Fig.3-4 is a photograph of a king monkey with a naughty expression portrayed through the costume, use of body language, eye and facial expressions. These are used to convey the character's mood and personality, and even scenery.

5) *Mid-Autumn* (中秋帖) by Jin Dynasty Wang Xianzhi (晋朝 265-420 CE, 王献之 334-386CE).

Calligraphy is one of the important forms of Chinese traditional art. The manner of the energy in brush's speed, pressure, stroke order that the calligrapher creates may be in accordance with the emotions within the text.

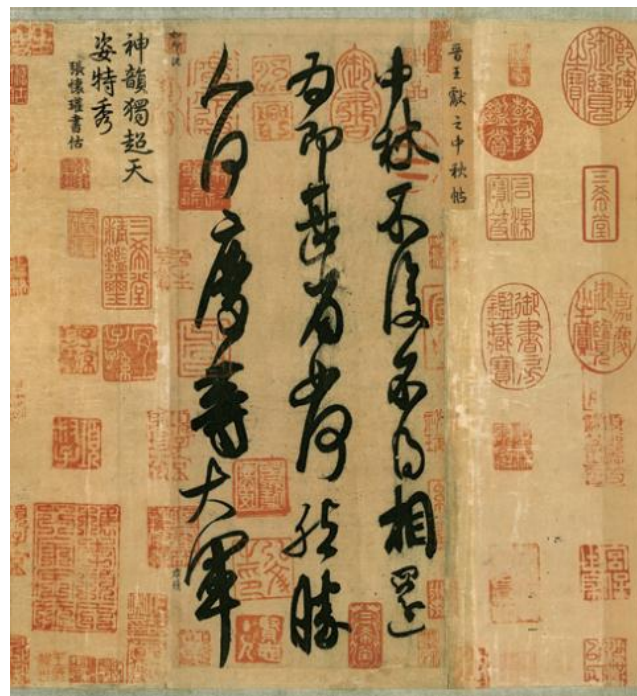


Figure 3-5. *Mid-Autumn* (中秋帖) by Jin Dynasty Wang Xianzhi⁵³

⁵³ *Mid-Autumn* by Wang Xianzhi, <http://www.chinaonlinemuseum.com/calligraphy-wang-xianzhi-mid-autumn.php> (accessed March 8, 2011). *Mid-Autumn* is now in Beijing, Palace Museum, China. The calligraphy is considered a great copy made by Song Dynasty calligrapher Mi Fu (宋朝 960-1279 CE, 米芾 1051-1107 CE).

Mid-Autumn is a rapid cursive writing style of calligraphy. It displays not only the rhythm and the dynamics of the lines, but also the calligraphy's charm of nonrestrictive and steady personality.

Xu and *shi* in these figures can be replaced by various pairings: still/moving, empty/solid, *xing/shen* (形/神), less/more, soft/hard, calm/vibrant, simplicity/complexity, and steady/flexible, etc. Deng continues with a statement that “they all create a *yijing* that directly comes from the [artist]’s inner soul and [will inspire] the artistic awareness [in the viewer/audience.]”⁵⁴

Referring to music, *xu* means sound of silence; *shi* is the notes with pitches that we hear. Both of them share the same meanings, and sometimes the soundless sound can speak louder and deeper than notes.⁵⁵ Therefore, the soundless sound has to be treated as the real sound with the full amount of air; otherwise, the music will begin to rush without awareness, resulting in the *yijing* being destroyed.

The string player’s flexible bow hand is like the painting or calligraphy’s brush; the expressive left hand (*yun*) is like the stroke’s rhythm, speed, and pressure that a painter creates. The lines and colors are the results that we see. All the arts transfigure with the performers’ emotion, energy, breathing, imagination, personality, and spirit.

⁵⁴ Haiqiong Deng, “Musical Change and Continuity of *Huayin*: the Essence of Chinese *Zheng* Music,” 22.

⁵⁵ Victor L. Wooten, *Music lessons: a Spiritual Search for Growth Through Music*, 229.

Xu-shi-yijing in The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto

Perhaps the hardest part of learning Chinese traditional music is in understanding the depth of *yun* and the style of *huayin* (described in Chapter Six) that conveys it.⁵⁶ Here is an example from my experience on *yun* in musical playing learned from Professor Wei. First, she would try to inspire me by telling stories, demonstrating on the bass, or by singing melodies to help my playing. The passage (m. 51-243) in *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*, where Shan-bo and Ying-tai study and play together indicates well of the concept *yun*. This is a vivid and joyful passage that sounds like the two riding horses trotting in the grassland, and Professor Wei played so fast and joyful. In order to prepare for such performance, she would imagine how nimble, agile and brisk a horse is. This lesson inspired me to learn how to play with a spirit of purity in order to better articulate what the music was trying to communicate.

Subsequently, I began to get a sense of the *yun* and its ability to leave a residual impression on the mind. My professor further instructed me on these skills:

1. Watch for the flexible bow grip and natural arm weight, which are the key points to keep in mind when playing this passage because appropriately applied use of them can adequately express the precise dotted rhythms representing the free-spiritedness of the running horses and the sensation of riding them.
2. Separate the eighth notes in the high register to convey the joyful jumps.
3. Feel the space between these two notes—D, E. The music is not stopped, but rather full of expression.

⁵⁶ Haiqiong Deng, “Musical Change and Continuity of *Huayin*: the Essence of Chinese *Zheng* Music,” 22.

In this example, Professor Wei did not mention specifics about my lifeless playing. Instead, she simply and profoundly showed me the details of the essence of its sound and meaning. Since then, I have started paying attention to the expression of deep feelings beyond the proper technique and pitch. This is exactly what Deng described as not simply a left-hand (*yun* or *vibrato*) being used to enrich the right-hand (*sheng* or sound), but rather a unity that was equally felt and supported.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Haiqiong Deng, “Musical Change and Continuity of *Huayin*: the Essence of Chinese *Zheng* Music,” 23-24.

CHAPTER FOUR: AN ANALYSIS OF EXPRESSIVE IMAGERY IN *THE BUTTERFLY LOVERS* VIOLIN CONCERTO

The Structure of Programmatic Music

The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto explores the potential of setting Chinese music in a Western symphonic medium, incorporating borrowed devices from the Chinese instruments sound character and theatrical folk music as well as vocal techniques from *Yueju* Theatre. The end result resembles a sonata-form concerto for the violin in one movement or a single movement sonata-form poem symphony. However the sonata form does not include a complete recapitulation. The recapitulation only comes back with theme I without the bridge and the closing theme. (Normally, the traditional recapitulation has theme I and II, bridge and closing themes as in the exposition, also the key signature stays in the original key.) The three parts of this legendary musical narrative include a progression of motifs—‘love’, ‘rebellious’, and then ‘transfiguration’—which reflect the structure of sonata form: exposition, development, and then recapitulation. With regard to compositional style, *The Butterfly Lovers* is considered post-romantic folk music even though it was composed during the late 1950s.

In the relationship between music and drama, the composer He Zian-hao notes that he was thinking only about the clear three-part drama. All he wanted to present was the emotion of the story instead of trying to tell it directly. It was a nice coincidence that the music and story were so well suited for one another, and worked so well together. Furthermore, the title of the piece would help the audience to understand the nature of the underlying narrative more easily. Moreover, the story was well known in Asia and it was a very easy musical piece to listen to because the progression of motifs was easy to follow. For instance, the emotion of the

introduction is infused with the happiness of the spring season, fully suggesting in its exposition to the audience the fun the lovers are having while in school.

The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto is unlike a traditional concerto. Normally, a concerto will begin with a tutti orchestra performing the main theme, joined later by a solo instrument. But in *The Butterfly Lovers*, the solo violin begins immediately after the introduction. The dialogue between the solo and orchestra is different from that found in the traditional Western concerto. Zian-hao's concerto focuses more so on melodic lines instead of form, and almost every phrase expresses a story. The concerto is based on a pentatonic scale in the mode of *chih* 徵調式 (G is the tonal), the original scale in C major is Sol-La-Do-Re-Mi, but the concerto is in G major, so the piece is in the scale of Re-Me-Sol-La-Ti, and with more modulation in the development section to closely related keys. This concerto does not have a large orchestra: flutes (2), oboes (2), clarinets A (2), bassoons (2), Horns F (4), trumpets B flat (2), trombones (3), timpani, piatti, tam-tam, *bangu*⁵⁸ (a drum-like Chinese percussion instrument), harp, piano, and strings.

The Sonata Form or Three-part Concerto

The Butterfly Lovers can actually be divided into five parts: introduction, exposition (Part I), development (Part II), recapitulation (Part III), and codetta.

The musical portrayals opens with an introduction (m. 1-11) in G major is played in 4/4 time, *adagio cantabile*. It depicts the affection between the protagonists' first rendezvous with a

⁵⁸ *Bangu*, it consists of a skin stretched over a set of wooden wedges bound in a circle and so hollowed out that only a small part of the skin covers a cavity at the center of the drum. The sound of the drum is very sharp, dry, and cracking. As a leader of the orchestra, it penetrates nicely through the other instrumental sounds. The information is from William P. Malm, *Music Cultures of the Pacific, the Near East, and Asia* (New Jersey: Prentice-hall Inc., 1967), 122.

timpani tremolo D and the strings playing D and A in harmonics and pianississimo tremolos. From underneath this prologue emerges a flute cadenza, a flute melody resembling the sound of singing birds, with repeated sixteenth notes arpeggiating an octave down and up. The atmosphere therefore emulates early spring with birds lively twittering and flowers blossoming.

Also in bar 4, is an indication for the flute to play “*Cadenza ad lib.*” The performer can thus play with freedom, from slow to fast. This is the language of traditional Chinese opera, something very rarely seen in Western musical techniques (Fig. 4-1).

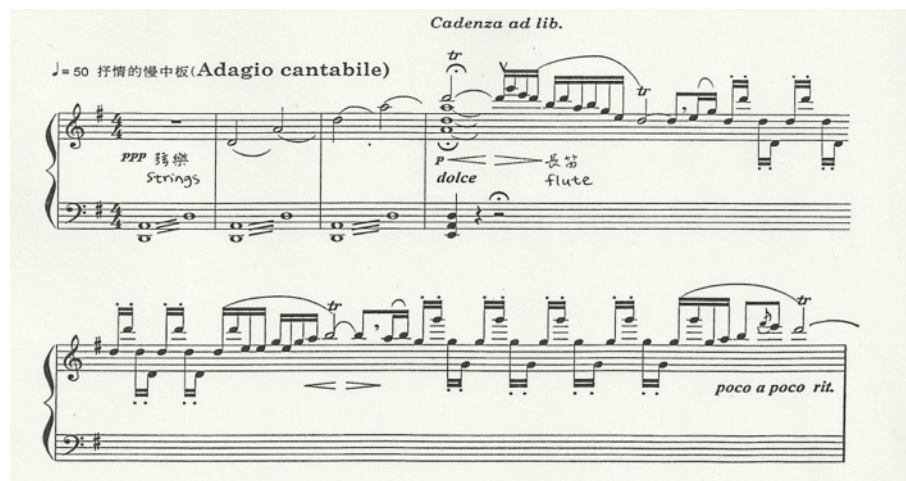


Figure 4-1.⁵⁹ Introduction Adagio cantabile with the solo flute in bar 4

After this cadenza-like passage, the theme is played by an oboe and viola in imitation (Fig. 4-2). This section portrays the first meeting of Ying-tai and Shan-bo in the school, as they are becoming very good friends. Ying-tai imagines an affair with Shan-bo. The passage is the bridge that connects the introduction to exposition. The tempo here is faster than in previous phrases, perhaps suggesting the excitement at the thought of their growing relationship.

⁵⁹ Figure 4-1 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 260.

The introduction to *The Butterfly Lovers* is similar to Chinese *Yueju* opera in that its motifs foreshadow what is to come in the rest of the piece. We can see it in the development where it becomes a feudal motif, the preface to the lovers' meeting in the chamber, and the climactic part of the piece wherein Ying-tai throws herself into the tomb.



Figure 4-2.⁶⁰ The conversation of oboe and viola starts from bar 5

The exposition (m. 12-290) includes theme I (slow tempo, measure 12-49), bridge (m. 50), theme II (*moderato*, measure 51-243), and closing (*adagio*, measure 244-290).

The introduction is then followed by the *Love Theme* in an ABA form. The A part can be seen as the *Love Theme* articulated in measure 12-30. It depicts the lovers' simplicity and elegance by using gentle glissandi that portray the tranquility of the water surrounding them. The *Love Theme* is a parallel double period. The main theme from A is based on *Yueju* opera's main melody, but with some changes (Fig. 4-3). This melody symbolizes the eternal love between the lovers, but it focuses more on the demonstration of the emotion than on the solo

⁶⁰Figure 4-2 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 260.

violin's technique. (The very free-flowing coloratura in *Yueju* opera extends the performance through its use of body language and expressive emotional content.) Therefore, since the operatic vocals are hard to emulate with an instrument, the composer articulated the *Love Theme* with a sound that slides up and down by a minor third to take advantage of the violin's technique, bringing the character of this passage closer to the folk opera singing.

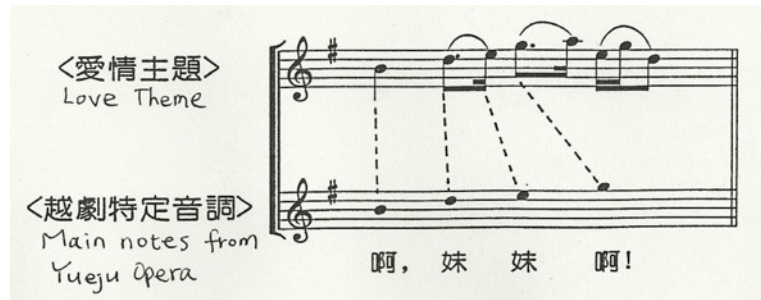


Figure 4-3.⁶¹ The *Love Theme* in *Yueju* Opera and *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto

The *Love Theme* (Fig. 4-4), in measure 12-20, is played in a high register. Then, from measure 21-29, the theme repeats again in the middle register. According to the composer He Zhan-hao, this theme (ti, re, mi, sol) in the opera is describing the love between the protagonists. The same idea is used in this concerto's solo violin part because they essentially share the same meaning, so it is a very successful adaptation. For Zhang-hao thought the melody was too simple for the solo violin. Therefore, sometimes the simplicity, or lack of technical activity in the concerto is intentional because of this focus on story or plot.

In time the section B, measure 31-38, is a conversation between cello and violin that signifies the joining of the lovers' hands (Fig. 4-5). Here the legato theme from the introduction is elaborated on it. The beginning in the cello indicates Shan-bo's talking, to which Ying-tai

⁶¹ Figure 4-3 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 261.

answers shyly. This segment, both musically and symbolically, is a bridge that helps to reiterate the three-part pattern of the exposition.



Figure 4-4.⁶² *Love Theme*



Figure 4-5.⁶³ The dialogue between solo violin and cello

⁶² Chen Gang and He Zhan-hao, "The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto," piano and violin score. Arranged by Guan, Sheng You. (Hong Kong: Yih Mei Book Co., 1960).

⁶³ Figure 4-5 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 264.

Finally comes the recapitulation of section A, measure 39-49, which differs from the previous example in that the main theme is entered with the orchestra tutti and a violin as an accompanying role in the first 5 measures. Therefore, there is greater volume and brightness in this segment.

The development of previous materials culminates in a brief cadenza at measure 50 (Fig. 4-6). The composers have written here a cadenza for the solo violin that conjures images of Ying-tai's murmuring to herself. The whimsical runs and octave leaps represent Ying-tai's happiness at the idea of being in love with Shan-bo and her desire to tell him about her true identity, but she is too shy to tell him. In the time when she decides (before the comma), she regrets with a sigh. In the folk opera, this would be the intermezzo during the scene change. But for the concerto, it is used for changing emotions. This transition is a very good example of program music using the metaphor technique to describe the story. The technique of incorporating an over-octave range is used to show off the violin's abilities.

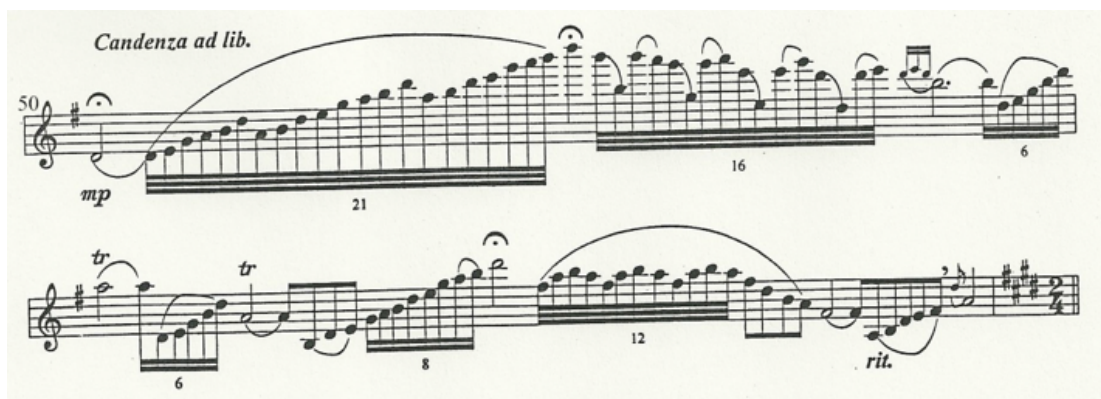


Figure 4-6.⁶⁴ Violin cadenza

⁶⁴ Figure 4-6 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 265.

The music suddenly halt then takes us into Theme II, measure 51-243, which is in an ABACA rondo form. A is the second main subject. The tempo is more urgent between the solo and the accompaniment; and shows the playful and carefree character between the lovers' collegiate friendship of three years. The nature of this theme is characteristic of exposition—two contrasting subjects. Not only does the theme have a different character, but also the tempo and key signature are changed. They have moved from 4/4 to 2/4 time signature, and G major to E major key respectively.

Measures 51-58 is the introduction and preparation of the A section. These eight measures use quarter notes and eighth notes with grace notes in *staccato* articulation. Alternation between the quarter notes and graced eighth notes present the joyful feeling of lovers running and chasing each other. In theme II, the A section occurs three times. The first time, (fig. 4-7) from measure 59 to 84, the solo violin is playing the imagery of the lovers' joining hands in brotherhood. The time signature is 2/4 with a delightfully played accent on each down beat. With the accent on the downbeat, the ensuing pause is made very clear, emphasizing the lovers' undulating passion. The second time the A section is played, measure 109-130, it is performed by an orchestra tutti, with the key signature having modulated from E major to A major. The final time is played with the orchestra accompanied by broken chords on a solo violin in E major. Theme II then finishes with an orchestra tutti and solo violin from measure 220 to 231.



Figure 4-7. Continued



Figure 4-7.⁶⁵ Theme II (a), a delightful *Joining of Hands in Brotherhood*

Section B (m. 85-105) is performed by an oboe and bassoon playing the melody. Two measures later, the solo violin plays the same melody but with variation of the motif. The counterpoint between those two lines mirrors the conversation between Shan-bo and Ying-tai (Fig. 4-8). The music is more lyrical than in section A, which also point to the lovers' time together.



Figure 4-8. Continued

⁶⁵ Figure 4-7 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 265-266.



Figure 4-8.⁶⁶ Theme II, section (b)

Finally, section C (m. 121-207) is the strongest place for including Chinese musical language. There are many traditional Chinese techniques copied by Western instruments here. For example, the strings imitate the *pizzicato* sound of a *pipa* and the solo violin uses octave running to copy the sound of a *gu-zheng*. In this section, composers over time have used many continual eighth, sixteenth and thirty-second notes, the perfect fourth and fifth as well, to musically articulate the lovers' glee and jumping about (Fig. 4-9).

⁶⁶ Figure 4-8 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 267.

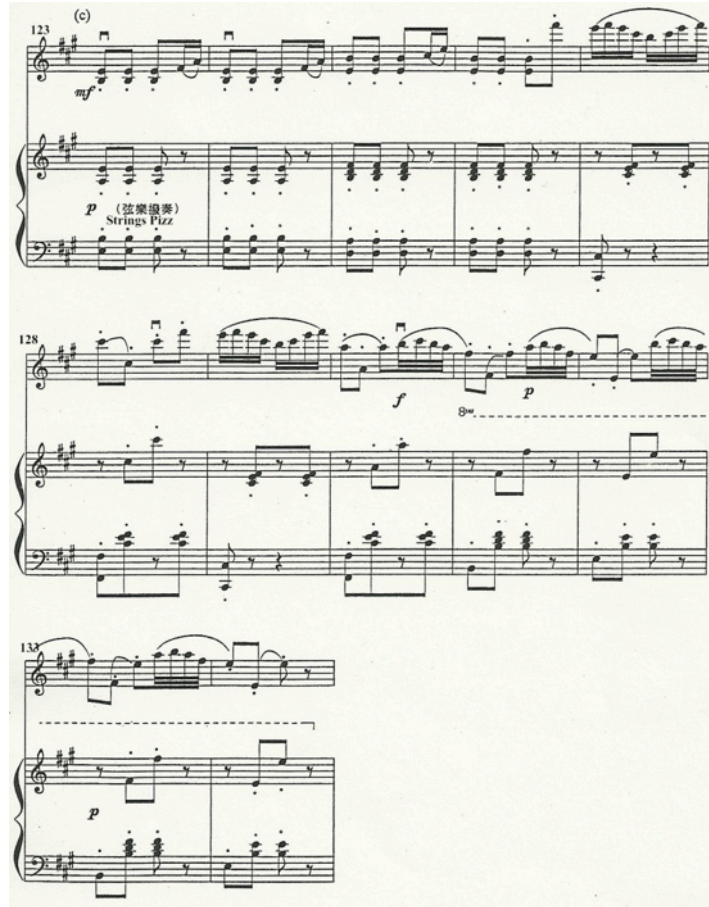


Figure 4-9.⁶⁷ Theme II, section (c)

Theme II is a typical rondo form. The focus of this section is on narrating the story. Here, the composers gave the violin more interesting motifs: a fast tempo and jumping *staccato* notes. Compared to theme I, the story and solo part here match better and the solo violin has more techniques to show off. Furthermore, because of its use of traditional Chinese sounds, made on Western instruments, it is acoustically different from Western classical music. The way it is done makes this change acceptable to all audiences no matter where they are from East or

⁶⁷ Figure 4-9 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 269.

West. Therefore, theme II is a very good example of the mixing of Eastern and Western styles and techniques.

The mood suddenly changes when the rondo gives to a more somber passage in the closing of the section in measure 244 to 290. It transforms the segment of the legato melody and the *Love Theme* into two whimpering and yearning lyrical sections. The solo violin plays the first section using excerpts from *Love Theme* with uncompleted motifs that articulate musically the emotion of Ying-tai being hesitant to say her feelings. In this passage, the composers use the special slide technique (*huayin*) up and down a minor third. This slide sounds very gloomy, reflecting the lovers' melancholy (Fig. 4-10). The composers use this technique to copy the sound of another traditional Chinese musical instrument, the *erhu*. For violin, it is hard to imitate the *erhu*'s timbre, which is very close to the sound of human crying because of the instruments' intrinsic acoustic.

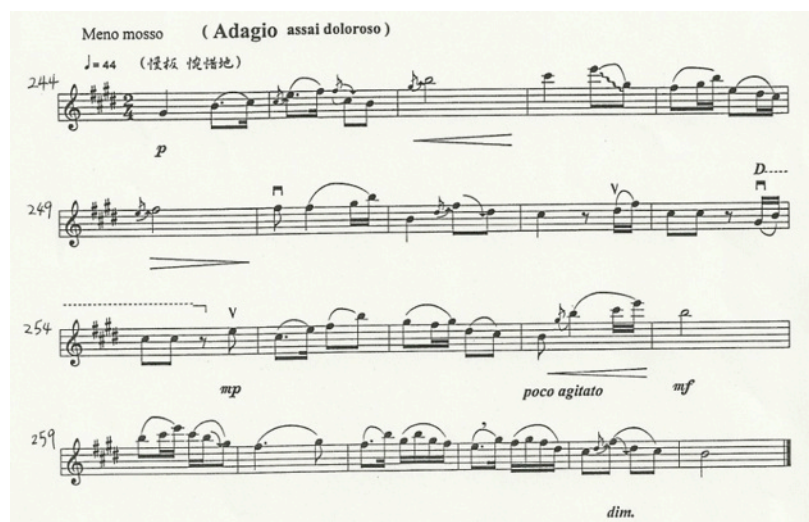


Figure 4-10.⁶⁸ Closing section—*Farewell at Pavilion*

⁶⁸ Figure 4-10 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 270.

In the second section of the closing, measure 269-284, the solo violin and solo cello share a conversation. The violin part represents Ying-tai and the cello part represents Shan-bo. Both melody lines share the joyous character of love blossoming between the two and gloominess when they are forced apart. The background music, including string tremolos, reiterates the mood of sadness and struggle of the lovers being kept apart. The strings end the section with a soft and light texture, but the color is rather cold, dark and ominous, foreshadowing the tragic ending of the story (Fig. 4-11). This codetta is longer than the typical Western codetta in sonata form. The composers made it longer to break up traditional Western rules.

Figure 4-11.⁶⁹ Second part of *Farewell at Pavilion*

⁶⁹ Figure 4-11 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 271.

The development section of *The Butterfly Lovers* is the most dramatic part of the whole concerto. It begins with dramatic *Sturm und Drang*. There are three parts to it, each with a different atmosphere: first is Ying-tai's frustration over the pre-arranged marriage, second is the lovers' meeting in the chamber, and third is the eventual death of the lovers. Using dramatic emotion, the composers wove together these contrasting narratives to present the drama from a musical point of view.

The first part of the development represents Ying-tai's frustration over a pre-arranged marriage. It follows a sinister passage in measure 291, played by a cello and bassoon, which is characterized by a set of repetitions that combine three eighth notes and one half note with the timpani's tremolo and the ring of *Gon* (tam-tam) foreshadow Ying-tai's struggle with the pre-arranged marriage under agitated multiple stops on the solo (Fig. 4-12). At measure 296, the key signature modulates from E major to D major, and at measure 309 it modulates once again from D major to B-flat major. Along with the key signature, the tempo changes as well. At measure 296, the tempo shifts from 4/4 to 3/4 time in three measures, then change to 4/4 for one measure then continue repeating the set for three times. In this context, the tension from measure 296 to 309 gradually developed by shrinking the length of the notes, from the half note changes to a quarter then the sixteenth note with the strings' playing a nervous tremolo figure, followed by a shift to three down bows. The intensity arrives at measure 309 with the feudal motif played by the double bass, cello, trombone, and horn. By hearing the sound of the feudal motif (Fig 4-13) with the continuous triplet in the background, we get a sense of traditional Chinese feudal society where the father is the most powerful person in the family.

In measure 324 to 337, the solo violin plays a *recitative* tempo (*san-ban* in Chinese) with brutal and provoked (Fig. 4-14). The motif in this passage is from the introduction.

285 Meno mosso

290 阴沉沉地 (Pesante) $\text{♩} = 60$

Meno mosso sul G unis.

阴沉沉地 (Pesante) $\text{♩} = 60$

295 不安地 (Affannato) Più mosso $\text{♩} = 104$

不安地 (Affannato) Più mosso $\text{♩} = 104$

Figure 4-12.⁷⁰ The foreshadow of feudal motif

The composers gave this violin part a number of harder techniques to perform—such as enormous leaps and double stops. Moreover, the fast scalar passage in measure 326 and 329

⁷⁰ Chen Gang and He Zhan-hao, “*The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*,” full score, (Shanghai: SMPH, 2008), 29.

suggest Ying-tai's grief over the pre-arranged marriage. Another concept to mention in the passage is the tremolo at measure 334. This is a common usage from *erhu*, called *chan-gong* (顫 3 trembling the bow rapidly). The accent comes with has heavy impressions on it, indicates not just only Ying-tai's hopeless and sobbing but also metaphors her insubordination and betrayal of her father's feudal power.

嚴厲, 光暴地
♩ = 138 (Duramente)

309 8^{va} *ff* (大提琴, 低音提琴, 低音管, 法國號, 長號)
cello, bass, bassoon, Horn, Tromb.

312

315

318 *fff*

Figure 4-13.⁷¹ The feudal motive by lower register

⁷¹ Figure 4-13 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 273.

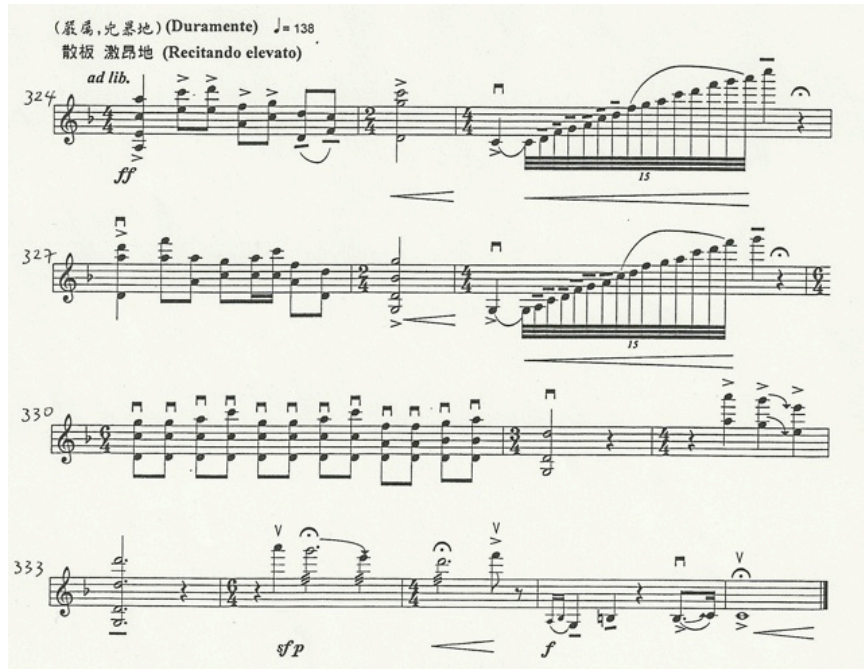


Figure 4-14.⁷² The recitative

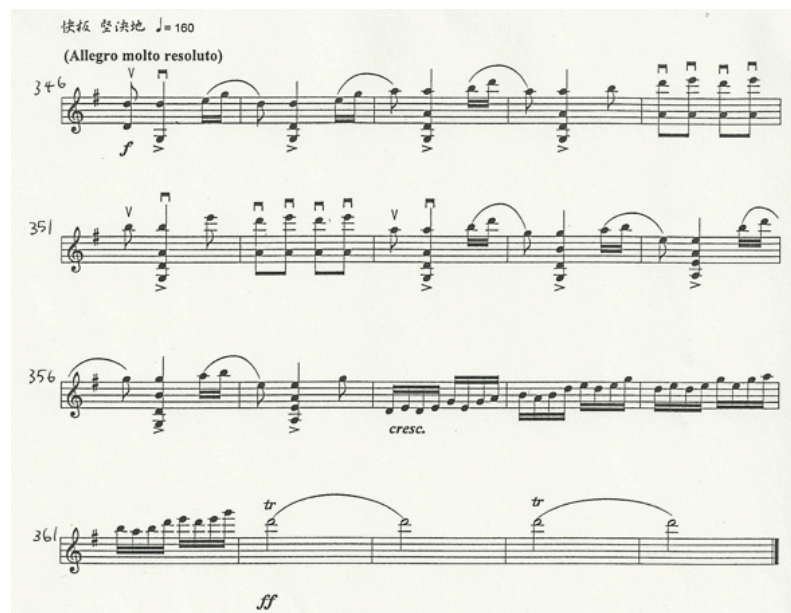


Figure 4-15.⁷³ *Opposition to an Arranged Marriage*

⁷² Figure 4-14 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 274.

⁷³ Figure 4-15. Ibid., 275.

After this rubato recitative the music follows up is an accented syncopation played by the solo violin—which mirrors Ying-tai’s indignation over her pre-arranged marriage (Fig. 4-15). Before the syncopation at measure 338, occurs the accompaniment introduces a new rhythmic motive composed of resolute sixteenth notes to underline the determination of Ying-tai to rebel against the establishment.

The interlocking motives of the syncopated rhythm representing, Ying-tai and the Theme II, section C motif representing her traditional and heavy-handed father contribute to the dramatic imagery. Through the repetition of syncopation, the music depicts strongly Ying-tai’s resistance. The violence is prolonged, with the modulation building up to the huge conflict and further intensified by Ying-tai’s first unsuccessful defense with her father’s rigid feudal power at measure 410 with the rhythmic dissonance between horns triplet eighth notes and sixteenth notes in the accompaniment.

The fighting continues till the trumpets and trombones shout out the feudal theme at measure 426 with whole orchestra accompanying, the brass instruments *crescendo* to the *fff* (the loudest point in the piece). After measure 444, it *decrescendos* down to a quiet dynamic that presages the interlude that is the next section—the “Meeting in the Chamber,” the second crying passage.

The sudden appearance of a mournful passage portrays an intimate conversation between the lovers prior to the untimely death of Shan-bo (Fig. 4-16). The music starts with an interlude, measure 446-467, which is in E-flat major with an *adagio* tempo. It is a special section in that the composers gave a unique structure that is typically found in sonata form development section.

After a short two-measure introduction (m. 446-447) by clarinet, the solo violin plays an exceedingly sentimental melody under harp and strings accompaniment.

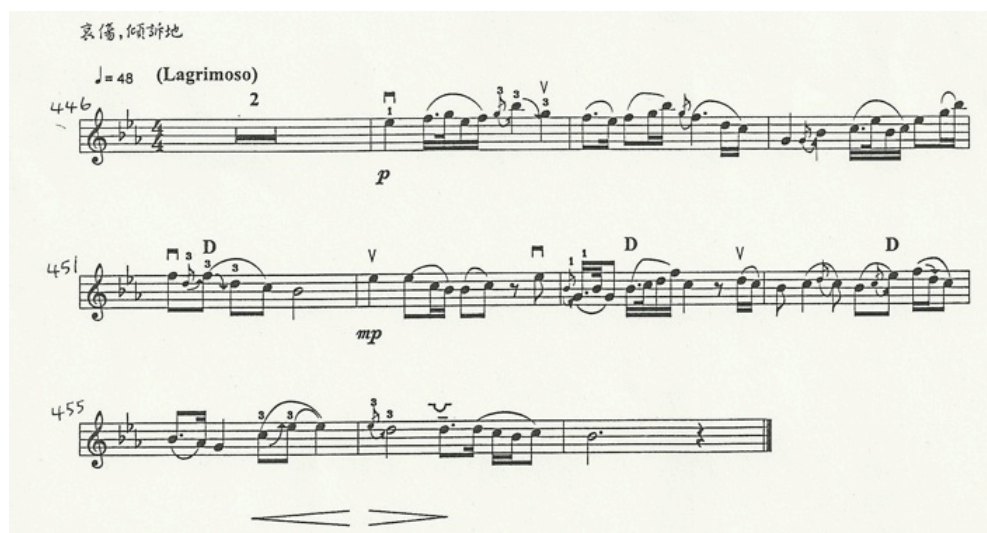


Figure 4-16.⁷⁴ *Meeting in the Chamber*

The motif is adapted from the *Love Theme* with lots of slow sliding up a minor third, slow sliding up and down a minor third and a tearful slow *mo-yin*, ♫ at measure 456, which uses the slow bending of a note. The passage is evocative of Ying-tai's conversation with Shan-bo about her prearranged marriage from her father. She has no right to discuss it with her father not only because of tradition but her fiancé's rich family background. This interlude makes up the music turns mournful in the concerto. Up until measure 458, the solo violin and cello are in conversation with one another (Fig. 4-17). The musical allusion evokes confessions of longing for each other as Shan-bo visits Ying-tai in her chamber. The melody sometimes goes stimulating sometimes staying; sometimes passion sometimes calm; sometimes being together sometimes falling apart. The cello plays in the middle register, imitating the main melody, while

⁷⁴ Figure 4-16 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 276.

the solo violin plays counterpoint—each expressive of the lovers’ ardent sentiments. The musical language used throughout the interlude is another segment that mimicked the sounds by *erhu*. This, then, is a major section of the piece where the East meets the West.

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Solo Violin (獨奏小提琴) and Solo Cello (獨奏大提琴). The score is written in Western staff notation with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked '慢板' (Adagio) and the mood is '(哀傷, 纏綿悱惻地)' (Sorrowful, tenderly nostalgic). The score is divided into four systems, with measures 458, 460, 463, and 466 marked at the beginning of each system. The violin part features a melodic line with a crescendo leading to a forte (f) dynamic, while the cello part provides a rhythmic and harmonic accompaniment. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Figure 4-17.⁷⁵ The conversation between solo violin and solo cello in the *Meeting in the Chamber* passage

The following music comes with the death of Shan-bo, Ying-tai throws herself into the grave. The passage where Ying-tai throws herself into Shan-bo’s grave—the climax of the entire

⁷⁵ Figure 4-17 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in “Liang-Zhu,”* 277.

concerto—is from measure 468 to 695. The orchestra plays a fast progression of fateful chords in quarter notes in measure 468 for four measures, then gradually decreases to eighth notes for two measures, and finally to constant sixteenth notes for seven measures. The music intensifies, ominously portending the sorrowful ending via the determinate and progressive reducing length of the notes.

The following solo violin resembles a recitative with very heavily bawling and in measure 481(Fig. 4-18). In Chinese folk opera, it is called *dao-ban* 導板, which means the head of the recitative. It usually remains the heaviest sensation.

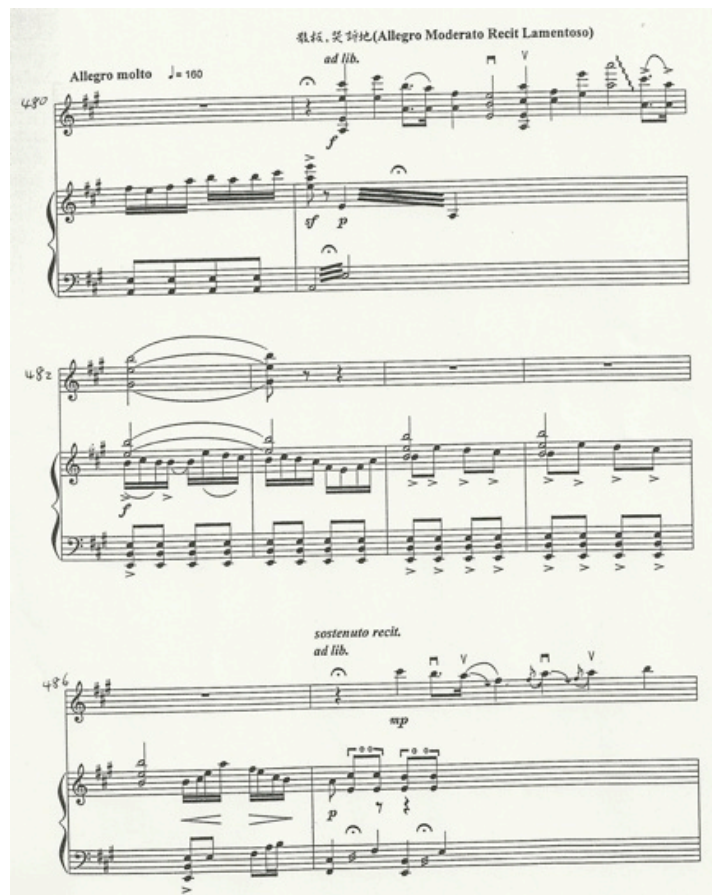


Figure 4-18.⁷⁶ An excerpt before Ying-tai jumping into the grave at measure 481

⁷⁶ Figure 4-18 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 279.

The freely of crying alludes to the grief and wailing of Ying-tai as she contemplates her marriage date. The chords in these measures are reminiscent of Ying-tai's being torn apart emotionally, while the long downward slides point to a mind weighted down while bawling and screaming.

The rest of the recitative in measure 487, 490, 493, and 496 as the solo violin plays its *recitative* melody, the *bangu* performs a pulsing rhythm that reflects the tension and conflict between Ying-tai's anxious protests and the obstinate force of her father's power over her. After *the freely* melodies, usually follows a fast tempo (Fig. 4-19). The technique of tempo that borrows from *Jin-Da-man-chang* 緊打慢唱 or *saoban* 蠶板 is adapted by the Chinese folk opera, with a rhythmically fast and ostinato in the orchestra with freely-performed and lyrical solo melodies or vocals against a rushing accompaniment.⁷⁷

After the alternating between the solo violin and orchestra, the solo violin plays fast downward-moving sixteen notes, giving the impression of a hurried wedding procession at measure 501. The wedding procession sometimes rushing sometimes hesitating seems there is a supernatural power that directing the procession to Shan-bo's tomb. Then the tension continues building up with threatening motivation such as accents at second beat, and perpetual sixteenth notes and tremolos and urgent upbeat and Ying-tai's grief-stricken melody alternated the whole section that conjures Ying-tai's mournful and enraged emotion. Approaching the end of the section, measure 621-634, the solo violin plays a sequence of fast sixteen notes and double stops, also with an accent on each beat. Heaviness in the sound reflects the weight on Ying-tai's heart as the procession passes in front of Shan-bo's tomb. She is in despair and eager to see it.

⁷⁷ Chen Gang and He Zhan-hao. "The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto: performance notes," full score, (Shanghai: SMPH, 2008).

Figure 4-19.⁷⁸ The bawling recitative of violin

In the last recitative is finally the section of *The Butterfly Lovers* where Ying-tai throws herself into Shan-bo's tomb at measure 647. The accompaniment concludes the development

⁷⁸ Chen Gang and He Zhan-hao, "*The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto.*," full score, (Shanghai: SMPH, 2008), 58.

with a climatic tutti that represents the outburst of anger over the mercilessness of social conventions and bondages (Fig. 4-20).

Figure 4-20 is a page from a musical score, specifically a page from the full score of "The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto" by Chen Gang and He Zhan-hao. The page is titled "悲愤地 (Patimento) ♩ = 54" and is in 6/4 time. The score is for a large orchestra, including woodwinds, brass, percussion, and strings. The woodwinds (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon) and strings (Violins I and II, Viola, Cello, Double Bass) are playing sustained, expressive lines. The brass (Cor Anglais, Trumpet, Trombone) and percussion (Timpani, Gong/Bell, Snare Drum, Tam-tam) are playing rhythmic patterns. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff*, *f*, *p*, and *mf*, and articulation like accents and slurs. The section concludes with a "no solo" marking.

Figure 4-20.⁷⁹ Ying-tai throws herself into the grave

⁷⁹ Chen Gang and He Zhan-hao, "The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto," full score, (Shanghai: SMPH, 2008), 77.

To escape from such brutality, Ying-tai chose to die together with Shan-bo. The entire orchestra performs a dramatically sonorous theme until measure 659, where the intensity comes back as at the beginning.

What makes a real difference in this development section is the traditional Chinese flavor the alternative performance techniques offer. Because of the unique sounds and moods their presence renders, this is the place in the concerto that most successfully contributes meaning to the program music. Indeed, because of the solo violin's use of more traditional techniques, the whole development section, including the orchestral parts, becomes more dramatic and operatic. This is the place in the concerto that truly challenges and demonstrates the soloist's performance abilities. Therefore, this is perhaps the most interesting part of the entire piece.

Recapitulation

The recapitulation, measure 660-709, has two aspects to it: the return of *Love Theme* and transfiguration of the lovers into butterflies. This section is the shortest section of the concerto. It differs from the exposition in that it does not recap theme II.

Before the return of theme I, the introduction beginning in measure 660, is marked by the return of the twittering flute, accompanied by a sweeping *glissandi* harp. This return paves the way for recapitulation of the *Love Theme* in the solo violin, which transforms the atmosphere into one that is calm, light and serene. In the transfiguration of the lovers into butterflies, measure 684-691, the string section initially plays *pizzicato* then interact with the woodwind instruments while the piano performs a fast running pentatonic scale (Fig. 4-21) in a high register. The imagery conjures a view of the lovers blissfully dancing in the sky without worry

or care. Shan-bo and Ying-tai have been transformed into dancing butterflies, forever flying freely in the sky together.

Piu mosso $\text{♩} = 63$

684 *p dolce.*

686 *pp*

688 *mp*

690

p dolce 鋼琴 *piano*

pp 弦樂撥奏 *Strings Pizz.*

Figure 4-21.⁸⁰ The transfiguration of the lovers accompanies by the piano with fast running scale

⁸⁰ Figure 4-21 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 282-283.

From measure 692-709, the *Love Theme* of the codetta dominates the passage. As it is joined by accompanimental doublings, we realize that Shan-bo and Ying-tai have, against all odds, fulfilled their pursuit of love as a pair of butterflies slowly disappearing into the final remnants of sound.

The Development and Variation of the *Love Theme*

The main *Love Theme* of *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto is the most remarkable passage of the piece. According to the co-composer He Zhen-hao, the main *Love Theme* came from *Yueju* opera. When singing the passage, vocalists had to put a great deal of emotional expression into it in order to present the cantabile and adequately articulate the feelings of the characters. Articulation, accent and language dialect in the concerto are compacted together in Chinese opera, but because the vocal technique is hard for an instrument to copy exactly, the composers considered simply borrowing the main lyric melody—ti-re-mi-sol—then combining it with variations.

The most important interval of the concerto is the moving minor third (in this piece, mi-sol and la-do). It imbues the musical narrative with gentleness, elegance, cantabile and a light texture. The composers adopted this minor third expression and main lyric melody for the entire piece and elaborated on it in different sections, which makes the whole concerto thematic (Fig. 4-22). They used a variety of different keys and de-composed the original theme to make this work more interesting. This is why the *Love Theme* is so well known.

The image displays a musical score for 'The Butterfly Lovers' violin concerto, comparing original themes with their transformed versions. The score is organized into two main columns: '(原譜) The Butterfly Lovers violin concerto' and '(移調對照) After transformed'. On the left, a list of six themes is provided, each with its original Chinese title and English translation. The themes are: 主題素材 (越劇特定音調) / Theme from Yueju opera, (一)愛情主題 / Love theme, (二)同窗三載 / Study together, (三)長亭惜別 / Farewell at Pavilion, (四)抗婚 / Opposition to an arranged marriage, (五)樓台會 / Meeting in the Chamber, and (六)哭靈投墳 / The death of Shan-bi / Ying-tai throws herself into the tomb. Each theme is represented by a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The original versions are shown on the left, and the transformed versions are shown on the right, separated by a vertical dashed line. The transformed versions are in a different key signature, one flat (Bb), and feature more complex, flowing melodic lines compared to the original themes.

Figure 4-22.⁸¹ Original melody from six sections transformed into the primary motif

Another important element of the concerto is the imitation of the musical language. *The Butterfly Lovers* not only uses a folk tune, but also uses the sound character of traditional instruments and the traditional operatic vocal techniques. In the concerto, there are various *glissando* notes, some of which are taken from the *erhu*'s natural musical character (which is close to that of human talking and crying). Some of them are from local operatic musical elements which give the whole piece its simultaneously Western and Eastern sounding character. For instance, oscillations between minor thirds and different sliding speeds on the violin make the piece sound more connected and closer to the unique traditional folk style of the operatic performance.

⁸¹ Figure 4-22 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 287.

Three Ways of the Concerto Employed Operatic Material

- 1) The cantabile melodic line between conversation passages: for example, in passages where Shan-bo and Ying-tai are in love, farewell at pavilion, and meeting in the chamber, the solo violin and cello have a conversation-like *cantabile* between them, associating this interesting musical interaction with corresponding narrative imagery rendered for audiences.
- 2) Adapting the tempo marking from the folk opera. The composers employed elements of using *san-ban* (free tempo) especially in the sections of *Opposition to an Arranged Marriage* and *The Death of Shan-bo, Ying-tai Throws Herself into the Grave*. This was done through interactions between the *sao-ban* (騷板) and *qwai-ban* (快板 fast tempo) at the measure 487. *Sao-ban* means *Jin-la-man-chang* (緊拉慢唱), singing freely upon a percussion's strong rhythmic conducting, usually *qwai-ban* follows up when *sao-ban* is finished. Each *Sao-ban* shapes the music dramatically. Use of *bangu* is seen commonly in local operas and most of the tempo markings in the concerto are from local opera. The sound of the drum is very sharp, dry, and cracking which penetrates nicely through the other instrumental sounds. Usually *bangu* can be seen as a leader of the orchestra when it is playing. The first recitative before *sao-ban* called *dao-ban* at measure 481. It is the most heaviest and pesante of the whole section. Employment of these techniques makes the concerto easier to understand, closing the distance between East and West for Western audiences used to classical music of European origin. These asymmetric unique tempo markings build up the intensity of the music into the great climax of the piece.
- 3) Special performance techniques from traditional folk operatic singing and instrument playing. For instance, first, the imagery of school life, playing and studying together, as

represented and performed by the solo violin, which copies the *gu-zheng* (an instrument played by plucking the strings) is brought to life with slurred sixteenth up and down, and octave leaping (Fig. 4-23); second, “*sao-xian*” (掃絃 sweep picking), a technique borrows from the *pipa*, means rapidly sweep a chord out in the in the development section when Ying-tai against the mindset of her father’s provocations. The chord comes with an accent and should sound very determined and aggressive (Fig. 4-24). Third, is the tremolo, or *chan-gong* (顫弓 trembling the bow rapidly), is borrowed from the *erhu* to render an atmosphere of urgency (Fig. 4-25). The last one is the use of human crying melody in the section of *Farewell at Pavilion, Meeting in the Chamber*, and *The Death of Shan-bo, Ying-tai Throws Herself into the Grave*, especially in the last section, the bawling and screaming operatic vocal crying.



Figure 4-23.⁸² The technique borrowed from *gu-zheng* on the running up-and-down sixteenth and octave on eighth notes



Figure 4-24.⁸³ The technique borrowed from *pipa*—“*sao-xian*” (掃絃 sweep picking)

⁸² Figure 4-23 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music* in “Liang-Zhu,” 297.

⁸³ Figure 4-24, Ibid.,



Figure 4-25.⁸⁴ The technique borrowed from *erhu*—tremolo

Changing of the Main Motif

A simple motif is necessary in composing a unified piece with recognizable variations. *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*'s main motif stems from notes borrowed from *Yueju* opera: mi, sol, la and do. The composers elaborated on these by using small motives and figural variations as embellishment, repetition of notes, changing the rhythm, sequences, reassembling the motif into different combinations (Fig. 4-26).

Figure 4-26.⁸⁵ The motif and the process of figural variations

⁸⁴ Figure 4-25 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 297.

⁸⁵ Figure 4-26. Ibid., 291.

In the figure, there are few processes that involve the motif. It starts the basic idea of the motif; then, in the second line, it adds rhythmic variation; the third line has a variation of second line that combines notes from the previous two measures into one figure, and leads into a sequence. Then again, in the third and forth lines, it takes the basic motif which has the pitches E, G, A, C and rearranges to E, C, A and G. The composers take this idea and develop it with changing the rhythm and adding some ornamentation through the arrow, the process, to (a) and (b) which is even more elaborate then the first part of three. These are the ideas of how composers arranged butterfly lovers into thematic concerto.

Tonality

The key signature or mode of a piece is important in that it reveals the color, emotion and atmospheric image of a musical piece. A musical work will also be boring without any modulation for extended periods of time. *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto basically uses the pentatonic scale of mode of *chih*—G, A, C, D, E—but the composers only used key changes in the piece instead of modulating the mode.

From Table 4-1, we can see the entire concerto is developed from traditional sonata-form rules: tonic (I) – dominant (V) – sub-dominant (IV) – tonic (I). There are more changes in the passage that characterizes the *Opposition to an Arranged Marriage* (m. 291-445). Here is the first climax of the piece. It emphasizes Ying-tai's sorrow and desperate emotions. But the principle climax, it reserved for the passage of Ying-tai throws herself into Shan-bo's grave.

Table 4-1. The structure of *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*⁸⁶

		Measures	Passages	Keys	The tonal of <i>Chih</i> Mode
Introduction		1~11		G	D
Exposition	Theme I	12~30 (a)	<i>Love Theme</i>	G	D
		31~38 (b)	<i>Joining of Hands in Brotherhood</i>	G	D
		39~49 (a)	<i>Love Theme</i>	G	D
	Bridge	50	Cadenza	G	D
	Theme II	51~84 (a)	<i>Studying Together for Three Years</i>	E	B
		85~108 (b)		E	B
		109~120 (a)		A	E
		121~207 (c)		A, D, A	E, A, E
		208~243 (a)		E	B
	Closing	244~290	<i>Farewell at Pavilion</i>	E	B
Development	Part I	291~445	<i>Opposition to an Arranged Marriage</i>	D, B-flat, F, G, C	A, F, C, D, G
	Part II	446~467	<i>Meeting in the Chamber</i>	E-flat	B-flat
	Part III	468~659	<i>The Death of Shan-bo, Ying-tai Throws Herself into the Grave</i>	A, E	E, B
Like-introduction		660-665		A	E
Recapitulation of Theme I		666~714	<i>Transformation into Butterflies (with Love Theme)</i>	G	D

⁸⁶ Table 4-1 motioned from Minghui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 292.

Table 4-2. The concerto's relationship between the structure and programmatic music ⁸⁷

	Keys	Measures	Topic	Music
Introduction	G major	1~11	Shan-bo and Ying-tai's meeting, then become good friends.	Depicts the affection between the protagonists, setting up the beautiful backdrop of their rendezvous with the opening <i>pianississimo</i> tremolos, followed by a lively twitter and graceful <i>legato</i> melody.
Exposition	Theme I (A) (three-part) G major	12~30	<i>Love Theme</i>	Portrayal of their love using the original <i>Love Theme</i> from folk opera. The first time as Ying-tai, second time as Shan-bo and Ying-tai together.
	(B) G major	31~38	<i>Joining of Hands in Brotherhood</i>	Shan-bo is represented by the cello and Ying-tai, as the violin. The simplicity and elegance of this match is enhanced by gentle <i>glissandi</i> that portrays the tranquility of the water surrounding them.
	(A) G major	39~49	The blossoming of their love	Same <i>Love Theme</i> , but played by the tutti orchestra and solo violin. It sounds brighter and thicker in texture.
	Bridge G major	50	Cadenza	The whimsical runs, octave leaps and few multiple stops portray Ying-Tai's murmuring of telling her true identity to Shan-bo or not.

⁸⁷ Table 4-2 concept derived from Yu-Wen Yang. "The Program Music Study: the Incorporation Between Concerto and Program Music from View of Nine Concertos," (master's thesis, National Central University, 2004), 77-80.

(Table 4-2 Cont.)

		Measures	Topic	Music
	Theme II (Rondo) E major	51~58	Postlude of A	A sudden halt from the Cadenza then leads into a lively rondo
	(A) E major	59~84	<i>Studying Together for Three Years</i>	The playful and joyful sensation in the alternating between the staccato quarter note and eighth note depicts lovers chasing to each other.
	(B) E major	85~109		Oboe and bassoon together react to the solo violin portraying the lovers studying together.
	(A) A major	109~120		Tutti orchestra plays the main theme.
	(C) A major	121~207		Solo violin jumps up and down octaves, creating the joyful sounds of the lovers playing together.
	(A) E major	208~244		Tutti orchestra plays the main theme and solo violin accompanies with broken chords. Then the solo violin comes back for the theme in higher register.
Closing	E major	244~290	<i>Farewell at Pavilion</i>	The mood suddenly changes when the rondo gives way to a more somber passage that transforms segments of the <i>legato</i> melody and <i>Love Theme</i> into a sorrowful farewell.
Development	Part I E major	291~308	<i>Opposition to an arranged</i>	Cellos play descending scale passages, creating a

(Table 4-2 Cont.)

		Measures	Topic	Music
	D major	291~308	<i>Marriage</i>	sorrowful mood, while a Chinese <i>Tam-tam</i> and timpani render images of an ominous atmosphere.
	B flat major	309~323		Brass and lower strings tutti play feudal chord, the <i>forte</i> and strong thematic image of Ying-tai's father's and his patriarchal power.
	F major	324~337		The solo violin uses the folk opera tempo, <i>san ban</i> , to present Ying-tai's intense sorrow and despair.
		338~345		The accompaniment then introduces a new rhythmic motive composed of resolute sixteenth notes to underscore Ying-tai's determination to rebel against the establishment.
	G major	346~357		The syncopated rhythm performed by the solo violin portrays Ying-tai's rejection of the pre-arranged marriage, even though she will die.
		362~369		Reiteration of the father's power.
	C major	370~409		Ying-tai's resistance again.
		410~425		The violent turmoil reflected in the musical passage intensified by

(Table 4-2 Cont.)

		Measures	Topic	Music
		410~425		rhythmic dissonance between triplet eighth and sixteenth notes in the accompaniment.
		426~445		The climax of Ying-tai's protests against the pre-arranged marriage.
	E flat major	448~457	<i>Meeting in the chamber</i>	Solo violin performs a sorrowful melody, reflecting a grief-stricken Ying-tai.
		458~467		Interaction between the solo cello and solo violin, creating an image of despair in the lovers' last meeting and conversation.
	Part II E flat major, A major	481~497	Death of the lovers	The solo violin recitative portrays Ying-tai's sorrowful rejection of the pre-arranged marriage. The <i>glissando</i> reflects her sadness up to her death.
		497~645		Perpetual sixteenth notes, fateful-sounding chords and multiple stops image the speeding up of the marriage procession and Ying-tai's desire to see Shan-bo's tomb.
		646~647		Ying-tai finally decided to escape from such brutality by throwing herself into Shan-bo's grave.

(Table 4-2 Cont.)

		Measures	Topic	Music
		647~659		Suddenly the tomb is collapsing and the earth is cracking up and then Ying-tai commits suicide. The accompaniment concludes the second part with a climatic tutti representing the outburst of anger over the mercilessness of social conventions and bondages.
		660~665		The tomb closed after Ying-tai threw herself. The music remains tranquillo for a while then return of the twitter, accompanied by a harp sweeping <i>glissandi</i> , paves the way for recapitulation of the <i>Love Theme</i> in the solo violin part.
Recapitulation	<i>Love Theme</i>	666~683	<i>Transformation into Butterfly</i>	The <i>Love Theme</i> returns. The protagonists transfigured into a pair of butterflies.
	G major	684~696		Strings with <i>pizzicato</i> interact with woodwinds to create the image of the butterflies are happily chasing each other again.
		697~709		Solo violin and tutti orchestra play the <i>Love Theme</i> together. Shan-bo and Ying-tai have,

(Table 4-2 Cont.)

		Measures	Topic	Music
	G major			against all odds, consummated their love.
Codetta		710~714		The butterflies slowly disappearing into the final remnants of sounds in the air.

CHAPTER FIVE: VIBRATO TECHNIQUE OF CHINESE INSTRUMENT—*ERHU*

Music written for the *erhu* (Fig. 5-1) is a symbol of Chinese music throughout the world. This instrument best reflects the quality of the human voice and most notably resembles a weeping woman. The *erhu* is regarded as the Chinese violin in the string family. It has been mainly considered a folk instrument, accompanying traditional opera for more than one thousand years. In the 1920s and 1930s, it gradually became a solo instrument. Since then, the *erhu* has been widely performed and taught in conservatories.⁸⁸

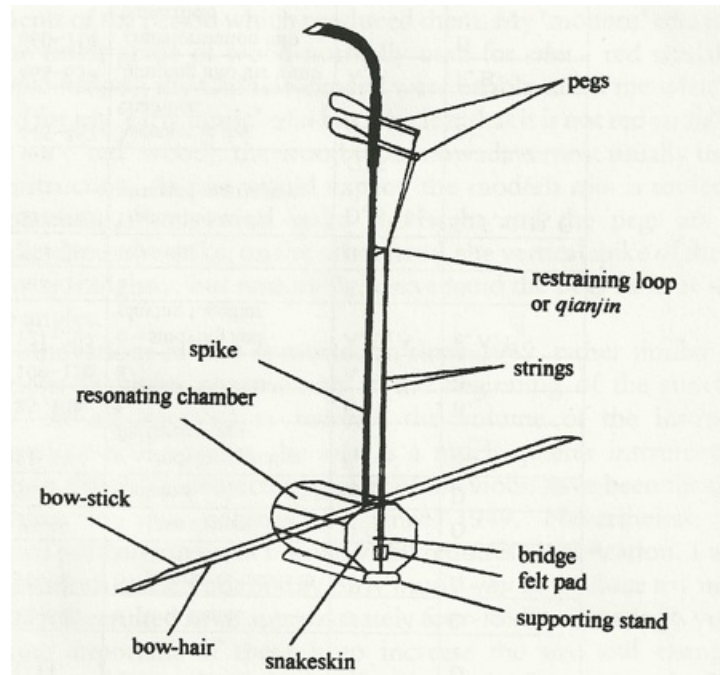


Figure 5-1. Diagram of the modern *erhu*.⁸⁹

The *erhu* has two strings tuned in D and A with no fingerboard (Fig. 5-2). Because it is without a supporting board, the *erhu* creates more variety on desired pitch and sliding effects

⁸⁸ Colin Huehns, "The 'Early Music' *Erhu*," *The Galpin Society Journal* 54, (May 2001), 56.

⁸⁹ Figure 5-1. Colin Huehns, "The 'Early Music' *Erhu*," 56.

compared to the Western instrument such as the violin. It is usually placed on the left lap, held vertically and stroked horizontally with an underhand (German bow hold) style (Fig. 5-3). The bow is made from horsehair and a bamboo stick. The bow-hair is placed between the strings of the instrument and the strings are stroked with both the inner and outer faces of the bow-hair.⁹⁰ The resonating chamber is made of wood covered by snakeskin.

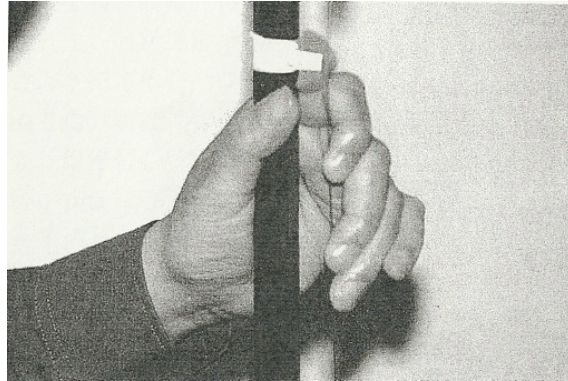


Figure 5-2. There is no fingerboard on the *erhu*.⁹¹



Figure 5-3. The underhand style bow grip⁹²

⁹⁰ Colin Huehns, "The 'Early Music' *Erhu*," *The Galpin Society Journal* 54, (May 2001), 56.

⁹¹ Figure 5-2. Fu Hua-gen, *The Interpretation of Erhu Playing*, ed. Irene Y. Chen, (China: International Publishing House for China's Culture, 2006), 100.

⁹² Figure 5-3. *Ibid.*, 61.

The snakeskin is usually the most important part of the *erhu*, giving the instrument a unique sound through reverberation of the skin. The best skin usually comes from the belly side of a python near the tail. Because of its similarity to the human voice, the *erhu* music is expressive, ranging from the subtle sensitivity to the extreme violence. It can be doleful, playful, and incisive.⁹³

A bit of background information on the *erhu* is essential for a discussion on the main technique that forms *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*, particularly found in the passages characterized by profound sorrow and lament. As the transcriber—Professor Wei has given instruction about using the finger joints and flexible wrists, shoulders and arms while performing this piece. We can find out the reason to forget the conventional Western technique through examination of the left-hand vibrato technique used on the *erhu*. There are four types of vibratos that the *erhu* uses while playing.

- 1) Rolling vibrato. This is the basic vibrato. The palm is the pivot point. A finger sits on the string naturally, continuously bending and straightening at the first joint near the fingertip while keeping that fingertip on the string. When the palm moves up, the first joint of the index finger straightens. As the palm moves down, the joint bends while the wrist pulls back. The wrist can be raised up a little bit to allow more room for the rolling and up-and-down motion (Fig. 5-4). The music using this type of vibrato is more elegant and gentle.
- 2) Pressing vibrato. Alike to the rolling technique; however, the fingertip stays in line with the string without bending or straightening the first joint, similar to the wrist

⁹³ Colin Huehne, “Experimental and Traditional *Huqin*: The *Sanhu* and *Euxianzi*” *The Galpin Society Journal* 56, (Jun, 2003), 62.

vibrato played on the violin. The pressure is heavier and the resulting resonance is deeper, creating more intensity than the rolling vibrato.

- 3) Sliding vibrato. There are two versions with this vibrato: the short distance slide and the long distance slide. The short distance slide is similar to the rolling vibrato. When rolling the palm, the fingertip rolls in the same movement. The rolling range may be as dynamic as to the point of touching the nail. Then the first joint simply makes a circle, it results in a pitch that is slightly low. The long distance slide requires the arm to be raised, so the wrist will naturally bend forward for sliding up-and-down. The wrist here must be very flexible.
- 4) Grasping vibrato. This vibrato is created through the motion of grasping the string through the fingertip to alternate tension on the string. The resulting sound wave is very intense and closely mimics the sound of human crying. This type of vibrato does not apply to the double bass because of the existence of its fingerboard.



Figure 5-4. The bending and straightening motion of the first joint finger of the left hand⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Chao Han-yang, *The Five Hundred Questions and Answers of the Art of Erhu Playing*. (Beijing: People's Music Publishing House, 2005), 75.

Through this examination of vibrato techniques on the *erhu*, I get a better sense of how to articulate the left hand technique more clearly as well. The right hand technique makes the *huayin* (sliding sound) more expressive through a variety of tone colors. The amount of pressure will affect the timbre and character of the tone, which also depends on the music and different depths of the sliding notes. There are three different ways of producing *huayin* with technique controlled through the bow hand at the beginning, in the middle and at the end. The three types of interpreting *huayin* can be applied through the playing on the right hand double bass technique.

1) The first way starts soft and ends strong. The left hand slides first. The bow hand follows with an airy sound that gradually grows stronger and more defined. The sliding sound emerges smoothly in the process.

2) The second way starts off strong then vanishes in the end. Upon drawing a strong *portamento* sound, the right hand must gradually fade away the well-defined intonation with sensitivity, and ease up the pressure and weight to create a light and airy sound. With a decrescendo in volume, the left hand completes its sliding. To create a lively sound, the motion of the slide must keep the same pace with the motion in the right hand. The bow continues traveling in the air to make a round and complete sound.

3) The third way sustains the volume all the way to the end, regardless of whether the slide is moving upwards or downwards. This is the easiest among the three, but attention still must be paid to bow speed and dynamics to avoid an unimaginative sound.

A significant factor in generating a beautiful and expressive sliding sound is to combine it with mastery of bow control. Nevertheless, it is a real challenge for the double bass to represent the sound and character of the *erhu*. In order to perform this concerto, it is essential that the

soloist have a thorough background knowledge of the original instrument, Chinese music, and Chinese culture in general.

CHAPTER SIX: TRANSCRIPTION AND PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUE

ISSUES WITH *THE BUTTERFLY LOVERS* VIOLIN CONCERTO ON DOUBLE BASS

.....[M]y own favorite music for solo bass are transcriptions of music originally written for other instruments. This is my thesis—since the double bass cannot draw upon a standard body of literature to compare with that of violinists or cellists, he must therefore utilize existing compositions which are profitable, in the musical sense as well as appealing to the ear. Certainly there is more to be learned from the music of Bach, Handel and Schubert than that of Van Hall, Schwabe, Sperker or Dragonetti. I feel that bassists must create a new body of bass literature predicated on the works of the masters.⁹⁵ ...Stuart Sanky

Despite the variety of its repertoire, the double bass as a solo instrument has been overlooked by composers for a very long time. This is due to its limited high register, huge size, thick strings, limited volume, low timbre and the technical limitations of players. A quote above by Stuart Sanky, a virtuoso double bass player, teacher, composer, and transcriber, established a core bass repertoire based on the transcriptions of the other instruments' music.

There is certainly great variety in the double bass repertoire of the twentieth century. This variety not only includes original compositions for solo double bass, but also transcribed music from many famous composers.

Nowadays there are more advanced and creative techniques that work idiomatically and that are attracting more and more bass players to perform the instrument. Along with innovative technique, bassists are playing their music with better setup and more advanced fingerings. A solo tuning, F#-B-E-A, is often used to create more tension on the strings, therefore producing large sonority and a more penetrating soloistic quality.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Samuel Applebaum and Henry Roth, "Stuart Sankey," *The Way They Play* 6, (Neptune City, N. J.: Paganini Publications, Inc., 1978), 82.

⁹⁶ Maurice Kelley, "Performance Practice Issues in the Shout Solo Works of Serge Koussevitzky" (DMA diss., Lincoln: University of Nebraska—Lincoln, 2006), 7.

In the twentieth century, several well-known double bassists— Lucas Drew, Stuart Sankey, Klaus Trumpf, Fred Zimmermann, and Oscar G. Zimmerman—have transcribed an enormous amounts of music for double bass. The repertoire includes sonatas by J. S. Bach, Boccherini, Telemann, and Vivaldi in Baroque era; concertos and sonatas by first Vienne school composers, Beethoven, Haydn, and Mozart in Classical era; sonatas, concertos and small pieces by Brahms, Chopin, Cesar Franck, Paganini, Rachmaninoff, Saint-Saens, Schubert, and Schumann, among others in Romantic era. In contrast, in the Chinese repertoire, there are very few, including *The Song of the Prairie* (草原之歌), *The Reflection of Moon on the Er-Quan Spring* (二泉映月, original for *erhu*), and *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*.

In Professor Wei's transcription of *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*, she chose the tuning of E-B-E-A (from low to high string). The lower E is the orchestra string tuning (E-A-D-G), and the other three strings are solo string tuning (F#-B-E-A). For E-B-E-A tuning, the low E string must be reached instead of F# which can extend a whole step lower than the original solo tuning. For example, Edward Elgar's Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 85 (another Professor Wei's transcription), the perfect solution for reaching the chords at the beginning of the concerto is to have low E on the lowest string. The performers just have to be aware of the perfect fifth between the third and fourth strings.

Transcription Issues

As the work originally appeared, the key was G major. When transcribing the work for double bass, the key was changed to F major, because of the *scordatura* solo string tuning; the resulting key will match the original key. Thus, the greater availability of open strings makes the double stops easier to execute. Measure 123 is a good example.



Figure 6-1. The ability of using open strings for the double stop execution

Another transcribing issue is to present the music as close to the original as possible. It is crucial to understand a composers' intention on marked bowings, phrasings, tempo markings, dynamics, and to associate emotional content with it. While transcribing, it is necessary to consider how to simplify some of the unplayable notes and decide on choice of registers. The most natural physically position for bass players is the neck position and thumb position (the middle of the fingerboard). Different registers on double bass have different acoustic sounds and effects. Usually the G-string projects faster and clearer; in contrast, the lower strings respond slower. Therefore, in *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*, Professor Wei used the register that can project better with natural physical posture, yet with some exceptions where it is required by the music.

For instance, the unplayable passage for the double bass—the violin's chords and double stops at the passage representing Ying-tai's resistance to the pre-arranged marriage (m. 324)—is performed *recitando elevato* on the original score (Fig. 6-2).

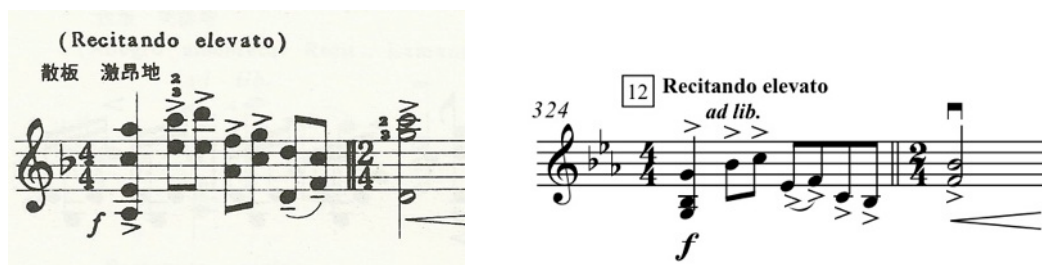


Figure 6-2. Original chords on violin part (left) and double bass transcription (right) at measure 324

It could not be played on the double bass without eliminating some of the double stops and chords, but through the support from the piano and player's body movement may make up the thinner texture. Other examples are in the sections of *Opposition to an Arranged Marriage* and Ying-tai's bawling passages.

The other essential issue is the choice of octave register. Because the pitch ranges of the transcriptions that are from other string instruments are higher than the double bass, it is difficult for double bass to remain on the same octaves. While making decisions with which octave to play (via realizing the double bass' register and sound projection), and maintaining the transcription as close to composers' idea as possible is important in order to avoid muddy sound in the fast passage, or near the edge of the fingerboard at the high position.

For example, the *Love Theme* in the violin score starts on b^1 then moves to one octave lower— b on fourth string (darker string) then in the third time, the register of the partial theme stays one octave higher than the first time. (The *Love Theme* is a partial theme has some differences at the beginning of four bars.) For double bass, the second time plays the same octave as first time to make the melody audible and flowing. For the third time Professor Wei chose to stay at the thumb position which is one octave higher than the original theme to build up the musical intensity that it is required from the original music content.

The cadenza is another challenging issue. The solo double bass part at the pentatonic scale before the second fermata remains the same register after the second trill, in order to arrive at c^3 and prepare the register for the repetition of twittering sound and maintain the intensity of the phrase (compare to the original violin score: after the second trill, the scale goes down to the interval of minor 7th). Usually on the double bass, the low register sounds more laid back and

the sound projects slower than high register. Moreover, the same repetition from the previous pentatonic scale should be avoided.



Figure 6-3. A partial view of the double bass cadenza

At measure 109, the chord is changed into the dominant of G major to take advantage of the harmonics and open strings. The open string and harmonics sustain much longer than stopped notes. Measure 208 is another good example. Therefore, the chord will resonate freely and achieve the arrival feeling of the distention.



Figure 6-4. Arrival chord on measure 109



Figure 6-5. Advantage of open string on measure 208

At measure 126, the last two eighth notes on the violin part is b^1 and f^3 , over an octave range. For double bass, it transcribed into a perfect fifths for staying around the middle of the fingerboard instead of running into the edge of the fingerboard.



Figure 6-6. Perfect fifth register of measure 126 on double bass

As mentioned before, solo double bass repertoire is usually performed around the middle range of the fingerboard. There are exceptions when the musical content needs special attention. The crying passage where Ying-tai is bawling in front of Shan-bo's tomb (m. 487-92) is a good example. Professor Wei chose the position close to the edge of the fingerboard to create intensity of the dramatic timbre instead of playing comfortably around the middle of the fingerboard. The intensity there is not as dramatic as near the edge of the fingerboard.

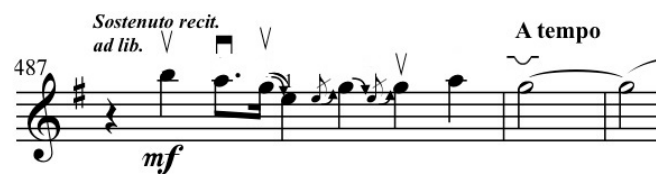


Figure 6-7. The bawling passage on the high register

Other aspects such as the choice of bowing, fingering, and acoustic difference between the violin and double bass are part of the transcription issues, too. For the bowing issue, as Professor Wei mentioned before, proper bowings for musical content (the double bass bow is shorter and heavier than the violin's bow) such as the bowings at the cadenza passage (Fig. 6-8) and measure 127: one should break the slurred sixteenth notes into two bows for 4 + 4, instead of slurring the whole measure as in the violin part (Fig. 6-6).

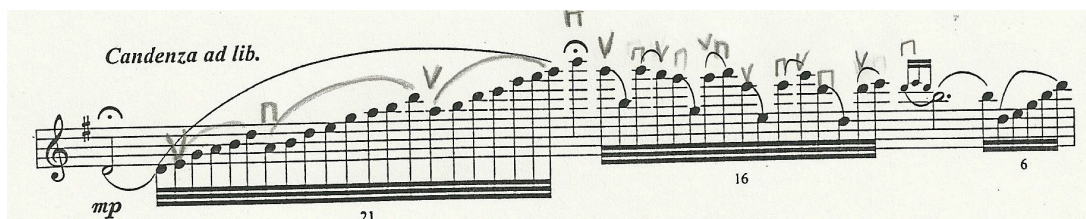


Figure 6-8. Violin bowings vs. double bass bowings at the cadenza passage

The choice of fingering is related to musical content as well. In this particular concerto, it is crucial to have proper fingerings that will present the timbre of the Chinese instrument—*erhu* with the music emotional content. There are some special issues involved while interpreting, such as shifting with strong finger for few notes on loud passages, same-pattern fingerings for fast running passage, muscle memory fingerings, supporting fingerings...etc.

For example, 1) applies to shift with a strong finger for several notes when musical content requires large amount of volume at the high position like the passage from measure 410-425 (Fig. 6-9).

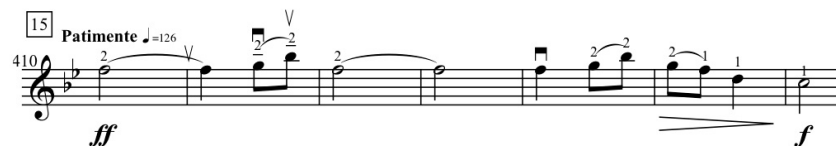


Figure 6-9. Strong finger (2nd) for high lyrical passage supporting the 1st finger on the bottom

2) Repeated pattern fingerings serve better for running up-and-down scales like the passage at measure 173-177 (Fig. 7-12 at Chapter Seven, p. 108), and measure 358-36, etc.

3) The familiar fingering that comes from muscle memory works greater for better intonation and effortless searching, such as measure 198 and measure 259 (Fig. 6-10), etc. And it works with the musical context.

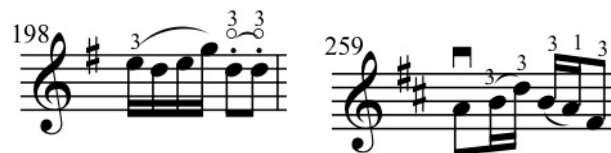


Figure 6-10. Muscle memory fingerings for effortless searching

4) For gaining finger strength from other fingers support when it is sliding on thumb position (Fig. 6-11). When the 1st finger is sliding, the 2nd places on the top of 1st (Fig. 6-7 above the page); while the 2nd is pressing, the 1st places closely on the bottom of the 2nd finger (Fig. 6-9).



Figure 6-11. 2nd finger places on the top of 1st finger

The acoustic issue is crucial to the matter of size and sound projection. The violin is ideal for the performance of small notes with little effort beyond normal bow pressure. In addition to the freedom of playing fast, the size of the fingerboard permits the ornaments to be played in one position. In contrary, there is much more effort that is required for double bass to shift while playing the ornaments. Moreover, the violin has a smaller bridge which means it can play more broken notes than the double bass. Therefore, in *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto* transcription, the music is best served by eliminating some of the chords and double stops; and choosing suitable, flexible bowings and fingerings.

Performance Practice Discussion

To be able to perform this concerto, it is important to understand the usage of basic *huayin* (*portamento*, *glissando*, or sliding) techniques that occur in *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*. As discussed in Chapter Three, *huayin* is a very important idiosyncrasy of Chinese music, and it is not only a part of the technique but also of the musical expression.

Huayin can express the performer's personal feeling and understanding of the piece. In the actual executions, it is hard to explain and there is no precise technique to measure. Sometimes, *huayin* is decorating the principal notes with upper and lower neighbors, or other chord tones; sometimes it is just a sonic gesture like a feather falling down from the air. Furthermore, Chinese string instruments and Western string instruments, including the double bass, are able to apply this unique technique. However, being able to use *huayin* wisely and sensibly is key to elevate the music to an artistic level that is beyond verbal description.

Usage of *Huayin* in *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*

Huayin has the most spontaneous role in traditional Chinese music. Almost all types of *huayin* are used in this concerto, and the nuances are based on three basic technical categories: I) *Huayin* with a semitone, II) *Portamento* with a minor third using the same finger, and III) *Glissando*-like slide. The information below is basically taken from performance notes on *The Butterfly Lovers* full score that the composers prompted when they were in the experimental group.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ He, Zhanhao and Chen Gang, "*The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto: Performance Notes*," full score, (Shanghai: SMPH, 2008).

I. *Huayin* with a semitone

There are two types of expressions included in this category.

- 1) Slides for up-and-down *portamento*: A finger presses down on a centered pitch, slides less than a semitone down, then back down to its original pitch. This is more like playing a microtone. It is designed to apply to a centered pitch change. This is borrowed from the *erhu* and is called *mo-yin* (wiping tone). Fast *mo-yin*, indicated by a ◡, is usually used to express tender youthful feeling, while the slow variant, indicated by a ◣, is used either for ornamentation or to simulate weeping. For the double bass, Professor Wei uses her expressive finger pad and first knuckle of the finger combined with a flexible wrist and shoulder to roll the *mo-yin* (will be discussed later in this chapter: Professor Yung-Chiao Wei's *Huayin Technique on Double Bass*).



Figure 6-12.⁹⁸ Marking of slow *mo-yin*

- 2) Slow upward *portamento* in a semitone: It is an expressive device derived from the musical language of regional theaters, and is used to convey bitter anguish and deep grief in the concerto, as in the example below. The finger should be powerful and smooth in its execution, and the pressure of the bow varies in accordance with the change of mood.

⁹⁸ Figure 6-12 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 294.



Figure 6-13.⁹⁹ Slow upward *portamento* in a semitone

II. *Portamento* with a minor third using the same finger

This is also closely related to folk theater and folk instrument playing. It exists in three variants with different speeds and directions.


- 1) Slow upward minor third *portamento*: It is marked by a . The sliding of the finger coincides with the shift of position. Therefore, its execution should be smooth, fluent and not too fast.



Figure 6-14.¹⁰⁰ Slow upward minor third *portamento*


- 2) Slow downward minor third *portamento*: The  mark, as in the example below, conveys tearful complaints and the feeling of a sigh.



Figure 6-15.¹⁰¹ Slow downward minor third *portamento*

⁹⁹ Figure 6-13 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 295.

¹⁰⁰ Figure 6-14. Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Figure 6-15. Ibid.

- 3) Slow back-and-forth minor third *portamento*: It enhances the smoothness of the melodic progression, merging any gap in the melody line, and it creates a sound that is very close to folk theater singing, and adds a special Chinese flavor to it. The change of bow should be as smooth and unnoticeable as possible. The marking of this type of *huayin* shares the same marking as slow upward *portamento* in a semitone (the second type of expression in Category I) and slow upward minor third *portamento* (the first type of expression in Category II). If the *portamento* begins with grace notes, then playing is on the downbeat without an accent.

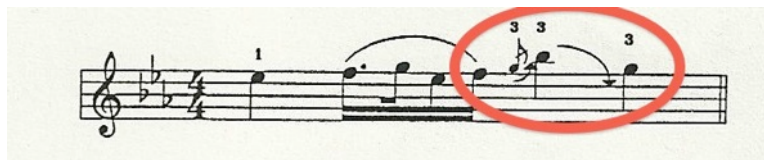




Figure 6-16.¹⁰² Slow back-and-forth minor third *portamento*

III. *Glissando*-like slide:

This is a technique commonly used on traditional Chinese instruments, especially the *erhu*, and is closely related to the music of regional operas. The notation is either  or . In Chinese musical language, under this simple notation, the music sounds very vivid, something markedly from music in other countries.

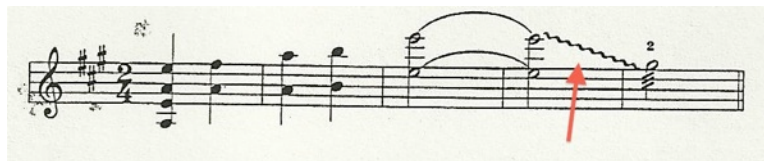


Figure 6-17.¹⁰³ A downward *Glissando*-like slide

¹⁰² Figure 6-16 is from Ming-hui Lin, *Discussion of the Relationship of Chinese Opera and Music in "Liang-Zhu,"* 296.

¹⁰³ Figure 6-17. Ibid.

There are a few concepts relating to both hands and the vivid character of Chinese instruments that performers have to be aware of while playing this concerto.

I) The left hand concepts:

- 1) Intonation: To perform these *portamentos*, the performer must first pay attention to intonation, then try to match the sound of the folk theater singing.
- 2) Slide speed: It affects emotions projected. In this piece, generally when the music is elegant, warm, *cantabile*, anguish or sorrow, the mood requires slow sliding and *crescendo*. In reverse, when the music projects cheerfulness, vibrancy, dissent, anger or resentment, then the slide should speed up and begin with a more powerful drawing of the bow.
- 3) Vibrato: There are a few different types of vibrato such as: fast, slow and delayed. Fast vibrato applies to narrow oscillation and has a small wave. Slow vibrato applies to wild oscillation and has a large wave. Delayed vibrato applies a straight tone first then add vibrato when it is necessary, especially the lone notes in slow *cantabile* music. For the concerto, attention must be paid to the dramatic emotions, with application of a suitable vibrato to achieve the sound of Chinese folk opera vocals.

II) The right hand technique:

- 1) Three different types of interpretation of the *huayin*: as mentioned in the Chapter Five “The Vibrato Technique of Chinese Instrument—*Erhu*,” there are three different types of interpretation of the *huayin*: i) starts soft and ends strong; ii) starts off strong then vanishes in the end; iii) sustains the volume all the way to the end. See Chapter Five for detail.

2) Tremolo: With traditional Chinese string instruments, it is called *chan-gong* (顫弓, trembling the bow rapidly). This technique is usually applied when the music is needed to project grief or sorrow. To play tremolo in this piece: 1) the tilted bow has to tremble at the tip as fast and short as possible in the given time; 2) tremble must come from a free forearm and wrist (support from the elbow) —the thumb, index, and ring fingers has to remain with a light pressure while the bow trembles quickly on the string; 3) it has to consistently be performed with urgency and intense feeling; and 4) adjustment of the bow length must be made to achieve a dramatic *fortepiano* (*fp*) sound.

III) Chinese instrumental characters:

The composers used some of the Chinese plucked instruments like the *pipa* and *guzheng*. Imitation of the *pipa* is in the syncopation motif occurring in the second part of the development section.

1) Pipa: The technique term from *pipa* is called *saolian* (掃絃 sweep picking), which means to rapidly sweep a chord out. As a result, the music sounds very determined and aggressive, thereby matching the expression of Ying-tai's protest.

2) Guzheng: The concept occurs in the section C of the rondo in the exposition where the notes are jumping octaves and running up and down. The remembrance of the sonority of *guzheng* is joyful, cheerful and alive.

With these three types of *huayin* and accompanying musical concepts examined and clarified, I would like to address the technique of *huayin* that Professor Wei used and issues of performance awareness while practicing the concerto.

The Method of *Huayin* Practice on Double Bass

When the technique of *huayin* is applied in practice and performance on the double bass, unlike the violin, bassists need to use the body movement for different degrees of intensity that music requires. Bassists will avoid a firm wrist and curved fingertips pressing down on the string, the conventional Western basic left hand shape. Instead, a freed and relaxed the wrist while sliding back-and-forth, the index or middle fingertip using the pad of the finger joint (Fig. 6-18) is used. The natural arm weight will remain on the string while circling the finger joint and the shoulder (back scapula, or wing) has to be flexible. Moreover, the body movement, the balance between the body and double bass, and proper breathing will assist the *huayin* technique smoothly.

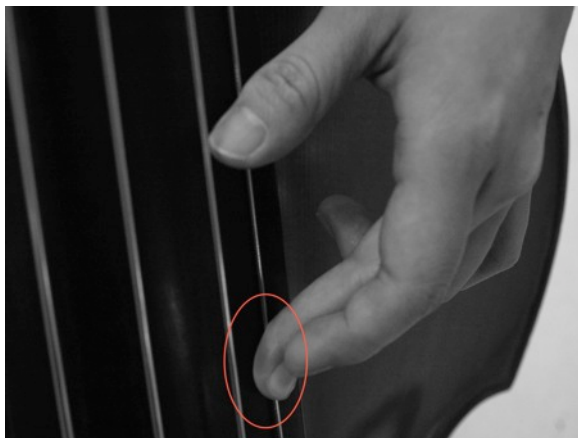


Figure 6-18. The finger pad on the string

The slow *mo-yin*, circling the pad, can be divided into two categories: 1) Stay at the same point; 2) Slide and circling together.

1) Stay at the same point: The motion of circling at the same point is achieved by using the flexible shoulder (back scapula) muscle to circle (raise up the shoulder) the first pad (Fig. 6-19). The wrist will automatically bend a little bit forward while rolling, similar to the first joint. The shoulder can adjust the range of circling the pad.



Figure 6-19. The rolling motion of the shoulder and finger

2) Slide and circling together: When the intensity of musical emotion is built up, on the double bass, it requires a larger *mo-yin* to express especially applying on the double bass which has a longer fingerboard than the violin. Creating a life larger *mo-yin* is required a wider rolling range from the shoulder and the coordination of body movement.

If using the middle finger, the index finger will be on the bottom to support the circle; if using the index finger, the middle finger will be on the top for greater strength. The result of wiping tone is similar to a microtone. Creating a slide and circle sonority together is similar to first one by adding a glissando. It creates a deeper sound than the first type of *mo-yin*. The motion applies the slide with rolling motion, while arriving at the real note the slow *mo-yin*

applies. During the movement of sliding and rolling, the sliding motion should combine with a firm arm but not stiff. The amount is just about enough to let the finger stay on the string.

Performance awareness

There are some concepts of performance awareness that I would like to mention before moving to the interpretation of *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto. Professor Wei inspires students by encouraging them to make a meaningful performance, blending emotional context with sincere feeling, breathing, imagination and coordination with muscles and the proper usage of body weight to communicate through the instrument with oneness while playing. Patrick McDonald, an accomplished Alexander teacher trained directly by F. M. Alexander, says in his book *The Alexander Technique: As I See It* that F.M. Alexander believed the body had an innate intelligence that seeks balance and a natural rhythm. So, it is very important to use sensory awareness and strategies for the whole body, especially for a performer of small stature playing a large instrument. Therefore, the first principle of playing double bass is freely approaching the coordination with the whole body while playing and always finding the easiest way to solve technique problems such as applying mental practice, proper breathing, and adjustable spine while playing on outer or inner strings.

Second is *qi* (breathing). In his book, *Casals and the Art of Interpretation*, David Blum notes that art critic Hseih Ho, in the fifth century C.E., mentions *qiyun* (or *ch'i-yün*) is the first principle of fundamental playing on an instrument.¹⁰⁴ *Qiyun* is as “breath-resonance life-motion...It develops in the silence of the soul.”¹⁰⁵ David Blum also says: “Technique, wonderful

¹⁰⁴ David Blum, *Casals and the Art of Interpretation*, 1.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 1-2.

sound....all of this is sometimes astonishing-but it is not enough.”¹⁰⁶ In order to apply *qi* to performance, Professor Wei emphasizes core support. All the emotion and energy can be applied by great control of *qi* (breathe). “Music from the Earth,”¹⁰⁷ is a great example to help the imagination of using emotion, energy, and *qi*. A Taiwanese cartoonist, Tsai Chih Chung, adapted speeches from Zhuanzi¹⁰⁸ into cartoon characters to illustrate invisible *qi* in nature. There is an excerpt of the comic, which was translated by Brian Bruya as below:

“....but the music of the earth is the wind....wind is the breathing of the earth. When the wind begins to blow, every opening there is responds with sound.....a big wind is like...the opening in the huge mountain trees respond...some are like [the sound from] nostrils,...mouths,ears; some are like circles or mortars, and others like deep pools or shallow gullies. All together the openings emit sounds, like rushing water, or a shower of arrows; like screaming or breathing....some sounds are coarse while others are fine; some are distant and others up close. Together, all the openings harmonize in a chorus of sounds...after the wind has passed, the wind has passed the openings become quiet, leaving the tree branches swaying gently back and forth. This is the music of the earth....Sound itself is emotionless. It is only from a person’s point of view that music acquires its emotion. If one listens to music from nature’s point of view, music is free of emotion. Therefore, emotion is a synthetic and not a natural distinction.”¹⁰⁹

The relationship between energy and emotion is achieved only by coming into harmony with the vital cosmic spirit or breathing in order for the string player to convey this through the movement of the bow hand. When the emotion grows deep, the energy and *qi* follow up. When music is sorrowful, the breathing is deep, slow, and heavy; in contrast, joyful emotion will engage shallow, fast, and light breathing.

¹⁰⁶ David Blum, *Casals and the Art of Interpretation*, 1.

¹⁰⁷ Tsai Chih Chung, “The Music of the Earth,” *The Book of Music & Nature*, ed. by David Rothenberg and Marta Ulvaeus, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 69.

¹⁰⁸ Zhuanzi (莊子 396~286 B.C.E.) was one the leaders of the Taoism.

¹⁰⁹ Tsai Chih Chung, “The Music of the Earth,” *The Book of Music & Nature*, 70-72.

The feeling of being supported from the core results from a straight spine and upper body, and breathing deeply from the abdomen. *Qi* must move the breath through the ribcage (floating ribs¹¹⁰) and into the belly, receiving as much fresh air as possible in the lungs. Tension and anxiety will diminish with increased oxygen levels in the body. While breathing with floating ribs, “it involves a change in the neck-head-back relationship and often, indeed, a change in the whole structure of the torso.”¹¹¹ Care must be taken not to hold the breath while playing in a high register when the shoulders are working towards it. Therefore, sometimes playing with the mouth naturally open will help get enough air in and stimulate circulation. Moreover, it is a major challenge for string players to change bow direction smoothly. With the movement of switching up-bow to down-bow, a nature gap is created in the sustaining melodic line. The sound divides with a sudden swell. If after practice the sense of *qi* can be combined through a floating breathing, the right hand will ultimately achieve continuity. (Inhale first and draw the down bow gradually to the tip, keep breathing through ribs and with a relaxed shoulder then draw smoothly with a tiny circle back to up bow then exhale while drawing back to frog.)

¹¹⁰ Patrick Macdonald, *The Alexander Technique: As I see it*, (Brighton: Rahula Books, 1989), 6.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER SEVEN: INTERPRETATION OF *THE BUTTERFLY LOVERS* VIOLIN CONCERTO ON DOUBLE BASS

The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto is filled with expressive imagery associated with dramatically folk opera structure and special vibrato techniques. In this chapter, the performance interpretation is based on my studies with Professor Wei, and includes—but is not limited to—many of her the detailed fingerings and bowings for the bass (also general posture) to imitate the sounds of the *erhu*. The expressive interpretation is comprehensively reflected through proper breathing and associated with expressive musical content in the performance. Along the way, tone color must also be aptly chosen—determining whether a certain musical passage be dark or bright, heavy or airy, and so on. Moreover, techniques borrowed from Chinese instruments, for instance original and transcription bowings and fingerings, must also be carefully studied and applied. After interpreting the concerto, a short discussion on the concept of how to apply the natural body weight during performance, and how to gain endurance, will follow.

INTERPRETATION

Love Theme

Love Theme, Theme I on exposition, is the main melody of the concerto that appears in the first entrance of the solo double bass. The main melody originated from a masterpiece of a local *Yueju* folk opera. The underlying story is the love tragedy of Ying-tai and Shan-bo. The music is designed to express the friendship and deep passion of the two lovers wherein the performers need to evoke the *yijing* (a spiritual state vital in the classical arts) while playing. For such a purpose for the love melody, composers wrote the melodies with the *huayin* (sliding sound) effect, such as sliding on one finger to make the pure and simple melody connect with no

gaps between notes, sounding like the traditional aria singing technique and *erhu*'s special acoustic effect. The combination of upward and downward minor thirds' *huayin* at measure 13, 14, and 18 (Fig 7-1) should impart a sensation of the feeling of the rhythmic rise and fall of a calm ocean's waves, supported by subtle vibrato. Because the distance of a minor third *huayin* is larger on a double bass than a violin, the left hand must apply the concept of *yun* while sliding (by applying vibrato and light sliding with flexible wrist before shifting). The bow pressure is light and sensitive to create an elegant and warm sound according to the musical context. The bow changes should be as smooth and unnoticeable as possible. The starting grace note is to be played without an accent.



Figure 7-1. Combination of upward and downward minor thirds at measure 13, 14, and 18

The opening begins in G major. The *Love Theme* repeats immediately after the first phrase ended. As described in Chapter Six, Transcription Issue (p. 82), the second occurrence of the *Love Theme* remains in the same register as the first time, to stay away from the low register in order to make it audible. The repeated *Love Theme* with *mezzoforte* dynamic can be interpreted as conveying a happy mood with flowing tempo, portraying Shan-bo's reaction after Ying-tai's lovely singing.

Joining of Hands in Brotherhood (m. 31-38)

The beginning of this passage is mainly focused on the conversation between the cello and the solo double bass. At this point in the story, Shan-bo (the cello) and Ying-tai (the solo double bass) are joining hands in brotherhood. The *huayin* in this passage is a slow downward minor third. The eighth note in measure 32 and the syncopation on beats three and four in measure 34 are deliberate slides to emphasize the emotion of Ying-tai's affection for Shan-bo, both as a friend and Ying-tai's one side affair. The slides occur bashfully and naively with a slightly squeezed sound (Fig. 7-2). The passage starts *mezzopiano* and progressively builds up to measure 35 which has a full and open sound with absolute confidence until measure 36. After this measure comes a gradual *diminuendo*. The effect of Ying-tai's *huayin* is that it should express innocence and bashfulness, like that of a girl talking to a boy in the early stages of their relationship. The bow pressure has to diminish while playing the upward slide (on the third beat of measure 36). In the last repeated *Love Theme*, the sentiment becomes more assertive while the *Love Theme* alternates between the orchestra and the solo bass. This passage then takes on a cheerful mood following the cadenza.



Figure 7-2. Slow downward minor third with bashfully and squeezed sound

The music moves then to the cadenza in measure 50 (Fig. 7-3). The cadenza is a bridge that connects theme I and theme II, which is similar to the *intermezzo* in opera. This is also a passage where the mood changes from lovely to delightful. The whimsical runs and octave leaps reflect Ying-tai's happiness of being in love with Shan-bo and her murmuring about telling her true identity to Shan-bo. The tempo starts slow with an *accelerando* toward the first fermata.

The bow pressure must release the weight after arriving on the first fermata on c^3 to prepare the next coming of light and clear fast runs. Similar interpretation for the next phrase after the first fermata starts slowly and gradually *accelerando* to the second octave of f^2 followed by hesitating on the octave of d^2 and then gradually moves up and reaches the half note on a^1 . After reaching the a^1 , the pressure on the bow hand should be decreased to prepare for the coming up-and-down expressive pentatonic scales that indicate Ying-tai's murmuring. She is trying to tell Shan-bo her identity when the first ascending pentatonic occurs, then followed by an echo with the same ascending pentatonic scale down an octave to express her hesitation. After the last ascending pentatonic scale, the passage arrives on the second fermata on c^3 to indicate that Ying-tai decides to tell Shan-bo about her true identity. Then suddenly, a repeated four-note figure appears. A similar interpretation should be taken here, as the octave leaps from slow to fast mimic the sound of a bird singing, very crisply, which indicates that she is too bashful to speak. Then the music becomes gradually ebbing and flowing and finally relaxing with a sweet sound at the final virtuosic ascending scale. The last grace note on a^1 - g^1 reflects Ying-tai's regret as a sigh. For all the fast runs in the cadenza, the shifting of left hand has to feel as light as a feather cascading to the ground.

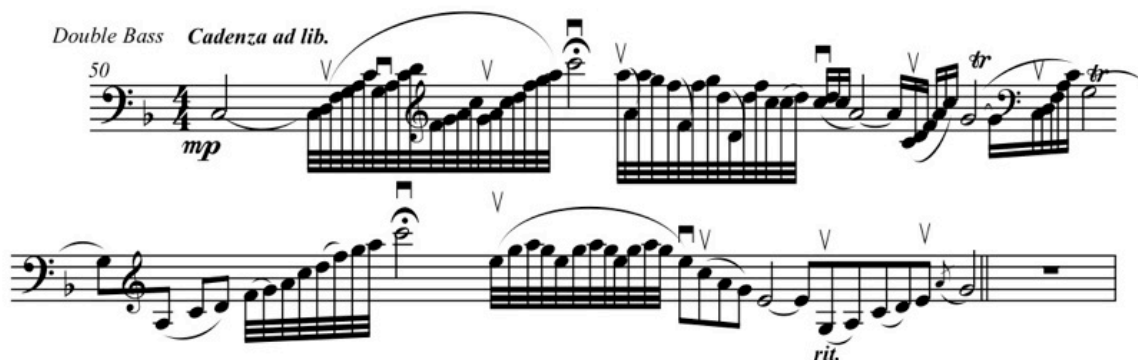


Figure 7-3. Cadenza at measure 50

Studying Together for Three Years (m. 51-84)

The Rondo, at measure 51 on the *allegro* at Section A (Fig. 7-4), is a very delightful section, interpreting their carefree days together. In the orchestral accompaniment, the violas, cellos, and basses play pizzicato on the downbeat; the oboes (with grace notes) and violins (up-bows) on the upbeat, creating a short and energetic interlude. The double bass solo begins in measure 59 (Fig. 7-5). It is important to keep vibrato all the time even on the short notes to connect the happy and joy-filled passage. At the same time, the right hand applies focused sound and less bow proportion to articulate the rhythm and pulse. The dotted eighth note must be played with enough sound to match the emotion and energy of the small introduction. Therefore, emphasis on extremely precise articulation with strong rhythmic pulse is the key point to producing the sense of *yun*.



Figure 7-4. Beginning of interlude on Theme II, at measure 51



Figure 7-5. Joyful Theme II of *Studying Together for Three Years*, at measure 59

Theme II, Professor Wei uses the same bowings from the original score, but changed to separate in the higher register at measure 63 and 64. It is important that bassists convey the same character that the solo violin expresses. Double bass players must reach the spirit of the musical context by playing with profound feeling. However, when a “scratched” sound happens in the high register a^2 ($f^2-e^2-f^2-a^2$), this indicates that the bow arm is too intense or not digging into the string enough (Fig. 7-6). When performing a transcription of violin pieces on double bass, it is crucial to consider differences of sound projection between the bass and violin. Therefore, the bowings on beat two of measure 63 (d^2-e^2) and 64 (f^2-a^2) are needed to separate the eighth notes. In order for the double bass to project the clarity of joyful character and control the quality of its sound here, it is necessary separate the eighth notes in the high register to avoid creating a scratched sound.



Figure 7-6. Bowings of d^2-e^2 and f^2-a^2

Following section B, measure 87-109, the music changes to a long lyrical melody, requiring more physical endurance while playing cantabile in a high register passage. Suggestions for playing this section consist of a free head-neck muscle and shoulders, and breathing through the ribs (while long notes are drawing or a proper musical spot). Meanwhile, imagine the tailbone as a pivot point, and use the legs to create a horse stance to be able to shift body weight while always applying the energy coming from the whole body to achieve the whole passage. Towards measure 99 ($a^2-b^2-b^2-a^2-f^2$), the music becomes very intense, so a very urgent feeling must be conveyed for the small climax of the section (Fig. 7-7). Support for this

intensity comes from the body and the breath—deep breathing will help develop the energy and emotion needed. At measure 106, the four eighth notes (a-b-f-e) have to be emphasized and articulated clearly (Fig. 7-8). From a technical point of view, this is a place where the performer needs to relax and set the tempo for the upcoming sixteenth notes. Musically, this part should emphasize the story: after the lovers have had so much fun, they finally come to an agreement, expressed as if they are nodding their heads. To express this, the bass player must use a short articulated style to emphasize the eighth notes and hold onto the intensity while the musical phrasing descends and then once again ascends up to the end of the passage.



Figure 7-7. Small climax on section B, at measure 99



Figure 7-8. Emphasizing on a-b-f-e, at measure 106

The music moves into another joyful and lively segment with the strings imitating the Chinese traditional plucking instrument, *gu-zheng*, in the accompaniment at measure 121 on section C (Fig. 7-9). The melody of the double bass solo is crafted with double stop eighth notes, slurred sixteenth notes, and octave leaps. This passage is meant to imitate the traditional Chinese instrument, the *gu-zheng*; therefore, the slurred sixteenth notes should remain as clean as possible with convenient fingerings (least shifting movement). Each of the octaves must be performed as crisp and vividly as possible. There are more similar motives of *gu-zheng* in

further passages. One should practice these gestures by thinking of a dotted-eighth note plus last sixteenth note pattern when it becomes more difficult in the higher register (Fig. 7-10).



Figure 7-9. Rondo, section C and the *gu-zheng* motif



Figure 7-10. The image of gesture (left); The fingerings and original gesture (right)

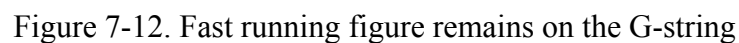
At measure 144, one should convey the feeling of riding horses (Fig. 7-11). Starting with an up-bow, the stroke *Jeté* (ricochet stroke) is similar to the Final part of William Tell overture by Gioachino Rossini, wherein the stroke denotes either a hero to the rescue or galloping horses.



Figure 7-11. Passage of *Jeté* stroke (ricochet stroke)

The bow bounces two notes in a down-bow and must be initiated from the air, not from the string. This segment is supposed to communicate the image of a horse galloping across a large grassy field; however the right arm must still carry weight, rising up just a bit and completely dropping the bow arm to make a heavier strike. The perfect fourth and fifth of the double stops should have a voluminous resonance with the open D and A strings. The trills of

In section C, the stanzas that are built up through the syncopations arriving at the descending sixteenth notes of measure 173 with extreme intensity (Fig. 7-12). Technique-wise, the easiest way to play the descending sixteenth is to apply the balanced spot (sweet spot) of the bow and with the sequential fingering patterns. Usually it is best to use convenient fingerings for a fast run, but if used here, the musical intensity will be lost. The best way to project clear and loud sixteenth notes is to remain on the G-string.



¹¹² Macdonald, *The Alexander Technique*, 6.

harmonious relationship with the head, neck and back.¹¹³ While ascending, one should relax the head-neck muscles, and create a space between the upper body and the bass by thinking about a straight line from back to the head. The straight line is supported from the back, core and legs. In other words, the performance must flow naturally and in a holistic manner. Otherwise, it is easy to fly off the fingerboard and lose control.



Figure 7-13 (1). Measure 190-191



Figure 7-13 (2). Measure 194-195

The usage of target notes (the harmonic note) will aid in intonation. At measure 198, major usage of 3rd finger (ring finger) on the high e^2 is better solution than the others. Most bassists are familiar with using their muscle memory for first finger on d^2 , and then e^2 will be naturally placed on the third finger.

Measures from 208 to 218 are repeated broken chords. The main point of the figure is to show the gesture and harmonic progression. The progression is V-I-VI-V-I-VI-ii-V in E major. The goal of accompanying the melody is more important than making the sixteenth broken chords (played by flutes and oboes) heard clearly.

¹¹³ Pedro de. Alcantara, *Indirect Procedures: A Musician's Guide to the Alexander Technique*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 25.

The difficulty of playing measure 219 is in the transition from slurred broken chords in a high register to the following separated sixteenth notes in a low register, and then back up to the high register (Fig. 7-14). This is because of the muscle memory getting used to the same motion for about 11 measures and then suddenly having to change to a different segment. It is important to be aware of the bow placement by applying the sweet spot of the bow and short bow length) on the strings to produce clean and focused sound when the fast separated sixteenth is approaching.



Figure 7-14. Music from slurred broken chords,
separated sixteenth notes to refrain (A)

The last stanza is the refrain (A) of Rondo from measure 220 to 240. It is the climax of the section. When reaching this point, a body usually tends to build up tension. The endurance of *qi* and usage of body weight is key to shaping the melody, and allowing it to flow together with full resonance. Setting the head-neck-back muscles and shoulder muscles free via support from the legs helps build up energy with a combination of breathing (take a new inhalation almost after every long note). Performing with right posture will provide energy naturally toward the end with healthy tone.

Farewell at Pavilion

Before moving onto the farewell passage, I will point out a particular concept regarding the interpretation of tone. In Chapter Three, I discussed the concept of *xu-shi-yijing*. There are many *xu-shi* sonorities in this passage. Imagination and creativity can be applied to the Chinese

plucked instruments when thinking about the interpretation of *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*. For music in the lyrical section: most of the feeling in the slow passage can be described as the principle and decorative notes that ring after plucking the string, a reverberation traveling through the air. Chinese instruments like the *gu-zheng*, *guqin* and *pipa* are plucked instruments. Musical sound on the *gu-zheng* is created by using picks placed on the tips of the fingers to pluck the strings on the right side of the bridge. The left hand fingers press down on each of the strings on the left side of the bridge with weight from the elbow and forearm. By doing so, changes in pitch or embellishments are created. The modified sound also determines *huayin* or *xu* (gestural sound). It is important to be aware that not every *huayin* needs to be heard every time one arises (there are three different types of *huayin*, that are discussed in Chapter Six). Sometimes it comes from just hearing a shift or subtle transition, a fading connection, an obvious *huayin* or even the touch of a pitch with a fadeout.

A great deal of musical language in the *Farewell at Pavilion*, *Meeting in the Chamber*, and *The Death of Shan-bo, Ying-tai Throws Herself into the Grave* passages is engaged with this rising and falling tonal phenomenon, also associated with *yi-yan-dun-cuo* (抑揚頓挫) articulations or inflections. Associating with the four tones in Chinese language, the melody oscillates in measured pitch and rhythm as in Chinese poetry (Fig. 7-15). In that figure, we can see how the Chinese poem is read by the transcription of the melody into the five-line staff. This even and oblique melody sometimes is even, rising, falling, and turning.

It is similar to the concerto's passages as in *Farewell at Pavilion* (244-284), recitative sections at *Opposition to an Arranged Marriage* (324-337), *Meeting in the Chamber* (448-467), and recitative sections at *The Death of Shan-bo, Ying-tai Throws Herself into the Grave* (481-

497). Poem reading and music all contain pitch to express emotion through *yin /yang* (light/heavy), and *xu/shi*.

曹冠
Poem by Tsao Kuan

涼風生玉宇
Cool whirlwinds arising in azure space,
黃花晚凝露
Dew condensed upon chrysanthemums,
汀蘋岸蓼秋將暮
Duckweeds on the bank and smartweeds on the shore foretell the coming late autumn
登高開讌俎
We ascend high places for a feast
傳杯興逸兮詠得句
To drink the convivial cup and take turns chanting improvised poetry
思戲馬常懷古
Reminiscing cherished memories of the Hsi Ma Terrace
東籬候酒人何處
We wonder where is he for whom the
芳尊須送與
fragrant, exhilarating wine was prepared at the eastern hedge

Figure 7-15. A Chinese poem reading with *yi-yan-dun-cuo* (抑揚頓挫) articulation¹¹⁴

The concerto's particular acoustical space and the resonance of the fixed position sliding are important for performers to know, as is which note is important to bring out or decorate; to be specific or allude. When rising a *huayin*, pressure or weight on the bow arm is released; when

¹¹⁴ Bliss Wiant, *The Music of China*, Hong Kong: Chung Chi Publications, 1965), 82f.

falling a *huayin*, we can enter or relieve as a sigh. But these subtle changes have to be interpreted wisely and meaningfully according to the musical content; otherwise *yijing* (the whole picture) will be destroyed.

Music in *Farewell at Pavilion* indicates Ying-tai's unwillingness to be apart from Shan-bo. The yearning and melancholy mood in this first sorrowful passage is not the same as *Meeting in the Chamber* (mournful and grief-stricken), but they all use *parlando* stroke (portato, detached stroke or talking bow) to bring out Ying-tai's monologue (Fig. 7-16).



Figure 7-16. Circled notes are similar to the Chinese language speaking in measure 244

In the figure the notes that I circled are similar to reading a poem with precise intonation (*shi* or *yang*) and expressive emotion; those encircled, can be interpreted as *xu* (*yin*) sound with airy (the left-hand slides as a feather falling down), and breathing sound gesture (a sigh), or passing notes (shifting transition), etc.

The combination of sensitive bow control and an expressive left-hand vibrato for variety in tone color are very important for this passage. For achieving this, both of the shoulders and arms and left-hand wrist and fingers work together as a whole along with the combination breathing and the support from strong legs (strong horse stance) in order to shift body weight.

The left hand shifts smoothly (aware of the pressure and weight) with each finger continuously placed on the strings. The bow is drawn continuously with subtle pressure changes, avoiding a return to the frog and maintaining long steady phrasing.

By interpreting expressive vibrato, for example, in the beginning of the stanza, measure 244, the music should sound exquisitely subtle and weepy. The left hand finger presses down on the string and vibrates as if dashing the string by itself has a tiny space between the fingertip and string. This is done without locking the thumb in the back, thus to create a flowing and gloomy sound.

It is important to interpret a meaningful note, for instance, the half notes in the slow passage: sometimes, the long note has to hold a consistent tone and add meaningful direction to carry over the melody line into the next bar as indicated by the *diminuendo* then *crescendo*; when it is the end of the phrase, apply *diminuendo*. *Qi* (endless breathing) is the key to supporting the ongoing melody line.

Moreover, a comma separates the slur at measure 262. The tiny pause emphasizes Ying-tai's whimpering. The measures from 277 to 280 (Fig. 7-17) contain the same upbeat phrasing found in measure 252 to 254. The same figure is repeated twice but the same music is never played twice. To avoid playing with the same interpretation, the first instance can be thought of as saying "do you understand (with mysterious thoughts)? I do understand (answered with a deeper sound and a heartbroken emotion)." The second instance (m. 277-280) can trail off unhurriedly, as if imploring, "Do not leave me (less articulation and non-stretch the melody)! Please do not leave me (articulate more on the notes and stretch the melody little bit)!" So thinking of these sighing emotions and giving them more definition in the second repetition of the figures solve the problem of playing the same music on repeated figures.



Figure 7-17. Never play the same music twice

In Professor Wei's interpretation, she adds a slow *mo-yin* that is not in the original score, in measure 250 (Fig. 7-16, p.113), with e¹ as the first eighth note; a as the quarter note in measure 257; and e in measure 281 (Fig. 7-17) as the first eighth note. The additional slow *mo-yin* adds emotional flavors and gives a taste of grief.

Opposition to an Arranged Marriage

After the lovers' hesitation and reluctance to part, as expressed in the previous section, follows the struggle and resistance of Ying-tai's opposition to her arranged marriage. The orchestra opens the interlude of the development section with feudal chords at measure 309. Following is the recitative of the solo part, which depicts Ying-tai's resistance. The syncopation rhythm in this section represents her anger and defending herself against her father.

The composers imported the special tempo marking *San-ban* (散板 recitative) from Chinese traditional opera to capture the dramatic bawling emotion from measure 324 to 337. Articulating the emotion here requires using the largest muscle of all—the whole body (from legs, back muscles, and breathing)—to draw sustained sound, emotion and intensity all the way through this section. The bow must dig deeply into the strings with voluminous resonance (be aware of not to create too much resistance, which will result in a forceful sound). The strong rhythmic pulse at recitative sections is very important in the passage to sustain the dramatic

intensity throughout this segment. Each phrasing is determined as Ying-tai is defending herself to her father. The intensity is so strong that it almost feels as if the bass will break.

The measure 330 time signature changes to 6/4 and marked as 12 down-bows. It is a traditional music language which is interpreted as if each down-bow is saying “no, no, No, NO, No, no, no...” at first in a slow and timid manner, then rising to a dramatic shout before calming down again. Once again for musical direction, the octave double stops found in measure 332, beats 3 and 4, give a lightly *accelerando* on the octave double stops, and then arrive on the downbeat of measure 333 to show the direction.

At measure 334 is a famous *erhu* tremolo. This tremolo has to be played as fast as possible through support from the elbow, bringing out the urgency of a broken heart. It is applied with the natural wrist shaking (holding the bow only with the thumb, index, and ring fingers) via a tilt of the bow while trembling the tip of the bow, being sure to build up the tension from soft dynamic to the end of measure 335.

The *huayin* of the last beat in measure 336 is a slow upward *portamento*. Engaging the body weight and gesture with the double bass will help the *portamento* in the slide upward convey bitter anguish and deep grief. The finger structure should be powerful and smooth in its execution, and the pressure of the bow should vary in accordance with the change of mood. This segment happens many times in the concerto (two more times in the meeting in the chamber section) and the technique applied here should communicate the intensity of the emotion.

The syncopation sequence passage is Ying-tai’s battling against her father. The rhythmic pulse of syncopation can disturb the breathing, making the music sound very unbalanced and unsteady. Completely dropping the down bow into the string for the accent notes (*shi*) and allowing the up bow to naturally express the coming note (*xu*) for conveying the tone of *xu*

(yin)/shi (yang). The *yun* will be naturally elaborated (discussed in Chapter Three). There should be no timidity in dropping the bow to preserve the same effect of the passage.

Later in measure 350, to achieve consecutive down bows on the eighth notes, the stroke should be retaken rapidly with natural circular motion from the arm.

Measure 358 with awareness and forethought given to where the fingering shifts occur from 1-1, 4-1, 4-4, 4-thumb, or 3-3 on the ascending scale (Fig. 7-18), mental preparation will allow the bassist to anticipate upcoming changing positions and fingerings before the current ones are completed. Only then will the bassist feel secure about performing the passage by applying the right amount of pressure and flexible bow arm on the balanced spot (sweet spot) of the bow. When the sound (note) is clear, then it is loud. This technique applies to all the fast running scale segments in the piece.



Figure 7-18. The fingerings and shifting moments of pentatonic scale

At measure 362, the trills of the hocked half notes extend for two measures then move down an octave. One should apply free bowings to make a continuous musical line in order to avoid a monotonous tone in the sustained trills.

At measure 398, Professor Wei simplifies the line by playing the repeated sixteenth notes on each beat, which does not change the composers' idea. In the original score, the musical line is presented on every first sixteenth note of the pentatonic scale. The rest of the sixteenths are

full of ostinato notes. It is better interpretation for the double bass to stay with the repeated sixteenth notes in order to keep the same intensity and clarity of the scale.

Meeting in the Chamber

Following this extremely wrathful and aggressive part is the second sorrowful section. Professor Wei mentions in the lesson about the *yijing*, this is when the two lovers meet after Ying-tai has failed in her opposition to the arranged marriage. Ying-tai is tired and heart-broken. This is interpreted with sensitive bow control for an airy or light sensation and very intimate color to depict her deepest sorrow. Similar interpretation is in *Farewell at Pavilion*; one should sing every note expressively. In Fig. 7-19, using the pointers, I highlight the notes that are similar to Chinese poem reading. The melody oscillates in measured pitch and rhythm with *xu/shi* tone color. The pointed notes are the principle and passing notes, but those not pointed are passing tones or decorating notes (*xu*).



Figure 7-19. The pointed notes are similar to Chinese poem reading
at *Meeting in the Chamber*

The airy or gestural sonority such as the one appears in measure 453, the second and third notes of beat one, the left hand has to stretch and subtly swing over to reach the pitch with a

release of the bow. This kind of gesture applies a pivot shift to touch the note a¹, f¹. Another example of a pivot shift is in measure 450, the thirty-second note on beat three. Furthermore, sometimes using the same fingering as 3-3 at measure 448, the last two quarter notes slides lightly to create the sonority like a gentle breeze caressing the face.

Shan-bo's Death, Ying-tai Throws Herself into the Grave

The extremely sorrowful atmosphere in measure 481 is created by a similar approach as done in measure 324, but even more dramatic and hysterical. The Chinese folk opera tempo device *Jin-Da-man-chang* 緊打慢唱 or *saoban* 蠶板 brings out Ying-tai's enraging and bawling in an extreme high register. The dramatic melody is sung freely upon a rushing accompaniment—*bangu*, a traditional percussion. Sustain the bow and stay close to the bridge with the combination of body usage and breathing while performing the passage. Tilting the bow creates a sorrowful and heart-broken tone color. For interpretation of the fury passages, Casals points out a *rubato* interpretation: “Fantas[ize] as much as you like—but with order!”¹¹⁵

On the first half-note chord at measure 481, pull the bow slowly in order to allow time for a resonating open D-string. Attention is then drawn to the note after the dotted eighth note g¹, articulating the sixteenth note for maintaining rhythmic pulse.

For greater intensity at measure 487 and 555, the up-bow works better for bringing out the urgent emotion. A natural strong attack is accomplished with a tilted angle combined with a big inhaling to completely drop the arm weight for the first note. For making an aggressive sound, it is okay if an attacking sound occurs. The music intentionally turns back to a soft dynamic at measure 493, where Ying-tai answers with an echo of pitiful feeling. Dramatically, Ying-tai switches her self-pity to anger where a large forte *glissando* is sung out. It is crucial to

¹¹⁵ David Blum, *Casals and the Art of Interpretation*, 86.

determine the pulse, which is needed especially the sixteenth note comes after the dotted eighth note at measure 496.

Playing with one fingering consistently for a few notes from a scale is not common in Western double bass playing. An exception occurs when musical emotion builds up in the higher register. A passage from measure 517 to 526 is the place applies the 2nd finger to shift some notes of the scale (Fig. 7-20).



Figure 7-20. Strong finger using for forte (*f*) scale

Through examining the score, particularly measure 625 to 632, it is apparent that the main element of the fast sixteenth is occurring on each down beat, A-B, d-e, a-b, d¹-e¹. For the pattern of a-b, the 1st finger remains on the first string while the right-hand plays the d on the second string. This is because the last sixteenth note of the figure returns to a (Fig. 7-21). The same principle occurs in the next pattern of d-e¹-d-e¹, but with a bit of a difference. Here, the left hand has to reach over an octave in a fast tempo. Pivot shifting and natural weight shifting between the third finger and thumb, and stretching back and forth without effort, is necessary. Indeed, the motion of the third finger is like playing a dotted eighth note while remaining on the string (same as in the first figure, but changing to the 3rd finger), and playing the sixteenth note while the third finger slightly shifts to e¹. Therefore, the bassist must get used to this movement of shifting back and forth on the last sixteenth note of the downbeat (making sure not to jump, only sliding on the string at the movement of the change). The right hand performs a pattern of

[illegible]

The big climax of the whole concerto occurs at measure 646 where Ying-tai decides to end her life and join her lover in death. The quarter rest is important because it presages Ying-tai throwing herself into the grave. By elaborating on the genuine rest with an obvious stop, the audience's attention and emotions will be engaged, and catharsis will follow the slow upward slide (Fig. 7-22).



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Transformation into Butterflies

After Ying-tai's tragic jump into Shan-bo's grave, the music moves into the section where the lovers transform into butterflies. Here, the *Love Theme* from the exposition emerged again. The mood is set in the cadenza by the flute, and the graceful rolling sounds of the harp imitate the image of joyfully flitting butterflies. The *Love Theme* is repeated twice as in the exposition, but with mutes in the string section and the solo violin depicts peaceful sonority and recalls of the lovers' first encounter. In Professor Wei's transcription, the *Love Theme* is interpreted for the solo double bass without the mute in order to bring out the same feelings as the solo violin by interpreting with peacefully tone color and flowing tempo.

The new concept for the eighth-note trills is crisp and vivacious like a bird's singing (Fig. 7-23) in the middle section of the serene recapitulation. A rapidly executed trill is applied with the fingers that simply hits on the fingerboard and occurs when the light pressure bow changes to an up-bow. The trills at measure 687-688 create a lighter and brighter tone color that can be altered into a vibrato motion for being an effortless depiction of the variance of a bird's singing.



Figure 7-23. Bird's singing at measure 687

The *huayin* occurred in the last five measures mirrors the lovers as they fly away and vanish into the air. The music recreates feelings of profound peace and serenity with a sparingly vibrato; the bow pressure is light, easily flowing and seamlessly (placement applies at the middle to upper part of the bow and tilted).

A Brief Note on Posture

After discussing the interpretation of *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto on double bass, I want to address a small concept of posture that incorporates the whole body. While performing, it is easy to forget that body should be used naturally and holistically. As discussed in this monograph: extending the back, dropping arm weight, and using one's core are concepts mentioned many times in this document in regards to interpretation. These concepts revolve around the health of the spine and its proper function within the body. A straight spine can support either standing or sitting. When it is straight, the shoulder and pelvis will be parallel each other and the floor. The shoulder and weight will then drop down naturally. When this occurs, the arms are free to move around the instrument (Fig. 7-24). For proper playing posture, once the spine is supported, other body structures are supported as well. The head "sits itself" on the shoulders, neither leaning forward nor backward. Meanwhile, the neck supports the head without tension and is treated as an extension of the spine (Fig. 7-25). Then, when it is necessary to provide more arm weight, the spine and body move slightly forward. The joint that provides forward motion to the shoulders is actually the hip, or coxal joint (Fig. 7-26). Therefore, dropping arm weight is the result of forward motion and application of the back muscles. The extended spine also provides core support and extension of the shoulders as well. When playing in the high register, especially the *Farewell at Pavilion*, *Meeting in the Chamber*, and *The Death of Shan-bo*, *Ying-tai Throws Herself into the Grave* passages, extension of the spine and core support are needed as well as a relaxed neck muscle. If the muscles are relaxed and free to apply while performing, these motions will be efficient with each of the disparate parts moving as one whole unit.

There are many details of the relationship between the use of the large joints and muscles, a subject worthy of future discussion which can be studied using other reference sources such as the Alexander technique for body re-education and coordination through the study of physical and psychological principles, but this is out of the scope of the monograph.



Figure 7-24 (1). Natural posture of playing low position



Figure 7-24 (2). Natural posture of playing neck position



Figure 7-24 (3). Natural posture of playing high positions

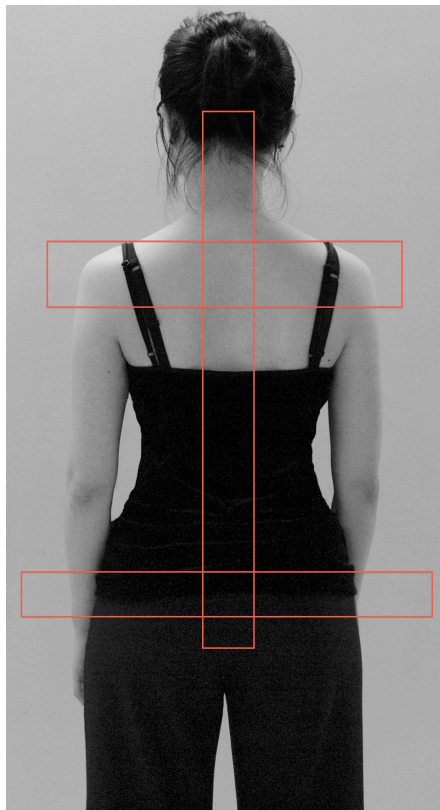


Figure 7-25. Straight spine and extension of the head with parallel shoulders and pelvis

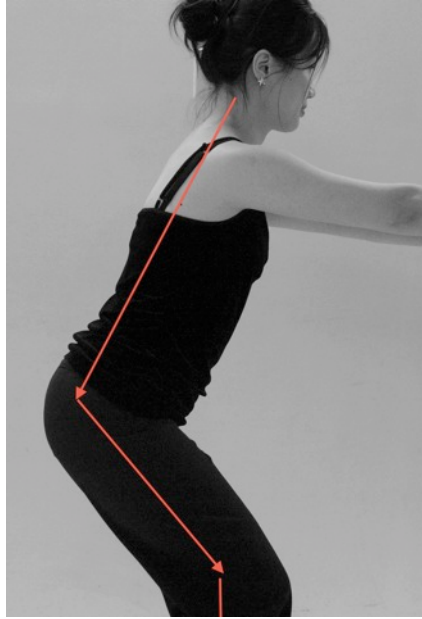


Figure 7-26. Forward bending posture from the coxal joint

A Brief Note on Endurance

In this section, I will explain a few ways to gain endurance when performing. As Professor Wei mentioned (Chapter Two: The Background Information on the Transcription Work), the concerto is mostly transcribed in higher register on the bass to best capture color and character of the story. For double bass players, physical and mental strength are required to be able to perform this masterwork in higher level. Yoga, Tai chi (a kind of kung-fu with graceful slow movement combined with deep breathing), swimming and running are very beneficial for helping the body to relax, refresh and develop endurance. Therefore, Professor Wei strongly recommends that double bass players practice Yoga and have a disciplined workout schedule for gaining physical and mental strength. The main goal is realization of using the body holistically—never misusing it and becoming more sensitive to how performing effort is distributed.

Gentle yoga helps to release tension and produce a state of physical and mental peace by working with the breathing and posture. Dr. Gail Dubinsky, a physician and yoga instructor in Santa Rosa, California, explains, “Yoga works on posture and balancing the tension in the upper body. The standing poses ground you and take away excessive energy blocked in the upper body.”¹¹⁶ Learning to become conscious of parts of the body used in performance, in regards to their relationship to the head, torso and legs also helps to build endurance in performing a demanding piece like this concerto. There are a few common yoga poses that Professor Wei recommends: the basic Mountain pose (a standing posture that helps the skeletal system to support the body and maintaining proper posture), the Downward-Facing Dog (relieving stiffness in the shoulder-blades), Upward-Facing Dog (relieving back strain), the Warrior pose (strengthening and stretching the lower body), and the Tree pose (a balance pose to develop poise, concentration, steadiness and calm). These poses, as a whole, are good for the core, arms, spine, neck and legs, but especially core muscles and the spine. It is also important not to make horrific faces while doing stretches. Ultimately, when the basic elements are applied together—deep breathing (to help the circulation and gain power) and good posture—the body (inner power), music and instrument unite together as one.

¹¹⁶ Lauryn Shapter, “Injury Prevention and Healing Through Yoga,” *Healthy String Playing: Physical Wellness Tips from the Pages of ‘String’ Magazine*, (CA: String Letter Publishing, 2007), 141.

CONCLUSION

The *Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto* transcription for double bass gives bassists another opportunity to introduce the Western audience with a new attractive color through the specific timbre of the Chinese cultural music. *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto* is a piece that shares a relationship between Eastern and Western music, demonstrating how the musical language consisting of Chinese culture and music can inspire performers to bring the best out of two cultures. The Concerto is composed with unique operatic singing, imitation of Chinese instrumental techniques, and *erhu*'s special vibrato. Among all Chinese instruments, *erhu* was the most important instrument in composing the concerto. Through understanding the concerto, we can best realize *huayin*, in its fundamental feature as a part of traditional *erhu* music. *Huayin* is the best metaphor for portraying Chinese music and stands proudly alongside the other Chinese arts, including painting, calligraphy, and poetry. *Huayin*'s nuanced style is a personal improvisation. Performers may spend some time seeking this delicate style to best evoke the true meaning beyond notes. Musicians pursue a spiritual level of performance through Chinese aesthetics like *qiyun*, *xin*, and *xu-shi-yijing*, which can also assist in interpretation and help to bring music to life—apart from analyzing the program music in detail, which also gives the performer the ability to greatly express a work's imagery. Even though there is no mechanical analysis to measure in detail, the essence remains in its perception of humanity and the overall aesthetics of a story expressed through music.

The transcription of *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto* includes musical language that is very hard to interpret for performers not familiar with Eastern culture. During the demonstrations of Professor Wei, the original transcriber, her expressive emotional energy creates music reflecting wordless sensations. I am very much influenced and captivated by her

instruction. The approach toward playing this concerto is similar to the way Professor Wei plays her own transcription of Elgar's cello concerto. In playing Elgar's piece, Professor Wei said that she uses so much passion and energy in the opening statement of the first movement that the whole instrument, stage, and ground start to shake. She encourages students to create and project sound to the furthest seat in the back of the hall by sustaining the bow close to the bridge and by using very expressive vibrato to sing out the melody. For the bawling passage in *The Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto, her performance expresses extreme sorrow that touches the audiences' hearts deeply. Her enthusiasm for playing is always inspirational to the point that I sometimes forget that she is playing an instrument.

The art of performance is also like the art of the calligraphy. In the process of writing calligraphy, the writers must compose themselves in a tranquil surrounding by forgetting worries and collecting thoughts by creating space in the mind, moderating *qi* through the writing brush. The force, movement of strokes such as the line and the points, and oneness in the art of calligraphy is all related to performing music.

To reach supreme artistry in performance, the ability to bring music to life is a deciding factor that causes the audience to listen or not. In order to make a meaningful performance, musicians have to blend emotional context with sincere feeling, breathing, imagination, and coordination with muscles and proper usage of body weight to speak through the instrument with oneness. Effortless blending of technique and emotion is required for oneness to occur. Once there is freedom in technique and binding of it with the self, the beauty of the music arrives on its own—playing with a humble heart follows an inner place of oneness.

Finally, through the years, I have strongly developed within myself not only better understanding of how to practice a piece, but also clearer insight into the need of digging deeply

into the background information of a masterwork. The knowledge about the Chinese music aesthetics, the usage of *huayin* either with double bass or with *erhu*, the expressive imagery, and the profound learning experiences with Professor Wei will inspire bassists' artistic spirits through this concerto. Following this path in the learning process, I believe that double bass players can delight audiences and themselves with styles that enrich the soul through the special beauty of the double bass.

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APPENDIX

BIOGRAPHY OF YUNG-CHIAO WEI

Yung-chiao Wei

Associate Professor of Double Bass at Louisiana State University

"Bass Players with great technique and supreme artistry are non-existent. Well, there are a few exceptions: the legendary Gary Karr, of course, Eugene Levinson of the New York Philharmonic, and now Yung-Chiao Wei, a young, multi-talented female bassist from Taiwan" reads a recent New York Concert Review of Yung-Chiao Wei's Carnegie Hall solo recital debut. Yung-Chiao Wei was also praised by The Miami Herald as "a two sided-talent - a competition winning pianist turned double bass virtuoso." Through her musical insight, breathtaking virtuosity and personality, Wei combines compelling, artistic performances on the double bass with a magical presence on stage.

Currently a double bass professor at the Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Wei is a recipient of numerous honors and awards, honors including the 2006 LSU Tiger Athlete Foundation Teaching Award, 2005 LSU Summer Research Stipend Grant, 2003 Taiwan Young Concert Artist Competition, both the 2nd Prize and Audience prize in the 2001 Izuminomori International Double Bass/Cello Competition in Japan, the New World Symphony Concerto Competition, the Texas International Festival Concerto Competition, two consecutive years the Interlochen Arts Academy Concerto Competition, the Academy's Young Artist and Fine Arts Award, and first prize in the Taiwan National Music Competition.

Ms. Wei's recent Carnegie Hall debut garnered tremendous praise from New York Concert Review Inc. Critic Anthony Aibel, who cited "Wei is a phenomenon." Her performance of Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata in A minor elicited another mention of praise; Aibel affirmed that "nuance on the double bass is hard to accomplish, but Wei plays with subtlety of dynamics, color and expression one seldom, if ever, hears on the bass".

Wei has appeared at major concert halls around the world including Carnegie Hall, Davis Hall, Jordan Hall, Isabella Stewart Garden Museum, Ozawa Hall, Lincoln Center Alice Tully Hall, National Concert Hall (Taiwan), Izuminomori Hall (Japan). Recent and upcoming performances include her New York recital debut at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, concerto appearances with the National Symphony Orchestra in Taiwan, the New World Symphony (FL), and solo recitals throughout US and Asia. She has been invited to give performances and/or master classes at the Eastman School of Music, Interlochen Arts Academy, University of Michigan, Ithaca College School of Music, Belize (Central America), Japan

Double Bass seminar, Montreal Chamber Music Festival, International Society of Bassist Convention, Shanghai Conservatory and Shenyang Conservatory in China, Taipei University of the Arts, Tunghai University in Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, University of North Florida, among many. She served as a faculty member of the Bowdoin Music Festival in Maine, and was a juror for the International Bassist Society Competition in 2003.

As a chamber musician, Wei has collaborated with celebrated artists such as Leon Fleisher, James Buswell, John Gibbons and Joseph Robinson. She was invited by Denis Brott (artist director of the Montreal Chamber Music Festival) to perform in Montreal Chamber Music Festival, where she collaborated with Dennis Brott, James Campbell, Joseph Rouleau, Gabriel Gascon, Rosemarie Landry, Andy Simionescu, James Ehnes, Neal Gripp, Stephane Levesque, and James Sommerville. Her orchestra experience includes serving as principal bassist in the New World Symphony Orchestra (FL) under Michael Tilson Thomas; the New York String Orchestra at Carnegie Hall; Metamorphosen Chamber Orchestra in Boston. She has participated in several festivals including the Tanglewood Music Center, Aspen Music Festival, Spoleto (Italy) and the Pacific Music Festival (Japan). Wei has been featured on the radio and television throughout USA (CBS, WGBH, PBS), Japan's NHK, Canada's CBC, Belize and Taiwan.

Wei stretched her repertoire from its classic European and Asian base to include a whole new genre, the Argentine tango. She joined 19 other women, the Leading Ladies of Tango-an all female tango performance in 2006 by invitation of Ted Viviani, executive producer of an Extreme Tango Production in San Francisco. She collaborated with the outstanding Argentinean singer Silvana Deluigi, Uruguay's virtuoso pianist Polly Ferman, Viviana Guzman (Flute), Anna-Maria Mendieta (Harp), Ina Paris (Violin) and two bandoneonists, Eleonora Ferrerya of Argentina and Bettina Hartl of Germany.

A native of Taiwan, Wei began playing the piano at age six and the bass at age twelve. She received her Master of Music degree with honors from the New England Conservatory in Boston and her Bachelor of Music degree with a Performance Certificate from the Eastman School of Music- the first bassist to be awarded such a certificate in twenty years. Her teachers include James Vandemark, Lawrence Wolfe, Stuart Sankey, Jeff Turner, Derek Weller, Peter Dominguez and Claudia Chen.

Wei is the first double bass soloist to transcribe and perform the famous Chinese Violin Concerto "Butterfly Lovers." It is recorded with pianist Chao-I Chou and released on Centaur Records in June, 2008.



The front cover of Yung-Chiao Wei's released recording.

VITA

Min-Tzu Chao was born in Tainan, Taiwan in 1978. She received her first piano lesson at the age of eight and double bass lesson when she was fourteen. She attended Tainan Women's College of Arts and Technology (the current Tainan University of Technology, also known as Tainan Tech) for a five-year program at sixteen and majored in double bass performance. After finishing the college, she continued her musical studies in Taipei National University of the Arts (TNUA) in 1999 under Professor Da-o Rao, the internationally acclaimed bassist and teacher. While studying in Taiwan, she received several prizes from competitions in Tainan County and Taiwan double bass competitions as well as concerto competition at TNUA.

After graduating from Taipei National University of Arts, she came to the U.S. in Spring 2004 to enroll in the graduate program at School of Music, Louisiana State University, and earned her Master of Music in double bass performance in December 2005 under the guidance of Professor Yung-Chiao Wei. Min-Tzu started her doctoral study at LSU in Fall 2006.

Min-Tzu is currently a doctoral candidate in double bass performance and plans to graduate in May 2011. She is the bassist with the Acadiana Symphony Orchestra in Lafayette and with the Louisiana Sinfonietta.