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"Shui Diao Ge Tou" from Poems of the Sung Dynasty

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“SHUI DIAO GE TOU”  
FROM POEMS OF THE SUNG DYNASTY

A Thesis

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
Master of Music

in

The School of Music

by

Wennan Wang
B.A., Southwest China University, 2003
M.A., Southwest China University, 2006
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INSTRUMENTATION

2 Flutes (Fl.) (2nd doubling piccolo)
2 Oboes (Ob.)
2 Clarinets in Bb (Bb Cl.)
2 Bassoons (Bn.)
4 Horns in F (Hn. in F )
3 Trumpets in C (Tpt. in C)
Tenor Trombone and Bass Trombone (Tbn.)
Tuba (Tuba.)

Timpani (Timp.)

Percussion 1 (perc.1)
(Marimba, Chime I, Tambourine, Large Crash Cymbal, Tam-Tam, Chinese Small Pecking Opera Gong)

Percussion 2 (perc.2)
(Wind Chime, Chime II, Tam-Tam, Xylophone, Tambourine, Large Suspended Cymbal, Triangle, Wood Block)

Percussion 3 (perc.3)
(Triangle, Glockenspiel, Large Suspended Cymbal, Chinese Tom-tom, Bass Drum, Brake Drum, Chinese Small Pecking Opera Gong)

Harp (Hp.)

Violin I (Vln.1)
Violin II (Vln.2)
Viola (Vla.)
Violoncello (Vlc.)
Contrabass (Cb.)
ABSTRACT

“Shui Diao Ge Tou” from Poems of the Sung Dynasty is a piece for full orchestra. It was suggested by two poems of Su Dong Po. One is “Shui Diao Ge Tou”. The other one is “Jiang Chen Zi”. No movement of this piece has a fixed form, but the whole piece takes on the arch structure. The musical development is analogous to the texts of the poems, and the whole piece is controlled by two principal themes. They can first be found at measures 6 and 15.

The materials of this work are drawn from the old traditional Chinese music. They are not always based on a pentatonic scale. Instead, they often have seven-tone scales which are similar to the Mixolydian, Lydian or Ionian church modes. Sometimes I even combined them like Bartok did. I wondered if these melodic patterns would give more an Asian quality to this piece. They connect better with the poems written by Su Dong Po. I really got an idea a long time ago to combine the Western composing techniques and Chinese flavor.

The more interesting thing for this piece is the title of the second movement “A Dialogue Between Su Dong Po and Debussy”. How did I come up with this title? When I composed the first movement, I found that Debussy’s “La Mer” and Ravel’s “Rapsodie Espagnole” had some influences on my music. So I tried to make a quotation there, but my music is quite different from theirs. And at the same time, I developed the two main themes so that the music is like a dialogue between two people who come from the different countries, two different cultures. I was wondering if I have successfully combined the two different elements.
“SHUI DIAO GE TOU”
FROM POEMS OF THE SUNG DYNASTY
Score in C

I. Shui Diao Ge Tou

Wennan Wang

Flute 1
Flute 2 & Piccolo
Oboe 1
Oboe 2
Clarinet in B♭ 1
Clarinet in B♭ 2
Bassoon 1
Bassoon 2
Horn in F 1-2
Horn in F 3-4
Trumpet in C 1
Trumpet in C 2-3
Trombone 1-2
Tuba
Harp
Timpani
Percussion 1
Percussion 2
Percussion 3
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Contrabass
Su Dong Po (Sū Shi, 1037–1101) was a writer, poet, artist, calligrapher, pharmacologist, and statesman of the Sung Dynasty and one of the major poets of the Sung era. His courtesy name was Zizhan and his pseudonym was Dongpo Jushi (“Resident of Dongpo”), and he is often referred to as Su Dong Po. Besides his renowned poetry, his other existent writings are of great value in the understanding of the 11th century Chinese travel literature as well as details of the 11th century Chinese iron industry. His work was equally first class, a feat unapproached by any other Chinese artist in history.
APPENDIX B: TWO POEMS WRITTEN BY SU DONG PO

‘Shui Diao Ge Tou’

Will a moon so bright ever again?
Drink a cupful of wine and ask of the sky.
I don’t know where the palace gate of heaven is,
Or ever the year in which tonight slips by.
I want to return riding the whirl-wind!
But I feel afraid that this heaven of jasper and jade,
Lets in the cold, its palaces rear so high,
I shall get up and dance with my own shadow.
From life endured among men how far a cry!

Round the red pavilion
Slanting through the lattices
Shines upon the sleepless,
Moon, why should you bear a grudge, O why
Insist in time of separation so to fill the sky?
Men know joy and sorrow, parting and reunion;
The moon lacks luster, brightly shines; is al, is less.
Perfection was never easily come by.
Though miles apart, could men but live for ever
Dreaming they shared beauty of this moonlights together endlessly!

-------English translator unknown

‘Jiang Cheng Zi’

Ten years-dead and living dim and draw apart,
I don’t try to remember
But forgetting is hard,
Lonely gave a thousand miles off,
Cold thoughts-where can I talk them out?
Even if we met you wouldn’t know me,
Dust on my face,
Hair like frost—
In a dream last night suddenly I was home.
By the window of the little room
You were combing your hair and making up.
You turned and looked, not speaking,
Only lines of tears coursing down—
Year after year will it break my heart?
The moonlit grave,
Its stubby pines—

-------English translation by Burton Watson
Wennan Wang (b. 1981), began studying the clarinet at age seven and earned the highest level of the amateur performance diploma in China in 1997. In 1999, he was enrolled in the bachelor’s program at the Music School of Southwest China University, majoring in music theory and piano. After that, he continued his study of music theory to pursue a master’s degree. During these seven years, he was granted the outstanding musician scholarship and fellowship of the music school every year, because of his excellent performance. Besides that, he also took part in many performance competitions in China on behalf of the music school and won several awards, like the ‘Challenge Cup’ National S&T College Students Performance and the ‘Tong He Cup’ clarinet performance competition in Chongqing. From 2000 to 2006, he served as the teaching assistant of the School of Music in Southwest University and the assistant director for the music major in Chongqing College Union and Chongqing University. In 2003, he was elected as outstanding graduate in Chongqing. Furthermore, two theses of his were published by Chongqing University and Southwest University Xuebao in 2005. He obtained his master’s degree in music theory with the highest GPA in the music school in June 2006. Now he is pursing his master’s in composition at Louisiana State University as an assistant of Boyd Professor Dinos Constantinides.