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Music Draws Blood:

A Monodrama of East and West

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts

by

Hsing An Chen

2012

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Music Draws Blood:

A Monodrama of East and West

by

Hsing An Chen

Doctor of Musical Arts

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Robert Winter, Chair

The cross-fertilization and convergence between Eastern and Western cultures ranks as one of the most influential developments of the twentieth century. Surprisingly, few serious efforts have been made to integrate Chinese and Western traditions and styles into the same production and aesthetic space. My performance project, whose background and gestation this dissertation addresses, strived to do just that.

The search for a Chinese source of inspiration ended when Prof. Chi Li of our Department of Ethnomusicology brought to my attention the only surviving collection of early Chinese texts with music: seventeen poems set to music by the celebrated Chinese poet and composer of the Song dynasty, Jiang Kui (ca. 1155-1221). My “Prelude” describes Kui’s elusive love experiences with two remarkable sisters whose virtuosity on the pipa was a pivotal element in their relationships. With the assistance of Prof. Peter Kazaras (UCLA’s Director of Opera) and

my advisor, Prof. Winter, we identified three Western arias that could provide both dramatic contrast and continuity: Christoph Willibald Ritter von Gluck's "*Divinités du Styx*" (Ye Divinities of Styx) from *Alceste* (1767); Giuseppe Verdi's "*Una macchia e qui tuttora*" from *Macbeth* (1847); and *Dido's Lament* from Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1688). The blending of these two seemingly disparate styles using the style of *Nian bai*, a recitative-like delivery used in traditional Chinese *Kun qu* opera, created a structure that derives its dramatic integrity and strength from these unlikely pairings.

Chapter 1 elaborates on "The Chinese Context" of Jiang Kui, while Chapter 2 discusses "The Western Connections" through Gluck, Verdi, and Purcell. Chapter 3 details the extraordinary power and significance of costume, makeup, facial expression, bodily movement, and use of the water sleeve adapted from *Kun qu* opera. Chapter 4 discusses not only our decision to employ a Chinese instrumental ensemble but the challenges confronted by Prof. Chi Li in orchestrating, arranging, and even composing under the inspiration of historical practices. My "Postlude" reacts to the overwhelmingly positive feedback we received from the premiere by outlining possible next steps in the evolution of this project, including opportunities for presentation in China.

The dissertation of Hsing An Chen is approved:

Peter Kazaras

Vladimir Chernov

Mitchell Morris

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Robert Winter, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2012

Music Draws Blood: A New Monodrama of East and West

Hsing An Chen

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Prince Orlofsky in Taiwan National Symphony Orchestra production of Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* (1995);

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 Mezzo-soprano in both productions of Taipei Philharmonic Orchestra and Taipei National Arts University of Verdi's *Requiem* (1998, 1999);
 Mezzo-soprano in Singapore Hallelujah Society's production of Mozart's *Mass in C Minor*, K. 427 (2000) and Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* (2001);
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Prelude

Setting the Stage

The history of music in China is almost as long as the history of China itself. Whether we trace the earliest mentions of music to 5,000 or 4,000 B.C.E. is immaterial. Music has played an important role in every aspect of Chinese culture for as long as there are any records or memory. Hence a professional singer raised and educated in both Western and Chinese music will understand from the outset that any effort to bridge these two worlds in a performance setting could take an almost infinite variety of forms. In other words, there is no single style of “Chinese” music, just as there is no single style of “Western” music.

During both my education and my career as an opera singer and concert artist I remained acutely aware of my dual identity as a Western performer who grew up in a Chinese household. Preparing the lead roles in operas such as *Aida* and *Turandot* proved so all-consuming that for many years I gave little thought to my dual heritage. But when I arrived for my doctoral studies at UCLA—a university with strong performance programs in both Western and world musics—I began to think that such a synthesis of my two worlds might be a remote, and very rewarding, possibility. At the time I had little acquaintance with the work of either Prof. Chi Li in the UCLA Department of Ethnomusicology or Prof. Peter Kazaras, the director of UCLA Opera.

After I completed my doctoral qualifying exams I met with my advisor, Prof. Robert Winter, to discuss possible research topics. He immediately asked me if I had considered the possibility of a performance project bridging Chinese and Western music. At first I thought this was *Mission Impossible, Part 5*. But as I began to think about it, I came more and more to the realization that this was perhaps a once-in-a-career opportunity for me to not only spread my

wings but to bring together in some meaningful way the two dimensions of my heritage and my artistic life.

During Spring Quarter 2011 I enrolled in a course on the performance of Kūn Qǔ opera with Prof. Li. Since my training had been almost entirely Western, I was both fascinated and intimidated by this style of performance from the 14th-17th century Ming Dynasty. Prof. Li offered me critical encouragement, and I began to immerse myself in the new style. Crucial to my growth was Prof. Li's introduction to me of the work of the 12th-13th century poet/polymath Jiang Kui (ca. 1155-1221), also known as the Bai Shi Dao Ren (White Stone Daoist). Here was an appealing historical figure to whom I could relate directly. Prof. Li explained to me that Jiang was a rare example of an artist who had actually set some of his poetry to music, and that at least some of his music had been preserved. My imagination began to work overtime.

Around this same time, Prof. Kazaras began looking for operatic arias that he felt were appropriate to my relatively new status as a lyric-dramatic soprano. Before Prof. Kazaras got too far in his thinking, Prof. Winter arranged serendipitously for a meeting at which Profs. Kazaras and Li met for the first time. Their mutual admiration and compatibility were immediately apparent. We talked non-stop for an hour and a half, during which time the gradual outlines of a monodrama began to take shape.

We understood quickly that not only could Jiang Kui's work play an important role in the monodrama we would eventually create, but Profs. Kazaras and Winter began to think about possible works from the Western operatic repertoire that might join forces with Jiang. Prof. Winter suggested finding arias in three different languages and from three different stylistic periods. As we discussed the dark and tragic sides of Jiang's poetry, Prof. Kazaras soon came up with three candidates for the Western contribution (I enumerate these in the outline below).

Introducing Jiang Kui

Figure 1: Jiang Kui as represented during the Song Dynasty



Born in Bo-yang, Jiang Kui was active as a poet, a practitioner of *ci* (a popular poetic style), a calligrapher, and a composer in the militarily weak but culturally rich southern Song Dynasty. His father, a scholar-government official, died when Jiang was only fourteen years old.¹ The boy then had to move in with his married sister in Han-yang, where he remained until he was thirty years old. In addition to receiving assistance from his sister, Jiang also sold his calligraphy and cultivated the patrons on whom he relied for support the rest of his life.

In 1186 Jiang met Xiao De Zao, a leading poet, scholar, and high-ranking government official. He soon moved to Hu Zhou himself, where he married Xiao De Zao's niece. Thanks to his connections with Xiao De Zao, Jiang Kui gained a level of social standing and was able to cultivate more influential patrons.²

¹ Chéng Dào Xià, *A New Chronology of Jiāng Bái Shǐ's Ci* (Hángzhōu: Zhèiāng Gǔjí Publisher, 1997), p. 300.

² Shuen Fu Lin, *The Transformation of the Lyric Tradition in China: Jiang Kui and the Southern Song Dynasty*, trans. Hóng Shēng Zhāng (Shàng Hǎi: Shàng Hǎi Gǔ Jí Publisher, 2005), p. 33.

During the Song Dynasty most of the poets famous at the time also served as government officials. Reaching this status was no easy task. Candidates were required to pass a daunting series of essay exams on political and social issues (sample: “What good will you do the people if you become a government official?) before they could be certified by the government. If they reached this stage they could be assured of financial security for the rest of their lives.

For reasons that are not at all clear, Jiang Kui took the exams repeatedly during his lifetime but never succeeded in passing. This insured that financial insecurity would constantly plague him. This accounts at least partly for Jiang remaining relatively little known during his own lifetime.³

In 1193, when Jiang was thirty-nine years old, he met Zhāng Jiàn (張鑾), the grandson of Zhāng Jùn (張浚), who was an outstanding general during the Song Dynasty. Zhāng Jiàn soon became one of Jiang Kui’s patrons, and he offered to buy the government position for Jiang. The incorruptible poet refused to go down this path. After Zhāng Jiàn died in 1203, Jiang Kui once again lost his source of financial support. Soon his base shrank even further. While struggling to make ends meet, his house was destroyed by fire. Now old and frail, he died in poverty at a hotel in Lín’ān. His funeral in Ma Teng had to be paid for by friends.⁴

The love affair between Jiang and two talented geishas⁵ alluded to in Jiang’s poetry, which is the subject of Chapter 1, is of a deeply poignant and ultimately tragic nature. While tragic love is also a hallmark of Western music, especially Romantic opera, the loose narrative left behind by Jiang’s poetry conveys a particularly sharp pain. Whatever feelings existed

³ Chéng Dào Xià, *Interpreting Bái Shí’s Cí* (Guǎng Dōng: People’s Publisher, 2005), p. 7.

⁴ Guāng Xī Yīn, *The appreciation of Jiang Kui’s poetry* (Sì Chuān: Ba Shǔ publisher, 1994), p. 2.

⁵ While the term “geisha” may sound overly sexualized in the wake of notions about Japanese women in popular American culture following World War Two, it is preferable to the overtly sexual term “courtesan,” and retains the notion of higher education and artistic achievement traditionally associated with this class. We cannot know whether sexual favors were expected of such Chinese women in the twelfth century.

between the principals, in the end their longings remained unfulfilled, memorialized only by the delicate and allusive lines penned by Jiang. These feelings are what initially motivated the scenario of *Music Draws Blood*.

The Birth of the Scenario

Given the subtlety of Jiang's language, we converged to the view that the Western contributions ought to be more dramatic. Prof. Kazaras offered three suggestions (these works are the subject of Chapter 2):

1) Christoph Willibald Gluck's "Divinites du Styx" (You Divinities of Styx) from *Alceste* (1767). In this aria, Alceste appears at the entrance to Hades and demands that she be swapped out for her husband, King Admetus. Gluck's music is bold and forthright, and emblematic of the logic behind *sacrifice*.

2) Giuseppe Verdi's "Una macchia" ("A Spot [of blood]") from *Macbeth* (1847). At this moment in Shakespeare's drama, Lady Macbeth—motivated by her lust for power as well as her twisted love for Macbeth himself, and with blood both on her hands and in her conscience—succumbs to literal *madness*. Verdi's music moves restlessly and relentlessly through a series of tangentially related keys that symbolize her state of mind.

3) Finally, Dido's Lament from the conclusion of Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1688) shows the heroine, overwhelmed by *grief* at the divinely ordered but nonetheless callous departure of her lover Aeneas, willingly mounting the funeral pyre that consumes her in *death*. These powerful sentiments—sacrifice, madness, and grief leading to death—convey an implied narrative in themselves but needed a more consistent plot line to be tied together.

How could we connect the 835-year old poetry of Jiang to these powerful emotions? This question is considered in both Chapter 1 (“The Chinese Context”) and especially in Chapter 4 (“Integrating the Libretto and the Music”). I focused in on the seventeen poems that both refer to the love affair and that Jiang himself set to music.

I discovered, not surprisingly, that Jiang Kui spoke in metaphors. As opposed to Western opera, direct feelings are rarely expressed. I found myself especially drawn to Kui’s fondness for metaphors of love, as for example in these four poems:

“Sorrow at Spring” (角招/1194) – willow tree

“Song of the Pipa” (醉吟商小品/1191) – pipa, a traditional and aristocratic Chinese instrument

“At Sunset” (長亭怨慢/1191) and “Secret Fragrance” (暗香/1191) – the plum blossom

In the end I drew on eight of the seventeen poems connected to Jiang’s unfulfilled love, using three in its entirety and quoting extensively from the other five. The principal challenge was how to create smooth transitions between highly contrasting styles. While there might be a number of musical solutions, I was especially attracted to the centuries-old tradition of *Niàn bái* (literally, “stage speech”), introduced during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

The blending of these three seemingly disparate styles—which includes arrangements of Kui’s melodies by Prof. Chi Li, performances in the style of *Niàn bái*, and Western operatic arias—creates a structure that derives its dramatic integrity and strength directly from its unlikely pairings. I felt from the beginning that our drama afforded an ideal opportunity to use Chinese costumes and gestures (the subject of Chapter 3). In combination with the simple stage designs of Chinese traditional opera, we would also utilize Chinese instruments to accompany the

Western arias, thereby creating a coherence and smoothness in the narrative that would otherwise be unachievable (discussed in Chapter 4).

I now began to rough out a scenario that wove the tragedy of love together. I elected to use four of Jiang's poems as the anchors for the Chinese portion of the narrative. Although all that has been introduced so far will be discussed in much greater detail in the chapters that follow, readers may understandably be curious about the scenario in advance. What follows includes, first, the monodrama broken into its eleven numbers; second, the scenario; and third, the complete texts (or "libretto," if one prefers). Readers can refer back to these items throughout their reading of the subsequent chapters.

The Monodrama by Musical Numbers

1. "Sorrow at Spring"
2. "Song of the Pipa"
3. "At Sunset"
4. "Secret Fragrance"
5. Aria: "Divinités du Styx" (From *Alceste* by Christoph Willibald Gluck)
6. "Rainbow Skirt"
7. Aria: "Una macchia" (From *Macbeth* by Giuseppe Verdi)
8. "The Beautiful Flower"
9. "Song of Autumn Night"
10. Aria "Dido's Lament" (From *Dido and Aeneas* by Henry Purcell)
11. "Immortal"

The Scenario

A woman recalls her affair with a dead lover. In “Sorrow at Spring” she wonders how she can endure the sense of loss these memories evoke. As she gazes towards the peaks beyond the fog, she dwells on their time together. Without him she feels as lifeless as the thousand acres of once-fragrant plum blossoms that have fallen from the trees. She struggles to call him back to her, but to no avail. Although it is spring, she feels only loss. The only way out is to create music, yet the only one who could truly understand is no longer there to hear it. In “Song of the Pipa” she elaborates on her loss, saying that only the pipa can give true voice to her feelings.

“At Sunset” continues her journey into separation and loss, highlighting her increasing inability to live in the world as she once did. Her desperation increases further as she watches the seasons change. She is left with nothing except her memories (“Secret Fragrance”).

Traveling to the gates of Hell, she offers to switch places with her beloved, but to no avail (“Divinités du Styx” from Gluck’s *Alceste*).

“Rainbow Skirt” reveals the toll taken by her attempt to retrieve her lover from the afterworld. She feels even more thinly tethered to the life she has known, and tortured by obsessive memories (“Sleepwalking Scene” from Giuseppe Verdi’s *Macbeth*).

Withdrawing ever further from the world she has known, her focus continues to narrow. She now hears only the sounds of birds singing in spring (“The Beautiful Flower”). Alone, and faced with the specter of dimming memories of love (“Song of Autumn Night”), she is left with but one choice (“Dido’s Lament” from *Dido and Aeneas*). Only in death does she finally find release.

一段已逝的情愛此時此刻回響著。。。

輕霧飄渺的遠山,勾起女子與已逝愛人的快樂時光.

此時的春天,在女子的心裡,只有深深的傷痛與失落.

沒有他的日子,她的生命如同一次清香的紅梅,散落消失於千畝之地.

不停地呼喚他的歸來,卻枉為徒然.

在這傷春之際,只有音樂撫慰她的心.

但是愛樂之人,卻無法有機會傾聽.

一曲醉商吟,琵琶樂聲道出她心聲她的無奈.

日暮漸落,然而女子的失落與絕望卻持續加深.

她無力獨活在這世上,

季節的轉變加速她的絕望.

“記憶”是她的唯一僅存!

她願意用自己的生命,去冥界地府換回她的愛人.但卻再次枉為徒然!

“記憶”在摧殘她的生命,她的身體漸衰竭.

遠離現今的世界女子,活在自己孤獨的世界,唯有春天的禽啼伴她.

“記憶”在消退中,正如同她的生命.

她願意用自己的生命去冥界地府換回她的愛人但卻再次枉為徒然.

“記憶”在摧殘她的生命,她的身體漸衰竭.

遠離現今的世界女子,活在自己孤獨的世界唯有春天的禽啼伴她.

“記憶”在消退中正如同她的生命!

The Structure of the Scenario:

The entire monodrama divides into five basic sections. The woman's sorrow at parting induces her lovesickness; her lovesickness leads to her attempt at rescuing her lover from hell; and desperation ultimately grinds down her resolve to live. She chooses to end her life for love.

I: Sorrow of parting

1. "Sorrow at Spring"

For the spring, I think...

How can I bring myself to see the weeping willows all around the West Lake?⁶

Lonely, I watch the pinnacle beyond the mist,

I remember joining hands with the prince on the lake.

In the short time since you left;

Early, a thousand acres of red fragrance have sprinkled and fallen.

A leaf-like boat crosses the waves in the mist, passes Thirty-Six Imperial Lodges,

Will this send the visitor back?

There still remain...

These threadbare sleeves hide behind the colorful boats,

And those who in those brothels rest their fans against their faces –

They shine and outshine each other in loveliness.

Their kingfisher-tail hairpins flutter,

Women love to color their foreheads with the "palace yellow,"

But now,

I feel sad at spring as in the past,

⁶ West Lake is located in the western portion of Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province. This famous lagoon was also formerly known as a center for martial arts.

The spring sorrow stirs me just as the wine tasting,
Alone, I play this feeling to the strings of a Wu zither,
Asking who knows the intention of the tune and the old friend who was with me in front of the
flowers.

1. “角招”

為春瘦。何堪更繞西湖，盡是垂柳。自看煙外岫。記得與君，湖上攜手。君歸未久。早亂
落、香紅千畝。一葉凌波縹緲，過三十六離宮，遣遊人回首。猶有。畫船障袖。青樓倚扇
，相映人爭秀。翠翹光欲溜。愛著宮黃，而今時候。傷春似舊。盪一點、春心如酒。寫入
吳絲自奏。問誰識，曲中心、花前友⁷。

2. “Song of the Pipa”

Just now it is again the time for Spring's departure,
A thousand threads of dainty willows worn dark yellow,
On which the evening crows caw.
Spring's golden saddle takes away my dreams;
Keeping its heart's secret,
Only the pipa understands my heart's secret.

2. “醉吟商小品”

又正是春歸，細柳暗黃千縷。暮鴉啼處。夢逐金鞍去。一點芳心休訴。琵琶解語⁸

⁷ Yi Shēng Liú and Sī Fèn Liú, *The selections of Jiang Kui and Chang 's ci* (Hong Kong: Sān lián Publisher, 1982), p. 69.

⁸ Nǎi Chāng Liú, *The Ci of Jiang Kui, New Interpretation Series Ratings* (Běi Jīng: Chinese Bookstore, 2001), p. 78.

II: Lovesickness

3. “At Sunset”

At sunset I look toward the city in the height land but cannot see it,

I see only scattered mountains numberless.

My lover, Wei, has gone. How could he forget Jade Ring’s demands?

Of which the first was: “Return soon, lest the red calyx have no one to be her master.”

Even with the sharp shears of Ping-Chou,

It can hardly cut through the thousand threads of grief at separation.

3. “長亭怨慢”

日暮。望高城不見，只見亂山無數。韋郎去也，怎忘得、玉環分付。第一是、早早歸來，
怕紅萼、無人為主。算空有並刀，難翦離愁千縷。⁹

4. “Secret Fragrance”

I still remember the place where we held hands.

A thousand trees reflect their cold green on the West Lake.

Petal after petal is blown away,

When can I see them again¹⁰?

4. “暗香”

長記曾攜手處，千樹壓、西湖寒碧。又片片、吹盡也，幾時見得¹¹？

⁹ Yì Shēng Liú and Sī Fèn Liú, *The selections of Jiang Kui and Chang ‘s ci* (Hong Kong: Sān lián Publisher, 1982), p. 8.

¹⁰ Shuen Fu Lin, “A Structural Study of Chiang Kuei’s Songs.” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1972), p. 164

¹¹ Nǎi Chāng Liú, *The ci of Jiang Kui, New Interpretation Series Ratings* (Běi Jīng: Chinese Bookstore, 2001), p. 96

III: Trying to rescue love

5. Aria: “Divinités du Styx” (From *Alceste* by Christoph Willibald Gluck)

Gods of the Styx, ministers of Death,

I am not asking you for pity.

I will deliver my tender husband from his deathly fate,

And I will leave myself in his place, faithful to the end.

It is unbearably sweet to die for the one I love,

It is the most natural of virtues, and my heart is enraptured.

I feel strong as I go where my love calls me!

IV: Desperation

6. “Rainbow Skirt”

I stare over the level banks as far as the eye can see,

The lotuses in the river have bloomed and fallen, but I have not been able to return home.

Sickness has drained my health;

Besides, I no longer need the white silk fan of summer, or any garment save my simple gauze dress.

Time flows on; I sigh on seeing a pair of swallows resting like guests on the beam of the house.

Where is my love?

The moonlight passing through the bamboo curtain reminds me of the pale face of my beloved.

6. “霓裳中序第一”

亭皋正望極。亂落江蓮歸未得。多病卻無氣力。況紈扇漸疏，羅衣初索。流光過隙。嘆杏

梁、雙燕如客。人何在，一簾淡月，彷彿照顏色¹²。

7. Aria: “Una macchia” (From *Macbeth* by Giuseppe Verdi)

Yet here’s a spot.

Out, damned spot! Out, I say!

One, two, well then, ‘tis time to do it!

Fie, my lord! Fie! A soldier, and afraid? Dare you not enter?

Yet who would have thought the old man to have so much blood in him?

The Thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?

What, will these hands never be clean?

Here’s the smell of the blood still.

All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.

Wash your hands, put on your nightgown,

Look not so pale!

I tell you yet again, Banquo’s buried;

He cannot come out of his grave.

To bed! To bed!

There’s knocking at the gate.

Come, come, come, come,

Give me your hand.

What’s done cannot be undone.

To bed, to bed, to bed.

¹² Nǎi Chāng Liú, *The ci of Jiang Kui, New Interpretation Series Ratings* (Běi Jīng: Chinese Bookstore, 2001), p. 12.

8. “The Beautiful Flower”

The blossoms cannot belong to the man who would dote on their fragrance.

The wind blows the sparkling waves along the lake.

And, I fear, when the spring wind departs and the green shade will be complete,

I will not be able to find the jade hairpins.

I hear the sound of oars rowing,

The clouds make me feel as if I were dreaming.

I try to nap a bit in the boat.

No need to seek beauty below Lone Mountain,

Because I can hear the birds singing at the arrival of Spring.

8. “鬲溪梅令”

好花不與 殢香人。浪粼粼。又恐春風歸去綠成陰。玉鈿何處尋。木蘭雙槳夢中云。小橫
陳。漫向孤山山下覓盈盈。翠禽啼一春¹³。

9. “Song of Autumn Night”

The maple drops its leaves into the river early this year.

The tender promise has vanished, leaving no memory in its wake,

And my beautiful dream is dim.

Alone, I see my tears fall on my nightdress.

What night is this night?

My grief has no end.

¹³ Liú, Nǎi Chāng. *New Interpretations of the Ci of Jiang Kui* (Běi Jīng: Chinese Bookstore, 2001), p. 139.

9. “秋宵吟”

搖落江楓早。嫩約無憑，幽夢又杳。但，盈盈淚灑單衣，今夕何夕恨未了¹⁴。

V: Choosing to die for love

10. Aria “Dido’s Lament” (from *Dido and Aeneas* by Purcell)

Thy hand, Belinda,

Darkness shades me. On thy bosom let me rest.

More I would, but Death invades me.

Death is now a welcome guest.

When I am laid in Earth, may my wrongs create no trouble in thy breast.

Remember me, but ah, forget my fate.

11. “Immortal”

Where are riches and fame?

I love only the fragrance of green wine and the dancing of red flowers.

With no need to rush,

I scan the many changes in the world throughout time.

11. “石湖仙”

浮雲安在，我自愛、綠香紅舞。容與。看世間、幾度今古¹⁵。

¹⁴ Liú, Nǎi Chāng, *New Interpretations*, p. 87.

¹⁵ Liú, Nǎi Chāng, *New Interpretations*, p. 43.

Chapter 1

The Chinese Context

Backdrop

The decision to employ the contributions of Jiang Kui in our monodrama may seem simple enough on the surface. However, anyone who wishes to understand the way these choices actually function in our work will need to enter into the complex and sometimes baffling world of scholarship about Jiang Kui's music. Suffice it to say that there exists no "Complete Edition" in the Western sense, nor is there any unanimity about how his music is to be interpreted even today. Any dramatic construction that invokes the work of Jiang cannot be undertaken without a sound knowledge of his poetic style, his deeply metaphorical language, and the enigmatic musical notation that stumped even the most distinguished scholars for two centuries. We begin with Jiang's poetic language.

Jiang's Poetic Language: *Ci*

Ci as a style of poetry dates back to the Song Dynasty (960-1276). The most educated and learned scholars in China practiced it, and the overwhelming majority of them were males. Even though the format of *ci* was less stringent than that of other poetic categories such as *shi*, to become a skilled practitioner of *ci* required years of training and experience. More than in any other category of Chinese literature, *ci* required the greatest degree of originality and imagination. While Jiang Kui practiced both *shi* and *ci*, only his *ci* include musical notation.

Ci traditionally divides into four categories according to length: *ling* (the shortest), *jìn* and *yǐn* (the medium sizes), and *màn* (the longest size). The seventeenth-century scholar Mao

Shu (1620-1688), a poet and a phonologist in the Ming and early Qing periods, provided a general frame of reference: *lǐng* contains less than 58 syllables (i.e. characters), *jìn* and *yǐn* range from 59 to 90 syllables, and *màn* extends beyond 90 syllables.¹⁶ However, no strict divisions persist among the four categories. Jiang Kui's *ci* consist primarily of two types, *lǐng* and *màn*, i.e. the longest and the shortest varieties.¹⁷ Vol. III of the most reliable published edition contains sixteen *lǐng*, while Vol. IV includes ten *màn*.¹⁸ Most of Jiang Kui's *lǐng* contain between 40 and 60 words; the shortest of these, the "Song of the Pipa" (醉吟商小品), contains only 29 words.¹⁹ The longer *màn* suggests a broader tempo, and applies to songs such as "At Sunset" (長亭怨慢).²⁰ With very limited specific information about tempo, such clues are highly important.

The Works of Jiang Kui

Acknowledgement of Jiang Kui's considerable achievements came almost entirely after his death. His surviving works consist of the *Bai Shi Dao Ren Poem Collection*, the *Bai Shi Dao Ren Song Collection*, two volumes of calligraphy (*Xù shū pǔ / Jiàng tiē pín*), and the *Poem of Rebuke*.²¹ The 84 *ci*, written under his pseudonym of *Bai Shi Dao Ren* (virtually all Chinese writers had one), were originally divided into six volumes.²² For musicians the most valuable of

¹⁶ Chinese Culture University, *Chinese Encyclopedia Online*, article "Ling Jin, Yin and Man," <http://ap6.pccu.edu.tw/Encyclopedia/data.asp?id=95&forepage=1>.

¹⁷ Shuen Fu Lin, *The Transformation of the Lyric Tradition in China: Jiang Kui and the Southern Song Dynasty*, trans. Hóng Shēng Zhāng. (Shàng Hǎi: Shàng Hǎi Gǔ Jí Publisher, 2005), pp. 75-76.

¹⁸ Chéng Dào Xià, *Interpreting Bái Shí's Cí* (Guǎng Dōng: People's Publisher, 2005), pp. 28-29.

¹⁹ Shuen Fu Lin, *The Transformation of the Lyric Tradition in China: Jiang Kui and the Southern Song Dynasty*, trans. Hóng Shēng Zhāng. (Shàng Hǎi: Shàng Hǎi Gǔ Jí Publisher, 2005), p. 78.

²⁰ Shuen Fu Lin, *The Transformation of the Lyric Tradition*, p. 90.

²¹ Liú, Yì Shēng and Sī Fèn Liú. *An Anthology of Jiang Kui and Zhāng Yán's Cí* (Hong Kong: Sān lián Publisher, 1982), p. 7.

²² Yào Huá Wáng, *Chinese Traditional Music Notation* (Fú Jiàn: Fú Jiàn Education Press, 2006), p. 156.

these collections is easily the *Bai Shi Dau Ren Song Collection*, which includes no fewer than seventeen *ci* with monophonic *suzi* notation—a 10-pitch diatonic notational system whose range exceeded an octave. According to the most reliable scholarship, Jiang Kui composed the melodies to fourteen of the seventeen songs himself. The melodies of the three remaining songs were taken by Jiang from other sources and applied later to his texts. For example, the melody “Rainbow Skirt” (霓裳中序第一) came from palace dance music of the Tang dynasty (681-907). Kui learned about this dance music from an instrumentalist and added his own *ci* to the music. The “Song of the Pipa” (醉吟商小品) was originally an instrumental piece for pipa, which Jiang Kui then adapted to his own text. In the third instance, one of Jiang’s best friends, Fàn Chéng Dà (范成大, 1126-1193), composed the melody that Jiang incorporated into his *ci*, “Spring Plum” (玉梅令). Jiang also composed ten melodies for religious services known as *Yuè Jiǔ Gē* (越九歌) that use an ancient notational system known as the Twelve Lǜ (律吕字谱). These refer to scalar patterns derived from twelve different pitches whose exact frequencies have been much debated by scholars. One piece for pipa by Jiang, “Gǔ Yuàn” (古怨), used a kind of word notation known as Jian Zi (减字谱) to indicate the fingerings. This fragmentary record constitutes the full extent of Jiang’s musical legacy.

Jiang Kui’s Style and Narrative

Zhāng Yán, a famous poet from the southern Song dynasty, characterized Jiang’s *credo* as “Wěi qū jìn qíng” (委曲盡情)—roughly translated as “poetry follows emotions.”²³ Jiang wished for his music and text to be closely bound, with less adherence to traditional conventions.

²³ Shuen Fu Lin, “A Structural Study of Chiang Kuei’s Songs” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1972), p. 1.

Zhang summarized Jiang Kui's most valued traits: solitude, sorrow, righteousness, a hermitic lifestyle, and love for nature—all of which produced a new and refined style of *ci* during the Song dynasty.²⁴ Jiang Kui's 84 *ci* reveal not only his longing but also chronicle his life experiences, including, in his numerous prefaces, references to specific dates and places that help us create a firmer chronicle.²⁵

Jiang's habit of including a preface to each *ci* is another principal characteristic of his style. Only four of the 84 *ci*, "Autumn Night" (秋宵吟), "Pearl Lips" (點絳脣), "Solution Chain" (解連環), and "The Flute under the Moon" (月下笛) lack a preface. This practice sets Jiang clearly apart from his contemporaries. Some of them provide only the date, while others are longer than the *ci* itself. Many provide the background for the poem that follows. As well as including the date and location, some of these allude to his emotional state.²⁶ The preface to "At Sunset" (長亭怨慢) even stipulates that Jiang first wrote the *ci* and then composed its melody.²⁷

In Chinese literature, declarations of love, however deeply felt, are indirect rather than explicit. Hence allusion and metaphor are consistent themes throughout Chinese literature. Any attempts to grasp the meaning of Jiang Kui's poems must be grounded in a solid understanding of how Jiang employs these two devices.

Based on his reading of the prefaces and the *ci* themselves, Xià Chéng Dào (夏承燾) has argued that Jiang Kui very likely fell in love with two geishas who resided in Hé Féi (the capital of Anhui Province, about 475 kilometers west of Shanghai). Xià believes that both were sisters

²⁴ Xià, Chéng Dào, *A New Chronology of Jiāng Bái Shī's Ci* (Hángzhōu: Zhè Jiāng Gǔ Jí Publisher, 1997), p. 8.

²⁵ Liú, Yì Shēng and Sī Fèn Liú. *An Anthology of Jiang Kui and Zhāng Yán's Ci* (Hong Kong: Sān lián Publisher, 1982). pp. 7-9.

²⁶ Shuen Fu Lin, *The Transformation of the Lyric Tradition in China: Jiang Kui and the Southern Song Dynasty*, trans. Hóng Shēng Zhāng. (Shàng Hǎi: Shàng Hǎi Gǔ Jí Publisher, 2005), p. 47.

²⁷ Xià, Chéng Dào, *A New Chronology of Jiāng Bái Shī's Ci* (Hángzhōu: Zhè Jiāng Gǔ Jí Publisher, 1997), p. 36.

and they were extraordinary performers on the pipa.²⁸ Indeed, the “Pi-Pa” emerges as a central metaphor used by Jiang to express his love for the two sisters. In “*Cleaning the River’s Sand*” (浣溪沙), written in 1186, Jiang writes: “... I hate playing the pipa, which only reminds me I am getting old and reunions are more and more impossible; if I pass through a thousand post stations our hearts cannot meet even in my dreams.”²⁹ The plum blossom equally symbolizes lovesickness, while the willow stands for grief at parting.

The use of the plum blossom as a metaphor for lovesickness may have begun in the Southern and Northern dynasties (420-589 AD)³⁰; starting with the Tang Dynasty (618-907), it became one of the favorite ways to represent the female.³¹ Jiang Kui also anthropomorphizes non-human objects. For example, “The Plum Tree on the Riverside” (江梅引) evokes his lovesickness just from the mere sight of it (見梅枝, 忽相思); the same is true of “The Beautiful Flower” (鬲溪梅令). The waves that sparkle beside the plum tree distance the man who would dote on the lovely plum blossom...” (好花不與殢香人。浪粼粼), while the plum blossom represents a girl who is beloved by a man though they cannot be together.

Writers have pointed out that “*Secret Fragrance*” (暗香) represent this style at its pinnacle.³² In this poem, Jiang evokes the plum blossom in several contexts: first, “The moonlight at its first rise has shone upon us many times; I play the flute by the plum tree, which wakes my fair one; ignoring the chill, we pick up the blossoms together.” This establishes the metaphor. Second, “The old man” (*Hé Xùn*, as Jiang refers to himself) forgets his longstanding

²⁸ Xià, Chéng Dào, *A New Chronology of Jiāng Bái Shī’s Ci* (Hángzhōu: Zhè Jiāng Gǔ Jí Publisher, 1997), p. 271.

²⁹ Shū Qián Zhāng, *Jiang Kui*, Vol. 12 (Taipei: Earth Press, 1994), p. 42.

³⁰ Lài, Qīng Fāng, *The Plum Metaphor in Ci during the Southern Song Dynasty* (Taipei: Taiwan Student Publisher, 2003), p. 9.

³¹ Qīng Fāng Lài, *The Plum Metaphor*, p. 49.

³² Liú, Yì Shēng and Sī Fèn Liú. *An Anthology of Jiang Kui and Zhāng Yán’s Ci* (Hong Kong: Sān lián Publisher, 1982), p. 60.

habit of composing new poems for spring; not until he smells the “fragrance of few plum blossoms” does he remember. In the second paragraph³³ we read: “Nevertheless, the long distance with snow severs the reunion of their love. The “Red Calyx” [the heart of the plum blossom] symbolizes the woman’s heart in his memory, while the green wine goblet “holds no more wine but only my tears.” In addition, the contrasting colors of red and green also represent the lovers. “Our time fled as the petals blew away! When will we see each other again?” Again, the falling petals suggest the end of life.³⁴

The “Willow” was another popular metaphor in Chinese literature invoked to illustrate the heartbreak of parting. Its multiple meanings derive partly from its phonetic sounds: “*liǔ*” (willow, third tone) and “*liú*” (to keep you with me, second tone) sound almost identical. The breaking of the branch at parting symbolizes the lovers’ grief. (Today this practice extends in China to farewells between good friends, even of the same sex.)

Further, poets also use the branches of the willow tree to symbolize the female’s slim waist. The wind blowing the branches and stirring the leaves evokes a woman swaying at the waist.³⁵ The willow leaf can also connote the delicate features of the female’s eyebrows.³⁶ As if this were not enough, the willow in Chinese literature also represents the fleeting nature of human life; the willow is a tree that grows rapidly but lives for only a short span. Finally, the willow recurs repeatedly in Chinese literature as the symbol of the geisha herself.³⁷ At the very outset of “Sorrow at Spring” (角招), Jiang writes: “Spring has worn me thin, and how can I bear to see drooping willows all around the West Lake?” At “drooping” Jiang indicates a *fermata* (ㄋ)

³³ My own division of Jiang’s poem; in the original the lines are grouped together.

³⁴ All of this is discussed at length in Shū Qián Zhāng, *Jiang Kui* (Taipei: Earth Press, 1994), pp. 115-120.

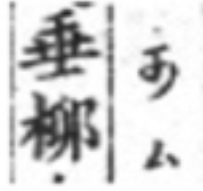
³⁵ Baidu Encyclopedia, “咏柳 (Yǒng liǔ)”, <http://baike.baidu.com/view/35077.htm>

³⁶ Baidu Encyclopedia, “柳叶眉 (Liǔ Yè Méi)”, <http://baike.baidu.com/view/106605.htm>

³⁷ Baidu Encyclopedia, “柳(liǔ)”, <http://baike.baidu.com/view/38280.htm>

to underscore his sense of desperation:

Figure 1: Use of the fermata



Xià Chéng Dào believes that 21 out of Jiang's 84 *ci* may express feelings of loss at his separation from the two geishas.³⁸ Their order of creation can no longer be determined. Although 17 of these 84 poems include melodies composed by Jiang, only eight of them fall among the 21 love poems. Another scholar, Xià Qú Chán 夏瞿禛, believes that the love affair began when Jiang was twenty-two years old.³⁹ This is not to say that any of these poems describe or refer directly to a specific relationship between Jiang and the two geishas. Jiang's prefaces to each poem, as well as the poems themselves, often allude in a subtle but unmistakable manner to their involvement.

Untying the Gordian Knot: Suzi Notation

The manuscript sources for Jiang's work were discovered during the period of the Emperor Qián Lóng (1711-99) in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912).⁴⁰ Its musical secrets remained a mystery until September 1953, when more than seventy drum scores were found in Xī'ān (西安), the capital of China's Shaan Xi province. Their notational system closely resembled that of Jiang, and provided the first serious keys to deciphering Jiang's musical contributions.

In the intervening years many scholars had entered the debate over the notational

³⁸ Xià, Chéng Dào, *A New Chronology of Jiāng Bái Shī's Ci* (Hángzhōu: Zhè Jiāng Gǔ Jí Publisher, 1997), pp. 274-281.

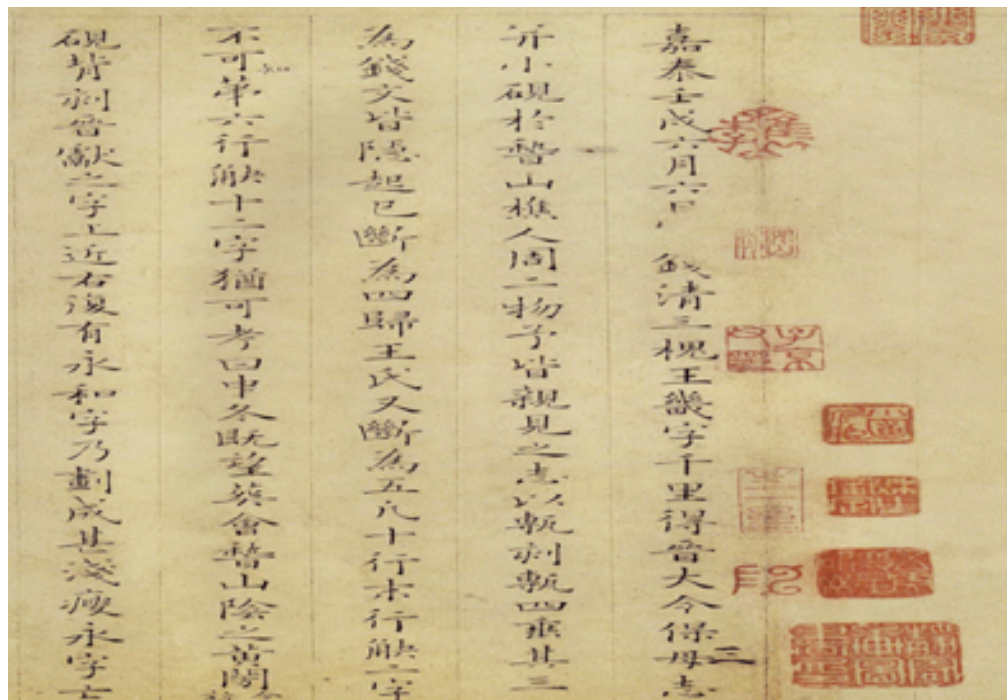
³⁹ Xià, Chéng Dào, *A New Chronology*, p. 301.

⁴⁰ Kui, Jiāng, *The Poetry of Jiāng Kui*. Edited by Chéng Dào Xià (Taipei: Hua Cheng Publisher, 1981), p. 198.

interpretation of Jiang’s songs. These include *Cí of Xiāng Yán House* (香研居詞塵) by Fāng Chéng Péi (1713-1808) ; *The Twelve Lǜ* (律話) by Dài cháng Gēng (1776-1833); *The Cí of the Seven Schools* (七家詞選) by Gē Zài (1821-18??); and *The Study of Jiang Bai Shi’s Songs* (白石道人歌曲研究) by Yáng Yīn Liǔ (1899-1984) and Yīn Fǎ Lǚ (1915-2002).⁴¹ None of their considerable efforts bore fruit.

Few of Kui’s handwritten manuscripts have survived. A rare example—the fourth-century introduction to Wáng Xiàn Zhī’s “The Boy’s Nanny Posts”⁴² (“Bǎo Mǔ Tiē; 王獻之保母帖) as overwritten (the original had largely faded out) in the twelfth century by Jiang— resides at the Palace Museum in Beijing, China.

Figure 2: *The First Five Columns of the Nanny Posts in the Hand of Jiang Kui*



None of Jiang’s 84 *ci* survived in his hand. The earliest manuscript source is a six-volume

⁴¹ Yīn Liǔ Yáng and Yīn Fǎ Lǚ, *The Study of Jiang Bai Shi’s Songs* (Běi Jīng: 1957), p. 13.

⁴² This awkward translation may appear suggestive to Western readers, but it actually refers to a practice of writing an appreciation about the person who most participated in a child’s upbringing.

copy by the scholar Táo Zōng Yí (陶宗儀) prepared in 1350, more than a century after Jiang's death. The modern scholar Yáng Yīn Liǔ relates that his study of Kui's works is based on an edition prepared in 1749 during the Qing dynasty by a poet named Zhāng Yì Shū's (張奕樞), which in turn may be an early copy of Táo Zōng Yí's volumes from 1350.⁴³ Indeed, the preface of Zhāng Yì Shū's edition states that he received his copy from his friend Zhōu Gēng Yú (周耕餘), who had prepared it in 1732.⁴⁴

To further complicate matters, another modern scholar, Xià Chéng Dào, evaluated Zhāng Yì Shū's edition and came to the conclusion that it contained many mistakes.⁴⁵ In actuality more than thirty editions of Jiang's work appeared during the Qing dynasty. The most popular of these was by Lu Zhōng Huī (陸鐘輝, d. ca. 1761),⁴⁶ who was both a poet and a wealthy businessman during the Qing dynasty.⁴⁷ Lu Zhōng Huī's 1743 edition is based on the original copy by Táo Zōng Yí.⁴⁸

Sorting all this out is made even more difficult by the fact that the original six volumes were in no fixed order, and Lu Zhōng Huī condensed the original volumes from six into four by joining his volume II into volume I and volume VI into volume V.⁴⁹ A well-known official scholar in the Qing Dynasty, Zhū Xiào Zāng (朱孝臧, 1857-1931), excoriated Lu Zhōng Huī's edition for its professed re-orderings.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Huī's edition remains one of the most frequently consulted.

From time to time these precious historical documents come on the open market, where

⁴³ Yīn Liǔ Yáng and Yīn Fǎ Lǚ, *The Study of Jiang Bai Shi's Songs* (Běi Jīng: 1957), Preface.

⁴⁴ Kui Jiang, *The poetry of Jiang Kui*. ed. Chéng Dào Xià (Taipei: Hua Cheng Publisher, 1981), p. 153.

⁴⁵ Kui Jiang, *The Poetry of Jiang Kui*, p. 188.

⁴⁶ Kui Jiang, *The Poetry of Jiang Kui*, p. p. 188.

⁴⁷ Zhāng, Wén Hǔ, *Writings from the Shū Yì Room* (Liaoning: Liaoning Education Press, 2003), p. 2.

⁴⁸ Wén Hǔ Zhāng, *Note*, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Kui Jiang, *The Poetry of Jiang Kui*, p. 188.

⁵⁰ Kui Jiang, *The Poetry of Jiang Kui*, pp. 188-189.

they sell in the range of \$20-40,000. The images below show (from right to left), Hui's Preface; the first page of the *Bai Shi Dau Ren* songs, Vol. 1; and the first page of the *Bai Shi Dau Ren shi*, Vol. 1 as recently offered on a popular Chinese online auction site.⁵¹

Figure 3: Edition by Lu Zhōng Huī (1743)



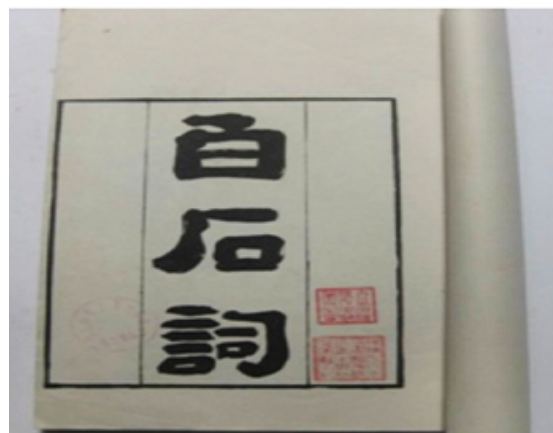
⁵¹ Kui Jiang, *Bai Shi Dau Ren Songs* (姜夔, “白石道人歌曲四卷別集一卷), <http://pm.findart.com.cn/2955151-pm.html>

More often they appear in facsimile editions for prices in the \$40-60 range. Below are a few such pages from a facsimile of Zhāng Yì Shū's 1732 edition (張奕樞).⁵²

Figure 4: The title page of the Zhāng Yì Shū's 1732 edition 張奕樞.



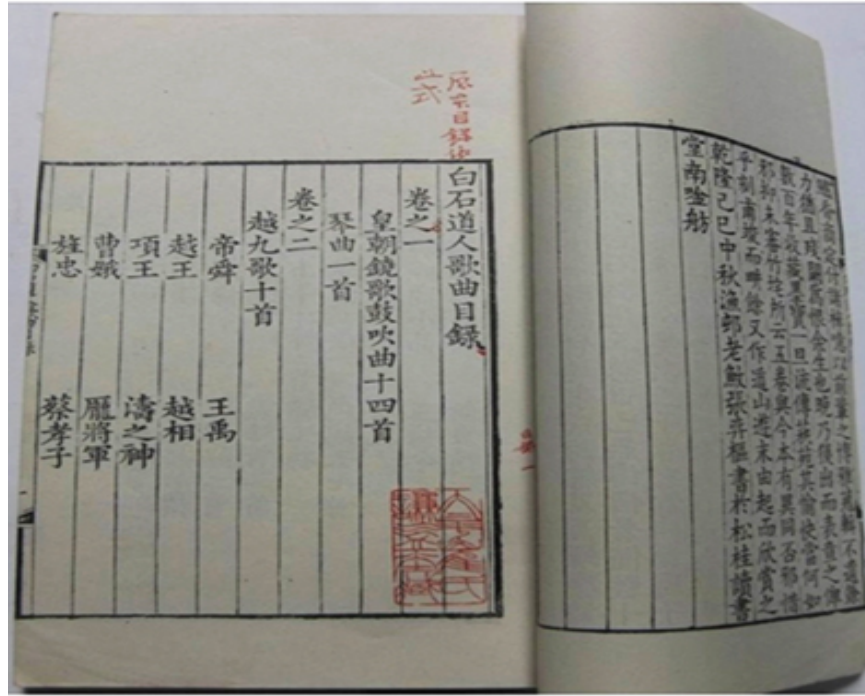
Figure 5: First page of Zhāng Yì Shū's edition (張奕樞), with Kui's pen name "Bai Shi."⁵³



⁵² Kui Jiang, *Bai Shi Dao Ren Songs, Zhāng Yì Shū's edition* (姜夔, “白石道人歌曲张奕樞刻本”), <http://book.kongfz.com/136/133230793>.

⁵³ Kui Jiang, *Bai Shi Dao Ren Songs, Zhāng Yì Shū's edition* (姜夔, “白石道人歌曲张奕樞刻本”), <http://book.kongfz.com/136/133230793>.

Figure 6: The Table of Contents of Zhāng Yì Shū's 1732 copy (張奕樞)⁵⁴



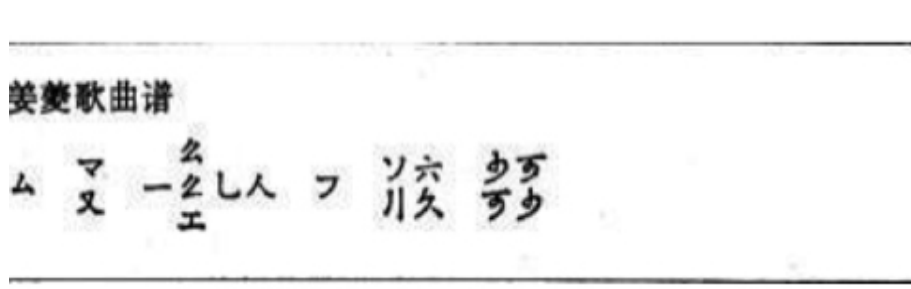
What none of these illustrations shows is the actual musical notation — *suzi* notation — that modern scholars finally began to decode after 1953. It turns out that all of the poems set to music by Jiang Kui made use of this anachronistic system. Indeed, Jiang Kui's work marks the only surviving vocal examples of this full 10-pitch system. It seems to have evolved from the earlier *yen* music notation of the Tang Dynasty (618-907).⁵⁵ The following chart illustrates the unique symbols used for the ten pitches in Jiang Kui's *suzi* notation:⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Kui Jiang, *Bai Shi Dao Ren Songs, Zhāng Yì Shū's Edition* (姜夔, “白石道人歌曲 张奕枢刻本), Kongfz, <http://book.kongfz.com/136/13323079>

⁵⁵ Yáng, Yīn Liǔ and Fǎ Lǚ Yīn. *The Study of Songs by Jiang Bai Shi* (Běi Jīng: Music Publisher, 1957), pp. 12-13.

⁵⁶ Lì Jiān, *Nàxī Yīn Yuè* (麗江, 納西音樂), <http://www.woxingwosu520.com/wan/gonglue/252.html>. The source for this illustration is unknown, but the numbers match those used in other examples of *suzi* notation.

Figure 6: The ten pitches of *suzi* notation (from 1-10 moving left to right) are:



The edition of Jiang by Yáng Yīn Liǔ and Yīn Fǎ Lǔ represents the ten characters this way: 么 マ 一 么 し 人 フ ソ 六 少. This does indeed recall the notation of the earlier *gōngchě* system: 合、四、一、上、勾、尺、工、凡、六、五.⁵⁷ Like *gōngchě*, *suzi* notation provides only the relative relationship of the various melody tones without specifying any reference pitch.

This rough correspondence between Jiang Kui’s notation and conventional Western notation can be seen in the following dual notations from “The Beautiful Flower.” The top *suzi* layer comes from black-and-white online facsimile of Lu Zhōng Huī’s 1743 edition at the University of California, Los Angeles, available through the Hathi Trust Digital Library.⁵⁸ The bottom layer shows the conversion undertaken by Yáng Yīn Liǔ of the first phrase of this song to Western staff notation. Note that the large Chinese characters supply the text of the poem (underlain in the example), while the smaller figures represent the actual numbers of the *suzi* notation that specify individual pitches:⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Yáng, Yīn Liǔ and Fǎ Lǔ Yīn, *The Study of Songs by Jiang Bai Shi* (Běi Jīng: Music Publisher, 1957), p. 14.

⁵⁸ Kui Jiang, *Baishi dao ren ji / Jiang Kui zhuan*. v.1-2., *Hathi Trust Digital Library*, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b4039015;page=root;view=thumb;size=100;seq=5;num=5;orient=0>

⁵⁹ Yáng, Yīn Liǔ and Fǎ Lǔ Yīn, *The Study of Songs by Jiang Bai Shi* (Běi Jīng: Music Publisher, 1957), p. 44.

Figure 7a: *Suzi* and Staff Notation in “The Beautiful Flower.” The vertical notation has been arranged from left to right to accommodate Western notation.

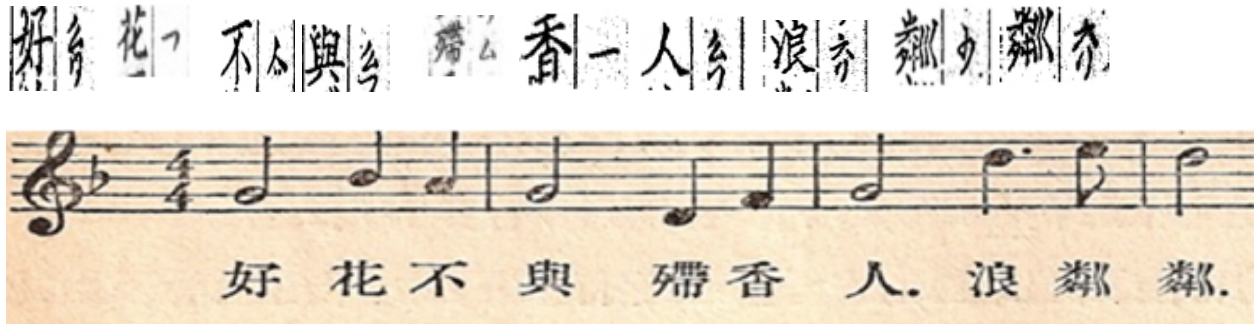
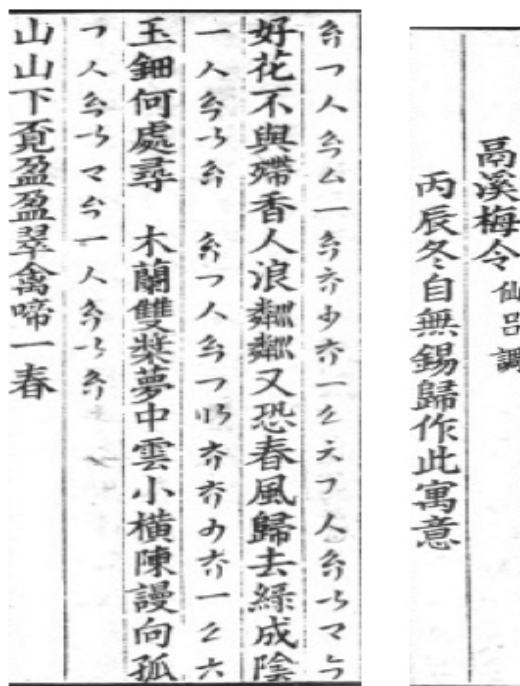


Figure 7b: The entire *Suzi* notation of “The Beautiful Flower.” Like other Chinese traditional notation, the music reads top to bottom, and from the right to left columns. The first column contains the title of the song. The second column is Jiang’s Preface. The third and fourth columns are the beginning of the song, with the *Suzi* notation in the third column and the text of the poem in the fourth.⁶⁰



⁶⁰ Kui Jiang, *Baishi dao ren ji / Jiang Kui zhuan*, Vols. 1-2, *Hathi Trust Digital Library*, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b4039015;page=root;view=thumb;size=100;seq=5;num=5;orient=0>

The Twelve Lǜ

From the above it would seem that we are now perfectly positioned to “transcribe” Jiang’s poetic songs into some semblance of modern notation. Yet *suzi* notation includes one additional strand of information that actually helps us to determine the absolute frequencies (pitches) intended by Jiang Kui. These are the elusive “Twelve Lǜ.”

In Chinese music, *Lǜ* can be defined as the absolute sound frequencies of specific arrays of pitches.⁶¹ The *Lǜ* is a profound yet complicated dimension of Chinese culture. Scholars have known about, and debated, the workings of the *Lǜ* for centuries. It was not only related to music but to the very authority and viability of a dynasty. The documentation of the *Lǜ* grew out of the correlation between pitch and bells that goes back at least to 600 BCE. Critical early understanding disappeared with the conscious destruction of books and records during the Qin Dynasty (221–206 BCE). Thanks to an archaeological discovery in 1978 of a tomb site from 433 CE, the earliest set of bells—64 in all and falling into eight irregular groups spanning more than five octaves divided into twelve tones each—has now been closely studied by Chinese scholars. Remarkably, each of these bells actually produces, depending on where it is struck, intervals roughly a third apart. This is the first documented instance of a 12-note scale in Chinese music.

As part of establishing its legitimacy, virtually every dynasty undertook a nearly constant process of revising the *Lǜ*. The most important note was the *Huáng Zhōng Lǜ*, the lowest pitch, which can be understood in the most general terms as a tonic. Variations could be considerable. For example, the *Huáng Zhōng Lǜ* in the West Zhōu dynasty (1046–771 BCE) ranged from 350 Hz to 370 Hz, while the same pitch during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) ranged from 295 Hz to 299 Hz.⁶²

⁶¹ Zhōng Liáng Tóng, *Chinese Traditional Music* (Fú Jiàn: Fú Jiàn Education Press, 2004), p. 13.

⁶² Zhōng Liáng Tóng, *Chinese Traditional Music* (Fú Jiàn: Fú Jiàn Education Press, 2004), p. 15.

The zeal for altering the *Lù* reached a fever pitch during the Song Dynasty, when it changed nine times within 150 years.⁶³ The last time occurred in 1104 under the leadership of Wèi Hàn Lù (魏漢律). In 1105, the Song Emperor recognized them as the *Dà Chéng Yué* (大晟樂), and these twelve *Lù* remained in use for more than one hundred seventy years.⁶⁴ With some assurance we can assume that Jiang's twelve *Lù* were based on the *Dà Chéng Yué*. The *Huáng zhōng lù*, or lowest bell, sounds closest to the Western "D"⁶⁵, with the remaining eleven *Lù* designated as follows:

黃鐘 (Huáng Zhōng Lù - tonic/unison) / D

大呂 (Dà Lǚ Lù - semitone) / E flat

太簇 (Tài Cù Lù - major second) / E

夾鍾 (Jiá Zhōng Lù - minor third) / F

姑洗 (Gū Xiǎn Lù - major third) / G flat

仲呂 (Zhòng Lǚ Lù - perfect fourth) / G

蕤賓 (Ruí Bīn Lù - tritone) / A flat

林鍾 (Lín Zhōng Lù - perfect fifth) / A

夷則 (Yí Zé Lù - minor sixth) / B flat

南呂 (Nán Lǚ Lù - major sixth) / B

無射 (Wú Yì Lù - minor seventh) / C

應鐘 (Yīng Zhōng Lù - major seventh) / D flat

⁶³ Zhōng Liáng Tóng, *Chinese Traditional Music* (Fú Jiàn: Fú Jiàn Education Press, 2004), p. 32.

⁶⁴ Zhōng Liáng Tóng, *Chinese Traditional Music* (Fú Jiàn: Fú Jiàn Education Press, 2004), p. 32.

⁶⁵ Yīn Liǔ Yáng and Fǎ Lǚ Yīn, *The Study of Jiang Bai Shi's Songs* (Běi Jīng: Music Publisher, 1957), p. 40. The frequency of 298.725 is actually slightly higher than the 293.333 cps of the modest Western d1, based on a reference "A" of 440 cps.

This list requires two immediate qualifications. First, the absolute pitches do not correspond exactly to our Western even-tempered scale. (Although we know that these early scholars arrived at the pitches of the twelve *Lǜ* by a sophisticated use of arithmetic ratios, a full discussion would require a book of its own.) Second, this array of pitches should not be understood as a “scale” in the Western sense. Each of them is capable of serving as its own tonic and generating its own scale, most often pentatonic or diatonic—though again without any literal correspondence to Western pentatonic (most frequently cited as the five black notes of the piano) or diatonic (most frequently the white notes) scales.

For each of Jiang’s songs used in *Music Draws Blood* he provided the *suzi* notation as well as the specific *Lǜ*, which refers to the “tonic” of the diatonic scale associated with the *suzi* notation.⁶⁶ With a tonic note of *d*, the notes are roughly equivalent in the Western scale to: *d*, *e*, *f*-sharp, *g*, *g*-sharp, *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*1, and *e*1.⁶⁷

Jiang’s seventeen songs are based on the twelve *Lǜ*. However, Jiang used more recent names in which the pitches are a perfect fourth lower than those in the earlier twelve *Lǜ*. The scholar Yáng Yīn Liǔ illustrates the relation between Jiang’s *Lǜ* and six of the twelve *Lǜ* before Jiang⁶⁸.

The Twelve *Lǜ* before Jiang Kui The Twelve *Lǜ* In Jiang Kui’s music

Huáng Zhōng 黃鐘(D)	=	Huáng Zhōng 黃鐘(A)
Yí Zé 夷則(B flat)	=	Xian Lǚ 仙呂(F)
Jiá Zhōng 夾鐘(F)	=	Zhōng Lǚ 中呂(C)
Lín Zhōng 林鐘(A)	=	Gāo Píng 高平(E)

⁶⁶ Zhōng Liáng Tóng, *Chinese Traditional Music* (Fú Jiàn : Fú Jiàn Education Press, 2004), p. 17.

⁶⁷ Yáng, Yīn Liǔ and Fǎ Lǚ Yīn, *The Study of Songs by Jiang Bai Shi* (Běi Jīng: Music Publisher, 1957), p. 17.

⁶⁸ Yīn Liǔ Yáng and Yīn Fǎ Lǚ, *The Study*, p. 40.

Wú Yì 無射(C) = Yuè Diào 越調(G)

Zhòng Lǚ 仲呂(G) = Zhèng Píng 正平 (D)

Other configurations give us more useful information. For example, in the graphic below:

Figure 8: Title and Tonic Note from “The Beautiful Flower”



For instance, the four large upper characters from “The Beautiful Flower” (高溪梅令) supply the name of the song. The two smaller words below (仙呂; *Xian lǚ*) are equivalent to 夷則 (*Yí Zé*), which specifies F as the tonic note. 調 (Diào) is roughly equivalent to “mode” in Western music

Meter

Were Jiang’s melodies intended to be performed in any particular meter (or combinations of meter). The following music example, come from the edition by Yáng Yīn Liǔ and Yīn Fǎ Lǚ offers a provisional answer:⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Yáng, Yīn Liǔ and Fǎ Lǚ Yīn, *The Study of Songs by Jiang Bai Shi* (Běi Jīng: Music Publisher, 1957), p. 41.

Figure 9: Meter, example from “The Beautiful Flower” (鬲溪梅令)

一. 鬲溪梅令

宋姜夔词曲, 1196

姜夔原有小序, 其大意云: “丙辰年(1196)冬天从無錫歸來, 作成這曲, 用來寄託自己的意思”.

好花不與 婦香人, 浪鄰鄰, 又恐 春風歸 去綠成
陰, 玉鈿何 處 尋? 木蘭雙 槳夢中 雲, 小橫
陳, 漫向孤 山山 下覓 盈盈, 翠禽啼 一 春.

The duple meter suggested by the authors here hinges around the strong influence on the Song dynasty of the previous Tang Dynasty (618 – 907). Based on discoveries in the Dun Huang Thousand Buddha Caves (敦煌千佛洞), the dominant meter in the more important musical genres of the Tang dynasty was shown to be 4/4.⁷⁰ Yáng Yīn Liǔ believes that this same meter carried over into the Song. According to Yang’s theory, commas and periods defined the musical phrases. Even though Jiang’s original music did not contain commas and periods, Yáng has nonetheless applied commas and periods to the texts of all of Jiang’s songs, arguing that they fit comfortably into 4/4. The presumption of duple meter assumes that melodies were not always syllabic, i.e. one character to one pitch. Melismas appear on more important words, and also to support the general sense of duple meter. We have no evidence that mixed or compound or other types of meters were used in Jiang’s time. The style should be based on the Kūn Qǔ style, sung with ornaments, from Ming dynasty. Kūn Qǔ is the earliest singing interpretation that we can find from Chinese music; therefore, it becomes the authentic interpretation for most of vocal music of Chinese music.

⁷⁰ Yáng, Yīn Liǔ and Fǎ Lǚ Yīn, *The Study of Songs by Jiang Bai Shi* (Běi Jīng: Music Publisher, 1957), p. 41.

Ornamenting Jiang's Melodies

Ornamentation plays an altogether important role in traditional Chinese music. In ancient China, the art of singing was mostly passed on orally from master to apprentice; notation was unnecessary. We are therefore very fortunate that, even though fundamental indications about rhythm, tempo, meter, and dynamics are absent, Jiang's notation does include indications for ornamenting and applying fermatas. These provide valuable directions for would-be performers.

In Jiang Kui's scores, adding either ornaments or fermatas (meaning the holding of a sung tone for extra time) lends special emphasis to key words in the text. Additionally, the four different tones inherent in the Chinese language also provide direction as to the inflection and direction of any ornaments. Based on his understanding of early *Kūn Qǔ* opera,⁷¹ the writer Yáng Yīn Liǔ has suggested that ornaments can either ascend or descend a major second or a minor third, similar in some respects to an appoggiatura, a turn, or an acciacatura.⁷² However, since the transmission of the meaning of the symbols was almost entirely oral, no one can say with any certainty just when a particular ornament should be invoked.

The roots of *Kūn Qǔ* singing can be traced back to the fourteenth century; hence there is a time lag of at least two hundred years between the time of Jiang Kui and the advent of *Kūn Qǔ*. According to Yáng Yīn Liǔ, Jiang Kui's scores indicate ornamentation through symbols placed immediately to the right of the affected pitches. For example, the symbol ㄣ, scholars believe,

indicates an ornament a major 2nd above the pitch at its left. In this notation: | 紅 ㄣ the 1

represents the pitch "ai", and ㄣ the represents the ornament a major 2nd above this pitch. This

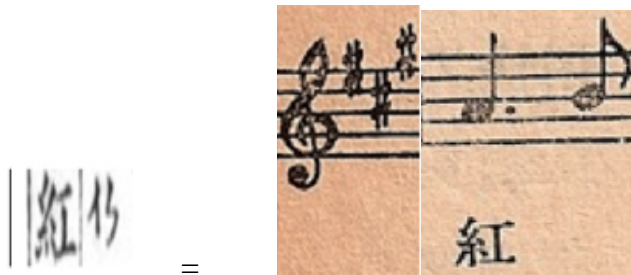
⁷¹ The most celebrated example of *Kūn Qǔ* opera is *The Peony Pavilion*, first performed around 1598 and preserved in countless re-workings to the present day.

⁷² Yáng, Yīn Liǔ and Fǎ Lǔ Yīn, *The Study of Songs by Jiang Bai Shi* (Běi Jīng: Music Publisher, 1957), pp. 22-27.

latter character literally means “red” in Chinese.

When transferring these symbols to staff notation, Yáng Yīn Liǔ places them to the right of the text character. The following example from “Sorrow at Spring(角招)” shows Yáng Yīn Liǔ’s placement:

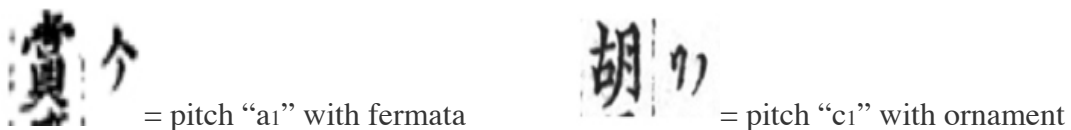
Figure 10: Placement of Ornamentation in Staff Notation



The second type of ornament, 了, can be seen at the right side of 頭 in Kui’s “Take Pity on the Red Lotus” (惜紅衣). Since it appears only a single time in all of the entire seventeen songs, scholars do not agree on its meaning.⁷³

The last symbol (ノ) found regularly in Jiang’s scores is believed by Yáng Yīn Liǔ to indicate, when it appears directly under a pitch, a fermata. When placed to the right of a note it indicates an ornament. Examples of both are shown below:

Figure 1 1: Fermata and Ornament



⁷³ Kui, Jiang, *The Poetry of Jiang Kui*. Edited by Chéng Dào Xià (Taipei: Hua Cheng Publisher, 1981), p. 201.

Indeed, *suzi* notation includes no fewer than four symbols that can indicate some degree of lengthening; they all share the location directly under the designated pitch and vary according to the importance of the word to which they are attached:⁷⁴

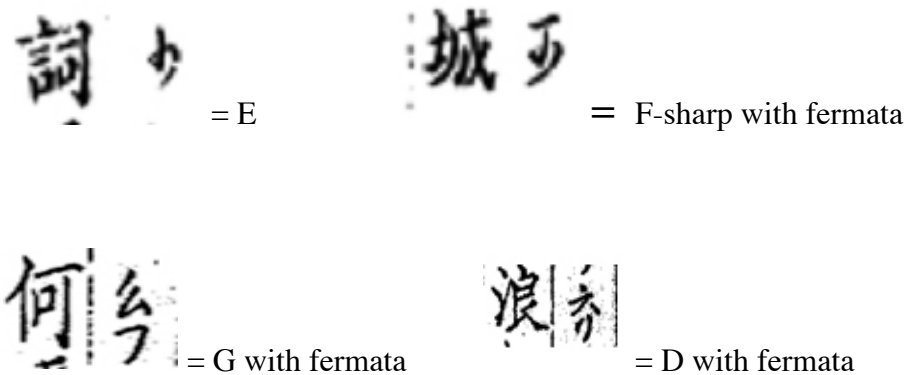
Figure 12: Fermatas of Varying Degrees

ろ り フ ノ

Since no clear hierarchy has come down to us from the tradition, the performer must decide the degree to which each applies in a particular situation.

From a strictly graphical perspective, the *suzi* fermatas had to be carefully placed. The four following examples illustrate the differences following the Huang Zhong tradition of the Song Dynasty:

Figure 13: Placement of *Suzi* Fermatas



Depending on the stress given to a phrase, rhyme, or word, the length of a fermata can vary significantly. Yáng Yīn Liǔ has pointed out that “ろ” is a fermata generally reserved for rhymes, and implies. The “フ” fermata usually applies to a single word and implies a shorter

⁷⁴ Yīn Liǔ Yáng and Yīn Fǎ Lǚ, *The study of Jiang Bai Shi's Songs* (Běi Jīng: Music publisher, 1957), pp. 27-31.

duration. The three symbols, ㄥㄩㄝ, can probably be used interchangeably.⁷⁵

Interpreting (Imagining) Jiang

As virtually all of the above discussion has made abundantly clear, a decision to utilize Jiang Kui's music in *Music Draws Blood* raises far more questions than it answers. While a good number of highly respected scholars have contributed to the untangling of the mysteries surrounding this music's basic decipherment, any performance will require more historical imagination and, perhaps, more audacity than even the most arcane Western score. Imagine a Western work with no surviving autographs or contemporary copies, no contemporary historical performance tutors, and no continuous performing tradition, and you will have some idea of the challenges we faced. In Chapters 3 and 4, I discuss in more detail the concrete performance decisions that had to be made with regard to Jiang's work in a modern performance setting. Having set the Chinese stage here, I now turn with a similar lens to the Western contributions.

⁷⁵ Yáng, Yīn Liǔ and Fǎ Lǔ Yīn, *The Study of Songs by Jiang Bai Shi* (Běi Jīng: Music Publisher, 1957), p. 27.

Chapter 2

Western Connections: Purcell, Gluck, and Verdi

Love and Death

The entanglement of love and death has permeated cultures from all over the world for thousands of years. Nine hundred years ago Jiang Kui was snared in this trap as well. Unlike other poets from across world history, Jiang portrayed his love affair (albeit with two objects) as the only one in his lifetime. This single-minded focus invests both his words and his music with a special poignancy.

Jiang Kui's love affair is therefore an appealing subject for a larger drama. However, the monophonic style of Jiang Kui's songs lacks in contemporary terms the degree of dramatic action that would create a satisfying narrative. With Prof. Kazaras we decided that what we sought was not an artificial insertion of a superimposed narrative, but rather some stretches that would supply a larger emotional framework. We discussed at length what kinds of feelings might support such an idea, and we cast about for arias from Western operas that we thought might fill these gaps. Prof. Winter suggested that a variety of operatic styles and languages would in the end prove less disorienting than, for example, relying only on the operas of Verdi—however satisfying each might be individually.

Of the many love-death related themes that continually surfaced, three themes seemed most prominent. The first was the kind of self-sacrificing love that we encounter, for example, in *Fidelio* by Beethoven. A second type was rooted in madness as, for example, in the celebrated Mad Scene from Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. And finally, there was love whose ultimate destiny was death; Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and Bellini's *Norma* came immediately to mind.

Each of these elements—personal sacrifice, madness, and ultimately death— are all very much in evidence in the poetry of Jiang Kui.

The works just cited as examples all come from the nineteenth century. Two of them are either German or Italian. Where, we asked, might we find the greatest degree of stylistic, chronological, and linguistic variety, but with works that could sustain the dramatic arc from self-sacrifice to madness to death?

Searching for Balance

Prof. Kazaras's vast experience in the world of opera (both as a tenor and, now, as a much-in-demand director) led to three choices, only one of which might be said to belong to the central operatic canon. In 1767 Christoph Willibald Gluck premiered in Vienna his *Alceste*, one of his so-called "reform operas." In an impassioned aria, "Divinités du Styx," ("Divinities of Styx"), *Alceste* stands at the Gates of Hell and demands that she be permitted to trade places with her now deceased husband. Here we have a number by a German-born composer whose work was published in his lifetime in both Italian and French—the perfect kind of pluralistic character we were seeking.

To capture the most gruesome dimensions of madness coupled with presentiments of the protagonists' deaths, Prof. Kazaras suggested Verdi's aria "Una macchia" from his too infrequently performed opera *Macbeth* of 1847. The staunch diatonicism of Gluck provided a splendid contrast to the frantic chromaticism of Verdi as Lady Macbeth strives in ever widening circles of desperation to cleanse herself of the foul crime in which she has just participated.

The only language we were now missing was English, and the most obvious period the Baroque. In this context Dido's Lament from Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1695) seemed

not like the injection of a warhorse but the perfect and balanced conclusion to our emotional journey. Its muted but deeply tragic conclusion would blend seamlessly with our re-workings of Jiang's music.

Since we planned to present each of these three works with a Chinese ensemble, we needed to have a solid editorial and stylistic grasp before turning the music over to Prof. Li for arranging. We now consider each in order of their appearance.

“Divinites du Styx” (“You Divinities of Styx”) from Christoph Willibald Gluck’s *Alceste* (1767)

Alceste was Gluck's second “reform opera,” following *Orefeo ed Euridice* of 1762. With a libretto by Ranieri de' Calzabigi based on the play *Alcestis* by Euripides, the premiere, in Italian, took place at the Vienna Court Theater on December 16, 1767.⁷⁶ Almost a decade later Leblanc du Roulet created the French text of the Paris edition, including a new ending featuring a surprise appearance of no less a personage than Hercules (of course, as a *deus ex machina*). Its first performance took place on 23 April 1776.

“Simplicity, truth, and naturalness are the great principles of beauty in all artistic manifestation,” argued Gluck.⁷⁷ Reacting against the excesses and artificialities of Italian *opera seria*, Gluck was persuaded that opera should return to its original agenda of arousing human passions. The music should not overwhelm the poetry, and hence the narrative. In the famous letter to Leopold II of Austria, Gluck argues that the true function of music is to assist the poetry

⁷⁶ Gustav Kobbe, *The New Kobbe's Complete Opera Book*, ed. The Earl of Harewood (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1976), p. 66.

⁷⁷ Lyric Opera of Chicago, *The Lyric Opera Companion: The History, Lore, and Stories of the World's Greatest Operas* (Kansas City: A Universal Press Syndicate Company, 1991), p. 13.

in an expressive but simple and unadorned style⁷⁸—one free of superfluous ornaments and overwrought cadenzas.⁷⁹ Syllabic text setting should give way to melismas only at moments of greatest intensity. The repetitiveness of the *da capo* aria must be done away with, and empty virtuosity should be excluded.⁸⁰ The traditional distinction between recitative and aria should be more flexible and nuanced, and accompanied recitative should predominate over *secco*.⁸¹

In his well-known article, Hector Berlioz criticized Gluck for falling into several traps that have some bearing on “Divinités du Styx.” As much as Berlioz worshipped poetry, he looked to music to bring poetic lines to their full expression. All the elements of musical style—harmony, melody, rhythm, instrumentation, and shape—are essential to bringing the sentiments and passions of the drama to life. Second, as Berlioz pointed out wryly, Gluck broke his own rules. For example, Gluck wished to minimize the use of *secco* recitative. However, in the original Italian version of *Alceste*, *secco* recitative appears frequently, and some of the accompanied recitatives, with their sparse bass lines and absence of customary figures, still resemble *secco*:⁸²

⁷⁸ Piero Weiss, *Opera: A History in Documents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 119.

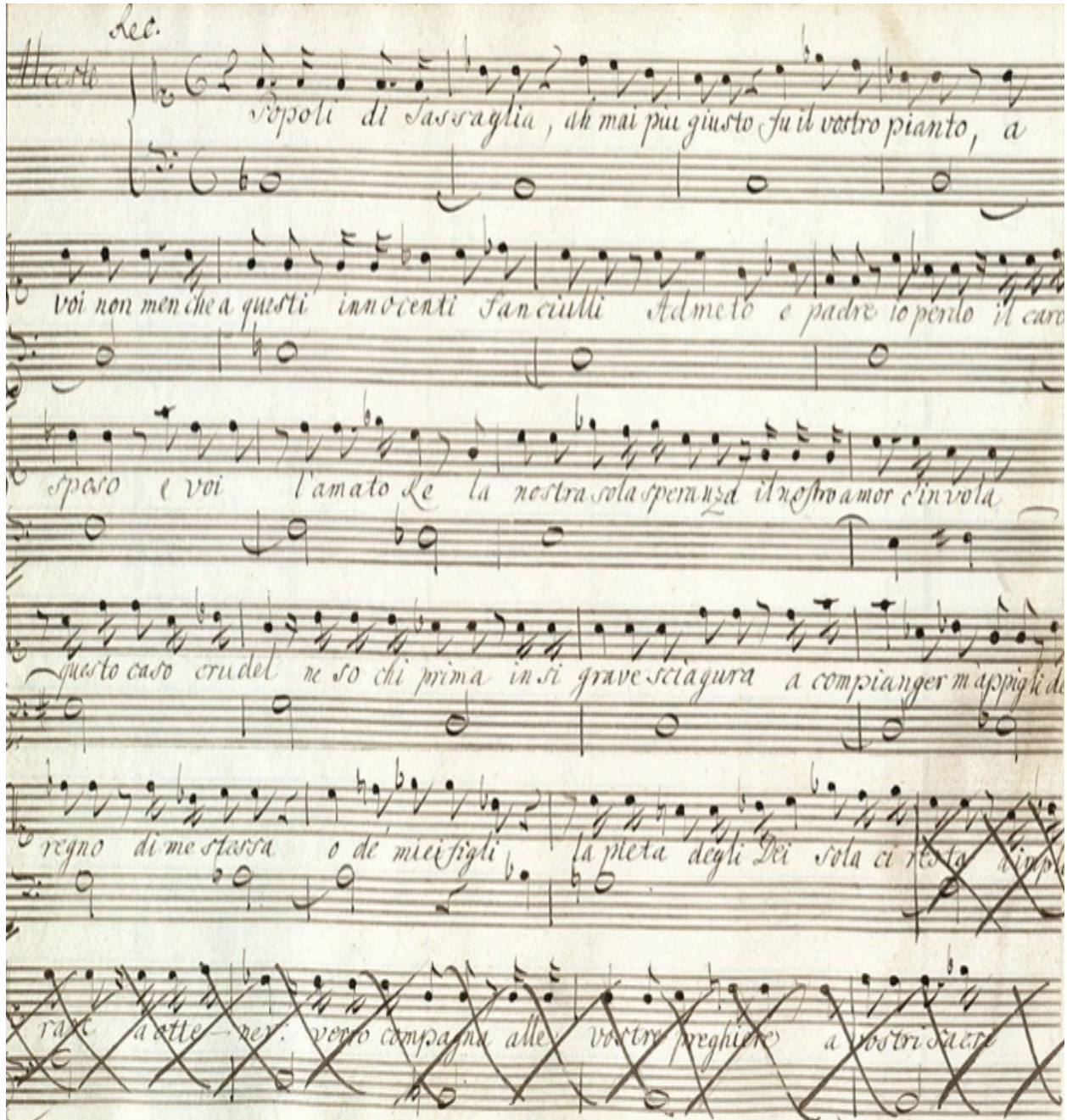
⁷⁹ Hector Berlioz, *Gluck & His Operas, with an account of their relation to musical art*, trans. Edwin Evans (London: WM Reeves, 1915), p. 68.

⁸⁰ Alfred Einstein, *Gluck*, trans. Eric Blom (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1954), p. 110.

⁸¹ Edward O. D. Downes, “‘Secco’ Recitative in Early Classical Opera Seria (1720-80),” *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 14, no.1 (1961), p. 52.

⁸² Hector Berlioz, *Gluck & His Operas, with an account of their relation to musical art*, trans. Edwin Evans (London: WM Reeves, 1915), p. 70.

Figure 1: *Alceste*, *secco* recitative from Act I, Scene 2



The powerful yet imploring “Divinités du Styx” avoids these drawbacks. With its simple but dramatic tonic-dominant syncopations, its opening provides an ideal introduction to the Western elements of *Music Draws Blood*. All the well-known issues of Gluck’s “reforms” aside,

“Divinités du Styx” presents editorial challenges that would take us well beyond the boundaries of this paper. The differences between the Italian and French are striking; for example, the familiar French melody that opens the aria:

Figure 2: French first edition in 1776⁸³

SCENE VII.
Alceste seule.

H. bois et Clarinette
1^{re} Viol.
2^e Viol.
Cors
Tromb.
Alto
Alceste
B. C.

Andante

F F

Tutti *Tutti*

⁸³ <http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/e/e4/IMSLP02515-Gluck-Alceste1776.pdf>

The image displays a musical score for a vocal piece, likely an aria or duet. The score is written in a single system with a vocal line on the right and piano accompaniment on the left. The vocal line is in a soprano or alto clef, and the piano accompaniment is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or E-flat minor), and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line begins with a long note, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, with dynamic markings of *p* (piano) and *f* (forte). The lyrics are written below the vocal line: *divinités du Star* *divinités du Star*. The lyrics are written in a cursive script, and the words *Star* are written in a larger, bolder font. The lyrics are written in French, and the words *Star* are written in a larger, bolder font. The lyrics are written in a cursive script, and the words *Star* are written in a larger, bolder font.

included, in the original Italian version, a much stripped-down yet perhaps more dramatic start (we ultimately elected to go with the more frequently performed French edition):

Figure 3: Italian edition, early manuscript⁸⁴

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for an orchestra. The tempo is marked "Andante" at the top left. The score is written on ten staves. The instruments are labeled on the left: Fl. (Flute), Oboe, Viola, Corni (Horns), Tromb. (Trumpets), and Trog. (Trumpets). The bottom staff is labeled "Cello" and "Basso" (Double Bass). The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings. A red "16" is written in the left margin of the bottom staff. The manuscript is on aged, yellowed paper.

⁸⁴ http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/f/fa/IMSLP103871-PMLP06514-gluck_alceste_ms_1.pdf

This image shows a page of handwritten musical notation on aged, yellowed paper. The score is organized into two main systems, each containing multiple staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and clefs. The paper shows signs of age, including some staining and a slightly uneven texture. The handwriting is in black ink, and the overall appearance is that of an antique manuscript.



In addition, while all editions and manuscripts sources show *Andante* as the tempo marking, the C of the Italian edition is changed to cut time in the French edition, suggesting a slightly faster tempo. The dynamic markings also vary greatly from source to source. Modern editions routinely show bar-to-bar changes from *p* to *f* at the opening. However, as the *F* markings in the first French edition show, the *F* simply means an accent in the notes played by the horn (and possibly also the trombones); the presumption, then, is that the strings play constantly at a softer dynamic (whether *mf* or *p* is less important).

Figure 4: French edition

SCENE VII.
Alceste seule.

H. bois et Clarinette
Andante
F F

1^{er} Viol.

2^e Viol.

Cors
F F

Tramb.

Alto

Alceste

B. C.
Fagotti
Fagotti

Figure 5: Italian version, early manuscript⁸⁵



⁸⁵ http://conquest.imsip.info/files/imglnks/usimg/f/fa/IMSLP103871-PMLP06514-gluck_alceste_ms_1.pdf

Regrettably, I had not yet made this discovery at the time of our first performance, and the *erhu* contingent that are the heart of the Chinese ensemble was forced to attempt sudden dynamic changes ill-suited to their nature.

The lack of excessive ornaments, and straightforward tonal language make a smooth transition from the first Chinese sections. The tonic-dominant simplicity of the A-section projects Alceste's disdain for death. Yet the seemingly simple tripartite A-B-A structure is in fact quite sophisticated. The *Andante* A-section bares Alceste's unrelenting demand, building to the dramatic high B-flat just before the final cadence. Yet at the phrase "*ministres de la mort*" (ministers of death) the tempo suddenly switches to *Adagio*, suggesting that Alceste, rather than hysterical, remains fully composed.

Perhaps the greatest surprise is reserved for the unexpected return in the dominant of the A-Section, as Alceste renews her call:

Figure 6: Return of A-section in the dominant

The musical score for Figure 6 is presented in eight staves. The top two staves are for the vocal line, and the bottom six staves are for the piano accompaniment. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major). The tempo is marked 'Adagio' and 'Trin'. The lyrics are 'Divinités du Styx', 'divinités du Styx', and 'ministres de la mort'. Dynamics include 'P', 'F', 'P', 'F', 'P', and 'PP'.

Even more dramatic is the sudden *Presto* at “*Je sens une force nouvelle*” (“I feel a new force”). While Martial Singher suggests a tempo of ♩=144,⁸⁶ I felt that the urgency merited a tempo closer to ♩=168. While framed by a clear cut A-section, Gluck’s architecture responds sensitively to the mood changes suggested by the text—a perfect example of the kinds of reforms he advocated.

“Una macchia” (“A spot”) from Giuseppe Verdi’s *Macbeth* (1847)

Macbeth was Verdi’s final work before the advent of his famous mid-century trilogy (*Il Trovatore*, *Rigoletto*, and *La Traviata*). In 1846, manager Alessandro Lanari contracted Verdi to compose an opera for the Teatro della Pergola in Florence.⁸⁷ Verdi had several libretti in his mind: *I Masnadieri* from Shiller’s first drama, *Die Ahnfrau* by Franz Seraphicus Grillparzer, and *Macbeth* by Shakespeare.⁸⁸ He decided to work on *I Masnadieri* and *Macbeth* simultaneously. The lack of the availability of a tenor for *I Masnadieri* finally compelled Verdi to go with *Macbeth*—the first of his settings of several Shakespearean dramas. While the premiere was originally intended for London, it ultimately took place on March 14, 1847 in Florence.⁸⁹ The libretto by Francesco Maria Piave and Andre Maffei, another passionate Shakespeare enthusiast, omitted a number of key scenes and characters further condensing Shakespeare’s already condensed drama. A revised version with an additional ballet and other revisions was produced in Paris on April 21 1865 at the Théâtre Lyrique.⁹⁰ This is the version heard most often today.

⁸⁶ Martial Singher and Eta Singher, *An Interpretive Guide to Operatic Arias: A Handbook for Singers, Coaches* (Penn State University Press, 2003), p. 45.

⁸⁷ Roger Parker, *The New Grove Guide to Verdi and His Operas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 99.

⁸⁸ Charles Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Verdi* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 145-146.

⁸⁹ Charles Osborne, *The Complete Operas*, p. 146.

⁹⁰ Roger Parker, *The New Grove Guide*, p. 98.

While it could be argued that “Una macchia” is less about love than the fruits of Lady Macbeth’s ambition and manipulateness, she and her husband are inextricably linked in Verdi’s mind. “Who could imagine that one so old could spill so much blood?” she asks. Even while she tries to assure herself that Banquo is dead and therefore permanently gone, she cannot erase the image of her husband: “Let’s go, Macbeth, why are you so pale as never before.”

Verdi took special care with Lady Macbeth. In a letter to Salvatore Cammarano on 23 November 1848, Verdi argued that Eugenia Tadolini (1809-1872) was much too beautiful to take on this role.⁹¹ He requested specifically that the *prima donna* should look ugly and evil, and that the highly charged sleepwalking scene (“Una macchia”) should not be sung but rather acted with a diabolical, harsh, stifled, and even hollow vocal quality.⁹² Verdi mentioned to the first Lady Macbeth, Marianna Barbieri-Nini, that the violence should inform the character. She later reported that the sleepwalking scene required some 150 movement and vocal rehearsals.⁹³

“Simplicity in art is everything...When form is intricate, contorted, and difficult, there is no emotion, and arousing emotion is the aim of art.”⁹⁴ In the adaptation, Verdi noted that the characters should be clearly drawn, the situation should be easily comprehended, and the aria should maintain both simplicity and restraint. Verdi’s music is self-consciously not pretty like the well-known Mad Scene from Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Rather, the music is tied directly to the text and the situation.⁹⁵

Guilt and sleeplessness render Lady Macbeth’s brain drowsy. Physical suffering consumes her spirit and distorts all her perceptions. This aria is less to be sung but acted with a

⁹¹ Charles Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Verdi* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 147.

⁹² Gilles De Van, *Verdi’s Theater*, Translated by Gilda Roberts (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 219.

⁹³ Julian Budden, *Verdi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 41

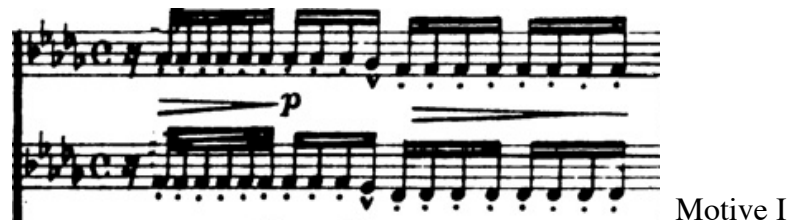
⁹⁴ Marcello Conati and Julian Budden, *Encounters with Verdi* (Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 284

⁹⁵ David Rosen and Andrew Porter, *Verdi’s Macbeth: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 29.

dark and veiled voice. It unfolds like a series of fragments that shift between declamatory recitative and aria.⁹⁶ The melody proceeds in spurts of disconnected phrases. From Helene Cixous's point of view, silence betrays hysteria. The hysteric ultimately loses the power of speech and their tongues are cut off. They talk inside their bodies.⁹⁷ Additionally, the stage should be dark and the orchestra must play in a muted fashion.⁹⁸ With its delicate non-Western sounds, the Chinese ensemble we utilized for this number fulfilled this requirement even more hauntingly than a conventional Western orchestra could have.

The entire aria, organized around the kind of flat key (D-flat major) that Verdi generally reserved for love, breaks down musically into two alternating sections (A-B-A'-B'), followed by a climactic C-section culminating in Verdian fashion with a pianissimo high D-flat. The A-section grows out of a nervous phrase that divides into three small motives. With their insistent repetition and harmonic instability, they reveal the insanity and darkness of Lady Macbeth.⁹⁹

Figure 7: Motives of the A-Section



⁹⁶ Gilles De Van, *Verdi's Theater*, Translated by Gilda Roberts (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 219.

⁹⁷ Jools Gilson-Ellis, "Month Ghosts: The Taste of the Os –Text", In *Languages of Theatre Shaped by Women*, ed. Jane De Gay and Lizbeth Goodman, (Intellect Books, 2003), p. 9.

⁹⁸ Marcello Conati and Julian Budden, *Encounters with Verdi* (Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 26.

⁹⁹ Jane A. Bernstein, "'Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered': Lady Macbeth, Sleepwalking, and the Demonic in Verdi's Scottish Opera," *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 1/2 (March, 2002), pp. 31-46.



Motive II



Motive III

While the first two motives are motoric and strangely disconnected (suggesting an erratic heartbeat), the appoggiatura in the English horn (“comme un lamento,” delivered more eerily in our Chinese ensemble by the *Shēng* [笙]) that constitutes Motive III triggers the expressive push-and-pull that must govern Lady Macbeth’s delivery:¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Daniel Albright, *Musicking Shakespeare: A Conflict of Theatres* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007), p. 183.

Figure 8: Opening of A-section, full score

Clar.^{no} Si^b

Corno Ing.

Cor. in Do

Fagotto

Timpani

Dama

Medico

Violini I.

Violini II.

Viole

V. Celli

C. Bassi

ANDANTE ASSAI SOSTENUTO ♩ = 50

come un lamento

Cambia in Re b

p

The bloody spurt of thirty-second notes is pulled back by the ensuing sixteenth notes, while the ascending chromatic scale (Motive II) conjures up Lady Macbeth's inability to erase the stain of blood. The appoggiatura itself echoes the ghostly laments from Duncan, Banquo, and Macduff. In Daniel Albright's view, the falling semitone implies *Tutto è finite* ("All is finished").¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Daniel Albright, *Musicking Shakespeare: A Conflict of Theatres* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007), p. 187.

The descending chromaticism and syncopated paralysis on a single note are perfect underpinnings to Lady Macbeth's musings about Macbeth's loss of resolve:

Figure 9: Opening of the B-section

The musical score for the opening of the B-section features the following parts and dynamics:

- Clar. no Sib:** *f pp*
- Corno Ing.:** *f pp*
- Cor. in Reb:** *f pp*
- Fagotto:** *f pp*
- Timpani:** *f pp*
- Lady:** - nar? Di fif-fet
- Dama:**
- Medico:** Che parlo?
- Violini I.:** *f pp*
- Violini II.:** *f ppp*
- Viola:** *f ppp*
- V. Celli:** *f ppp*
- C. Bassi:** *f pp*

The delicate, alternating two-note figures that accompany “Di sangue umano sa qui sempre” (“The smell of blood is upon them”) suggest drops of blood. Again, the timbres of the Chinese ensemble are ideally suited to express this ghostly mood.

Throughout, Lady Macbeth’s sings alternately *sempre sotto voce*, *con forza*, *allargando*, *spiegato*, *stentando* (“with difficulty”), *con dolore*, and finally *un fil di voce*, displaying Verdi’s deep understanding of the range of Lady Macbeth’s hysteria:

Figure 10: Expression marks for Lady Macbeth

The image displays a musical score for Lady Macbeth, consisting of two systems of staves. The first system includes five piano staves and a vocal line. Each piano staff begins with a dynamic marking of *f pp*. The vocal line starts with the lyrics: "si - - - re spo. soe pe - - dreuror non e - ra?... Che ne av...". The second system consists of five piano staves. The first staff begins with a dynamic marking of *pp*, while the others begin with *f*. The score is marked with various expression marks, including slurs and accents, indicating the intended performance style.

Clar. no Si *pp*

Corno Ing. *pp*

Cor. in Re *f*

Fagotto *pp*

Timpani

Lady *(con dolore)*
- pro, na, mai pu. li - re io non sa - pro?

Dama *f*
Oh ter.ror!

Medico *f*
Oh ter.ror!

Violini I *ppp*

Violini II *ppp*

Viola *ppp*

V. Celli *pp*

C. Bassi *pp*

ppp
 Di san-gueu ma - no sa qui-

pp
pp
pp
p

Lady
sem-pre. *in forza* *pp capo*
 A - ra - bia in ter - ra ri-monda ei pic.col

bal - sa - mi, co' suoi balsami non *dim.* *sottovoce* *stent.* *morendo*
 puo..... co' suoi bal - sa.mi non puo nono, non p

At the dramatic height of the B'-section, Banquo's sobbing ghost appears in the repeated, offbeat orchestral appoggiaturas. The ensuing *ppp* tremolos and the extraordinary chromaticism (with successive harmonies of D-flat minor, V4/2 of G-flat, and the breathtaking D-major chord—spelled even more remotely as E-double flat—in 6/4 inversion, ultimately serving as the Neapolitan of D-flat major, the home key of the following C-Section) all put the lie to Lady Macbeth's claim that the dead cannot return to haunt the living:

Figure 11: Banquo's sobs (first illustration); tremolos of the dead (second illustration)

The image displays a musical score for an orchestral scene. On the left, there are three staves of music. The top staff shows a series of repeated eighth-note figures. The middle staff contains the vocal line for Lady Macbeth, with the lyrics "sbra- la!.. Bancoè". The bottom staff shows a series of repeated eighth-note figures. On the right, there is a larger section of the score with ten staves, each labeled with an instrument: Clar. no Sib, Corno Ing., Cor. in Re, Fagotto, Timpani, Lady, Violini I, Violini II, Viole, V. Celli, and C. Bassi. The Lady staff has the lyrics "fos se chi mo - ri..... non sur se a". The orchestral parts feature tremolos and repeated eighth-note figures.

This harmonic wizardry is outdone only by the even more breathtaking C-major chord within the key of F-flat [!!] major on the word “*balsami*” (“balm,” or ointment), which Verdi commands to be rendered “*quasi insensibile*” (“almost inaudible”).

The delicate interplay between first and second violins in the extended final cadence captures the faltering tiptoeing of Lady Macbeth as she finally exits.¹⁰²

Figure 12: Orchestral postlude

The image displays a musical score for an orchestral postlude. The instruments listed on the left are: Clar. no Sib, Corno Ing., Cor. in Re, Fagotto, Timpani, Lady, Damo, Medico, Violini I., Violini II., Viola, V. Celli, and C. Bassi. The score is written in F-flat major. The first five staves (Clarinet, Horns, Bassoon, and Timpani) show sparse, sustained notes. The vocal parts (Lady, Damo, Medico) have a few notes with lyrics like "- dia. m.", "- la.", and "- la.". The string parts (Violini I., Violini II., Viola, V. Celli, C. Bassi) are more active, with the violins playing a delicate, tiptoeing melody marked "leggero". The cellos and basses play a rhythmic pattern marked "pizz.". The score is divided into three measures by vertical bar lines.

In our monodrama we found a remarkable if unlikely musical resonance between Verdi’s

¹⁰² Daniel Albright, *Musicking Shakespeare: A Conflict of Theatres* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007), p. 188.

ghostly depiction of Lady Macbeth and the sufferings of Jiang Kui, intensified by the continuity of the Chinese ensemble.

Dido's Lament from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1688)

Dido and Aeneas was Henry Purcell's first and only opera. After writing music from 1680 on for a series of dramatic works, Purcell created his one and only dramatic work set entirely to music. The premiere took place no later than the summer of 1688 at Mr. Josias Priest's Boarding School in Chelsea, for whose teenage students the work was expressly written.¹⁰³ *Dido* may cede to John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* (1683) as the first English opera,¹⁰⁴ but it is indisputably the first great English opera. The libretto by Nahum Tate (1652-1715) was drawn from his own tragedy, *Brutus of Alba*.¹⁰⁵ After its first performance the opera largely disappeared from the stage for two centuries. The earliest extant score is a copy prepared after 1750.¹⁰⁶

Whatever the specific motivations, dying for love seemingly presents the apex of human passion regarding love. Heartbreak has long enjoyed the universal power to bring about the end of life, whether literally or metaphorically. The heartbreak expressed by Jiang Kui is, at its root, indiscernible in intensity from the heartbreak expressed by Queen Dido of Carthage. Moreover, its slow and stately pace blend seamlessly with the melodies of Jiang Kui.

¹⁰³ Arthur Hutchings, *Purcell* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1982), p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ Curtis Alexander Price, *Henry Purcell and the London Stage* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 225.

¹⁰⁵ Curtis Alexander Price, *Henry Purcell and the London Stage* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 226.

¹⁰⁶ Curtis Alexander Price, *Henry Purcell and the London stage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 239.

We elected to begin with Dido’s 8-bar recitative (“Thy hand, Belinda”). This afforded us a smoother transition both from the preceding *Niàn Bái* (see Chapter 4) as well as to the lament that follows. Dido’s utterances move inexorably downward:

Figure 13: Dido’s descent in her recitative

The figure shows three staves of musical notation. The first staff is a vocal line for Dido, marked *pp*, with the lyrics: "Thy hand, Be-lin - da ; dark - - ness shades me : On thy bo - som let me". Below the staff is a figured bass line: C-----B♭-----A♭-----G-----. The second staff is a vocal line with lyrics: "rest : More I would, but Death in - vades me : Death is". Below it is a figured bass line: -----G-----F-----E-----E♭-----. The third staff is a vocal line with lyrics: "now a wel - come guest." Below it is a figured bass line: -----D-----.

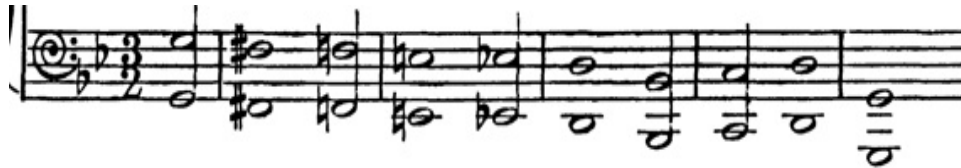
Depending on how the figured bass is harmonized, the move with slow, full harmonies from C minor to F minor and then finally G minor sets up the chromatically descending tetra chord whose basic shape was familiar to virtually every seventeenth-century composer. Purcell’s particular 5-bar configuration and slurring emphasize its plaintive, sighing qualities:

Figure 14: Ground Bass Slurs

The figure shows a single staff of musical notation with a chromatically descending tetra chord. The notes are C, B♭, A♭, and G, connected by slurs. The bass line is written in a style typical of figured bass notation.

The harmonic implications of the bass line, with its MAJOR-minor motion, are initially straightforward:

Figure 15: Bass line, harmonic implications



i V6 v6 IV6 iv6 V7 i6 ii6 V i

Yet Purcell adds several critical dimensions that impart a much greater level of pathos. First, he creates a vocal line that in its first two identical statements consumes for each phrase two full statements of the ground bass; this masks the potential repetitiveness of the bass pattern. Moreover, its third bar recalls unmistakably a parallel bar from the recitative:

Figure 16: Recitative and lament, parallel bars



The third and fourth phrases (vocally also identical) reverse the initial process, in which Dido's achingly beautiful and sustained opening line now becomes short single-bar ("remember me") utterances on the same pitch as she draws closer to her death.

Finally, centered around the note "E" in the ground bass, Purcell varies the harmonies and the placement of appoggiaturas and passing tones. The complexity and dissonance level increase as we move toward Dido's end. In the ten continuous bars that form a kind of codetta to

the lament, Purcell invests each voice with the same drooping chromatic descents that had previously dominated the bass line. Yet the entire lament proceeds with a sense of dignity and even reserve that blends seamlessly with the grief of Jiang Kui.

I had come up with the idea to deliver, following the conclusion of Dido's Lament, a *Niàn Bái* over Prof. Chi Li's postlude. While we were rehearsing one day, Prof. Kazaras suggested that I move the *Niàn Bái* up to the postlude at the end of Dido's Lament. We were all surprised and delighted at the degree of pathos this brought to the waning moments of the drama. It not only supplied a fitting close but synthesized East and West in a manner that we could never have predicted.

Chapter 3

The Stage Action and Choreography

The entire action and choreography of *Music Draws Blood* grew out of the collaboration between Profs. Chi Li and Kazaras. Drawing upon her deep knowledge of *Kūn Qǔ* opera and other traditional Chinese music, Prof. Li designed a choreography that depended for its expressiveness on the fan, water sleeve, and hand gestures. Taking his cue from these parameters, Prof. Kazaras provided minimal but crucial stage movement that invested this one-character drama with a sense of forward motion. Our plan to provide a digital stage design had to be postponed, but in future productions we would hope to create a minimal environment with some Western touches that could work in a wide variety of settings.

The choreography of Chinese opera aims to illustrate three aspects of the poetry that makes up the drama: content, action, and emotion.¹⁰⁷ The four disciplines in which Chinese opera singers are expected to excel serve the three aspects cited above.

The Four Principal Disciplines of Chinese Opera

Unlike Western opera, *movement* is a central concept of Chinese opera and it demands training for every Chinese opera singer in no less than four disciplines. A professionally Chinese opera singer must have undergone, from the age of eight, at least eight years of training in singing, reciting, dance-like acting, and martial arts.¹⁰⁸ Apprentices are expected to mimic their teachers faithfully; only after they have mastered their art will they be expected to develop their own individual style. The interpretation of the overall *movement* must come ultimately from the

¹⁰⁷ Rú Shān Qí, *Wu Shin Nien Lai Ti Kuo Chu* (Taipei: Zhèng Zhòng Publisher, 1962), p. 18.

¹⁰⁸ Colin Mackerras, *Chinese Drama* (Beijing: New World Press, 1990), p. 73.

singer's inner feelings as they interact with traditional conventions. On a very simple and abstract stage, the singer/figure is expected to provide the “what, why, where, and how” of the action without any constraints of space and time.

Traditional Chinese opera singers divide into four main characters: *Shēng*, *Dàn*, *Jìng*, and *Chǒu*. Each character wears its own particular costumes, has its particular voice quality, applies its particular make up, and thereby creates its own figures. These broad categories also break into sub-categories. For example, *Shēng* refers to a male role but it includes:

- 1) *Lao Shēng*, a middle-aged scholar and official and usually with a beard;
- 2) *Xsiao Sheng*, prince, a young scholar, a dandy, and lover; and
- 3) *Wu Shēng*, a warrior who excels in acrobatics.¹⁰⁹

Each type can be distinguished through their movement. For example, the martial arts are associated with *Wu Shēng*, while a *Xsiao Sheng* figure usually carries a fan on stage.

Dàn is a category of China operatic character that includes no few than six different types:¹¹⁰

- 1) *Qīng Yī*, a married decorous woman with serious and righteous character;¹¹¹
- 2) *Huā Dàn*, a young lady of a comic type—bright, flirtatious, roguish, and energetic in character¹¹²;
- 3) *Guī Mén Dàn*, an unmarried lady;
- 4) *Wǔ Dàn*, an woman expert in the martial arts;
- 5) *Lǎo Dàn*,¹¹³ an old lady, and
- 6) *Cǎi Dàn*, an ugly woman of comic character.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Alexandra B. Bonds, *Beijing Opera Costumes* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), p. 3.

¹¹⁰ Alexandra B. Bonds, *Beijing Opera Costumes*, p. 5.

¹¹¹ Alexandra B. Bonds, *Beijing Opera Costumes*, p. 6.

¹¹² Alexandra B. Bonds, *Beijing Opera Costumes*, p. 9.

¹¹³ Alexandra B. Bonds, *Beijing Opera Costumes*, pp. 10-11.

As with *Sheng*, different *Dàn* characters present different movements. For instance, the movement of *Huā Dàn* moves faster than that of *Qīng Yī* because she is a young lady of brighter character.¹¹⁵ The character we chose for *Music Draws Blood* is *Qīng Yī*, a beautiful, graceful, quiet, gentle, sympathetic, and faithful woman. Her movements must be elegant with slow, graceful motions of the water sleeve or with dance movements by the fan.

The painted face is one of main characteristics of *Jìng* and it usually indicates a statesman, warrior, hero, demon, or swashbuckler.¹¹⁶ *Jìng* must be proficient at martial arts; *Chǒu* is usually a comic figure¹¹⁷ with funny or exaggerated movements. Hence in Chinese opera, singing style, movement, and appearance are wholly integrated.¹¹⁸ The conventions govern how you walk, sit, stand, mime, stare, stroke the beard, or make a hand gesture. In general, these movements are divided into the hands, eyes, legs, and the entire body.¹¹⁹

Makeup

Makeup provides one of the most important indications of style in Chinese opera. Such makeup can be divided into two types: “plain face” and “painted face.” In the four main characters of Chinese opera (*Shēng*, *Dàn*, *Jìng*, and *Chǒu*), *Shēng* and *Dàn* usually show the net face, which only highlights the eyes with white face and red shadow (this is the type of makeup used by my character in *Music Draws Blood*).

¹¹⁴ Alexandra B. Bonds, *Beijing Opera Costumes* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), p. 16.

¹¹⁵ Elisabeth Halson, *Peking Opera* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 14.

¹¹⁶ Colin Mackerras, *Peking opera* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 43.

¹¹⁷ Elisabeth Halson, *Peking Opera* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 11-16.

¹¹⁸ Rú Shān Qí, *Wu Shin Nien Lai Ti Kuo Chu* (Taipei : Zhèng Zhòng publisher, 1962), p. 18.

¹¹⁹ Elisabeth Halson, *Peking Opera* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 44.

Figure 1: Shēng makeup¹²⁰



¹²⁰ http://quyi.chinese.cn/article/2009-11/16/content_84582.htm

Figure 2: *Dàn* makeup¹²¹



The second type of face—the “painted face”—is reserved for *Jing* and *Chǒu*. The painted face carries different meanings, depending largely on the colors used. The painted faces of *Jing* carry multiple patterns. The colors and their general symbolism are: red = loyalty; black = righteousness; yellow = violence; white = traitor; and blue or green = irritableness.

¹²¹ http://english.chinese.cn/chineseculture/article/2011-08/02/content_296630_2.htm

Figure 3: Jing makeup¹²²



The painted face also applies to the comedic Chǒu, although this is generally restricted to the center of the face.

Figure 4: Chǒu makeup¹²³



¹²² http://english.chinese.cn/chineseculture/article/2011-08/02/content_296630_3.htm

¹²³ http://english.chinese.cn/chineseculture/article/2011-08/02/content_296630_3.htm

Three Types of Movement that Illustrate Three Different Aspects of Poetry

Music Draws Blood draws on three different types of traditional movement: water sleeve, hand gestures, and fan-dance. The following sections show how we applied each to our drama.

1. The water sleeve

Originally the water sleeve (so named because of its flowing quality) was quite long, extending to the floor. This applied particularly to leading roles; the length of the sleeve was considerably shorter for minor characters. Part of the reason was that major characters could afford the longer sleeves. Eventually the water sleeve was cut shorter in order to move more easily and with more grace.¹²⁴ The actor executes flowing movements, with different gestures applied to each type of role. My *Qing Yi* movement should not move in too grandiose a way.¹²⁵ All the movements must be performed in the rhythm and tempo of the music. The repertoire of water sleeve movements in Chinese opera runs to at least fifty.¹²⁶ Below are some representative movements that Prof. Chi Li and I developed for *Music Draws Blood*.

a) To illustrate the poetic content

In “Secret Fragrance” the text reads: “Petal after petal is blown away, when shall I see them again?” (又片片, 吹盡也, 幾時見得?¹²⁷).¹²⁸ Each phrase suggests either action or restraint for the water sleeve. The petal in the first phrase is a metaphor that references the broken heart of the woman, and I used a falling motion in the water sleeve to evoke the image of petal’s falling:

¹²⁴ Cecilia S.L. Zung, *Secrets of the Chinese Drama* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., LTD., 1937), p. 77.

¹²⁵ Elisabeth Halson, *Peking Opera* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 46.

¹²⁶ Cecilia S.L. Zung, *Secrets of the Chinese Drama* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., LTD., 1937), p. 79.

¹²⁷ Guāng Xī Yīn, *The Appreciation of Jiang Kui’s Poetry* (Sì Chuān: Ba Shǔ publisher, 1994), p. 84.

¹²⁸ Rú Shān Qí, *Wu Shin Nien Lai Ti Kuo Chu*, (Taipei: Zhèng Zhòng publisher, 1962), p. 164.

Figure 5: Water sleeve falling



The second phrase, “When shall I see him again,” reveals the woman’s deep sadness from her broken heart. In this case I let the water sleeve droop (the eyes contributed to the sense of sadness):

Figure 6: Water sleeve drooping



In the “Song of the Pipa,” I illustrated the words by using movements that mimicked performing on the pipa:

Figure 7: Performing on the pipa



Finally, in this example where the woman stands at the city wall I extended my arm upward to suggest both its height and the impossibility of going over it:

Figure 8: Raising the sleeve at the city wall



b) To convey action

The verb in the poetry also can be expressed by the water sleeve. For instance, in the “Song of the Pipa,” for the line “My dreams follow his golden saddle” I swayed the water sleeve quickly to illustrate “follow”:

Figure 9:



c) To illustrate emotion

In Dido's Lament, on the words "laid in earth," to intensify the descending chromaticism that symbolized musically Dido's impending death we used the sliding of the water sleeve from the shoulder to the hand:

Figure 10: To express impending death





In the repeat of the A-section of “Divinités du Styx,” Alceste expresses both braveness and anger in her mounting demand to be swapped for her husband. We intensified this with a fast flickering motion:

Figure 11: Flicking of the sleeve



In “*The Song of Autumn Night*,” the line of greatest distress reads: “Alone, I see my tears fall on my nightdress. What night is this night? My grief has no end...”. This utterance serves as

the woman's final cry before she ends her life; it seemed only fitting to hide her sleeves.

Figure 12: Hiding the sleeves



An upheld sleeve movement traditionally carries a sense of desperation, remorse, or deep sorrow.¹²⁹ We used this movement with some frequency in the production, especially at the end of Dido's Lament.

¹²⁹ Cecilia S.L. Zung, *Secrets of the Chinese Drama* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., LTD., 1937), pp. 83-85.

Figure 13: The upheld sleeve



At only one juncture did we alter the traditional meaning of a gesture to accommodate our drama. Raising the sleeve traditionally connoted embarrassment or a need to conceal oneself.¹³⁰ Prof. Kazaras, however, felt that in our monodrama the concealing of my face would mark the transition from life to death, as happens in Dido's Lament. Hence as I recite the subsequent and final song, "Immortal", my body makes this very transition:

¹³⁰ Cecilia S. L. Zung, *Secrets of the Chinese Drama* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., LTD., 1937), p. 81.

Figure 14: Hiding the face



This sampling of gestures was applied almost equally to the music of both East and West, providing continuity and cohesion throughout the drama.

2. Hand gestures

In Chinese traditional opera, hand gestures serve to harmonize all bodily movement. Hand gestures typically serve four functions: to draw extra attention to an actor, to intensify the feelings of a character, to indicate time and location, or to aid as a cue to the orchestra.¹³¹ Balance is essential: If the hand points to the left, the eyes follow its movement and direction. However, the rest of the body moves in the opposite direction, placing the left foot back a little to maintain both aesthetic symmetry and physical balance.¹³²

¹³¹ Elisabeth Halson, *Peking Opera* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 44-45.

¹³² Cecilia S.L. Zung, *Secrets of the Chinese Drama* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., LTD., 1937), p. 103.

a) To illustrate poetic content

“Rainbow Skirt” contains the lines: “I sigh on seeing a pair of swallows resting like guests on the beam of the house.” “A pair of swallows” underscores Jiang’s desire for pairing, and points only to his loneliness.¹³³

Figure 15: A pair of swallows



Another hand gesture involves pointing at one’s self.¹³⁴ In “At Sunset,” the line “Return very soon, lest the red calyx have no one to be her master,” the “red calyx” is understood as a metaphor for the woman, who points to herself.

¹³³ Rú Shān Qí. *Mei Lan Fang I Sue I Pan* (Bei Jing: Chinese Opera Association, 1935), pp. 63-65.

¹³⁴ Rú Shān Qí. *Mei Lan Fang I Sue I Pan* (Bei Jing : Chinese Opera Association, 1935), p. 59.

Figure 16: Pointing at Oneself



b) To illustrate action

In some instances a hand gesture might illustrate the action by pointing to the object of a statement following hand gesture means to point something out. In Verdi's "Una Macchia," we expressed the phrase "Via, ti dico" ("Out, I tell you") by point to the imaginary recipient of the command:

Figure 17: Pointing to an object of command



c) To intensify an emotion

We employed the anger hand gesture¹³⁵ in Lady Macbeth's line "Un guerrier...così codardo?" ("You, a man, afraid to enter?") to underscore her delusional contempt for her husband.

¹³⁵ Rú Shān Qí. *Mei Lan Fang I Sue I Pan* (Bei Jing: Chinese Opera Association, 1935), p. 57.

Figure 18: Anger



d) Non-symbolic rules for hand figures

Prof. Li designed a fan dance for the “Sorrow at Spring” that opens the opera. In Chinese opera, simply holding a fan requires a specific hand gesture.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Rú Shān Qí. *Mei Lan Fang I Sue I Pan* (Bei Jing: Chinese Opera Association, 1935), p. 65.

Figure 19: Hand position using a fan



Virtually every movement in Chinese opera is part of a gesture. Holding the water sleeve in a pleasing shape is known as the akimo gesture¹³⁷ and requires a specific hand configuration.

Figure 20: Holding the Fan



¹³⁷ Rú Shān Qí. *Mei Lan Fang I Sue I Pan* (Bei Jing : Chinese Opera Association, 1935), p. 62.

3) The fan dance

Fan dance was used to perform by dancing girls for emperor's entertainment and it is also one of important props from Chinese opera.¹³⁸ Shēng and Dàn are the two main characters to present this kind of dance and it usually cooperated with hand gesture and water sleeve at the same time. The functions of fan can define as a symbolization, indication, and illustration.

a) The fan as an abstract symbol

“Spring has worn me thin, and how can I bear to see drooping willows all around the West Lake?” Prof. Li designed a movement in which the fan opens slowly, suggesting the fragility of the woman's heart.

Figure 21: Slow opening



The “Sorrow at Spring” contains the sentence “and ask who knows the intention of the tune and the friend who was with me in front of the flowers.” Prof. Chi Li had me open the fan as a representation of the blooming flowers, with a supporting hand gesture to suggest the flowers.

¹³⁸ Tianmaio Liu, *On stage*, www.mkb.ch

Figure 22: Opening the Fan



b) The Fan as an Indication

In “Alone I watch the peaks beyond the mist... ,” the fan indicates the peaks in the distance.

Figure 23: Pointing to the mist



c) The fan as an Indicator of Poetic Content

In the lines “a thousand acres of fragrant red have scattered and fallen,” the slightly swaying fan alludes to the fallen blossoms.

Figure 24: Falling blossoms



In another line, “writing for the strings of a Wu zither,” the fan becomes a pen to illustrate the movement of writing.

Figure 25: Writing



d) The fan as an indicator of action

In “Sorrow at Spring” at the lines “Those on painted boats who hide behind their sleeves,” the fan illustrates the movement of the oars.

Figure 26: The fan as oars



Drawing upon Prof. Chi Li's rich experience, our use of movement from Chinese opera exploited as many traditional gestures as we could uncover. When these could not provide the answer, we introduced alternative gestures that were consonant with this centuries old system. Again, the use of movement and gesture throughout the monodrama gave it a cohesion that would otherwise have proved impossible.

Chapter 4

Integrating the Libretto and the Music

Crafting the Libretto

Chapter 1 addressed the cultural and poetic background to Jiang Kui's accomplishments. It described the metaphorical language employed by Jiang and the linking by scholars to a love affair with two musically talented geishas. To integrate this narrative into a "libretto" required a more specific reading of Jiang's experiences. I elected to focus on the eight of the 21 *ci* we know to have been set to music by Jiang (here with their dates of composition):

1. Rainbow Skirt / 1186 (霓裳中序第一/ Ní shang zhōng xù dì yī)
2. A Day of Apricot-Blossoms / 1187 (杏花天影/ Xìng huā tiān yǐng)
3. Pale-Yellow Willows / 1190 (淡黄柳/ Dàn huáng liǔ)
4. At Sunset / 1191 (長亭怨慢/ Cháng tíng yuàn màn)
5. Song of Pipa / 1191 (醉吟商小品/ Zuì yín shāng xiǎo pǐn)
6. Secret Fragrance / 1191 (暗香/ Àn xiāng)
7. Dappled Shadows / 1191 (疏影/ Shū yǐng)
8. The Beautiful Flower/ 1196 (鬲溪梅令/ Gé xī méi lìng)

For centuries before Jiang Kui, Chinese poets had celebrated two sisters, Táo Yè and Táo Gēn, who lived in the fourth century. The eldest of them, Táo Yè, served as a concubine to Wáng Xiàn Zhī (王獻之 344–386), the seventh son of the famous calligrapher Wáng Xī Zhī (王羲之 303-361). Both of the sisters played musical instruments.¹³⁹ Using Jiang's own precise datings in

¹³⁹ Shàng Jiāng, *Cūn Mǐn, Sòng cí Sān Bǎi Shǒu Jiān Zhù* (Shàng Hǎi: People's Literature Publisher, 2005),

four of these poems, we can construct a rough chronological narrative.

Jiang's *ci* "A Day of Apricot-Blossoms" (杏花天影, written on January 2nd, 1187, appears to describe a lovesick parting. In his Preface Jiang locates this *ci* in Huái Chu (淮楚), which is now in Ān Huī (安徽省), a province of China whose capital is Hé Fēi.¹⁴⁰ Along with the location, Xia says in a text line: "Missing Táo Yè" (想桃葉). This sentence suggests strongly that Jiang was missing a woman like the legendary Táo Yè.

"A Day of Apricot Blossoms" (杏花天影)

The green-silk leaves kiss the Love Birds' Shore,
Missing Táo Yè [italics mine] as she called for a ferry,
Spring's sorrow is again evident in my eyes.
Hesitating briefly as I leaned back in the boat,
On the way to Chin Ling City
Orioles sang while the swallows danced,
Yet only the waves knew my pain.
The green grass covers the bank but I cannot return to her.
Sunset,
Departing in my boat but with nowhere to go.

p. 172.

¹⁴⁰ Nǎi Chāng Liú, *The Ci of Jiang Kui, New Interpretation Series Ratings* (Běi Jīng: Chinese Bookstore, 2001), p. 37.

Another *ci*, "Pipa Immortal" (琵琶仙), was written in 1189 when Jiang accompanied his nephew Xiāo Shí Fu (蕭時夫) to view spring on the West Lake.¹⁴¹ In this poem Jiang explicitly names Táo Yè and Táo Gē, lending further support to the existence of a relationship between them.

"Pipa Immortal" (琵琶仙)

As the sound of oars rowing approaches from afar,
The beauties in the boat recall my old friends *Táo Yè and Táo Gē*.
With dance–fans they collect the petals floating into the boat.
How astonishing their beauty!
Spring is departing,
The island turns green to the echo of the cuckoo's lament.
While the beautiful times remain in memory,
The love from both past, present, and future will remain forever,
Recalling is too painful to speak of.
Again, the Remembrance Festival approaches,
Within my sadness the seasons fly by.
My lovesickness is like the elm leaves falling in the lonely stairs,
A thousand willow leaves dance at the feast,
The leaves in the sky are as thick as snow,
My deep sorrow like the raven hidden in the willow's dense leaves,
The song "Yáng Guan"¹⁴² evokes the sadness of my departed love.

¹⁴¹ Shū Qiǒn Zhāng, *Jiang Kui* (Taipei: Earth press, 1994), p. 80.

¹⁴² This instrumental song, also known as the "Wei Cheng Song," consisted, according to the Tang Dynasty poet Wan Wei, of seven quatrains. It became a well-known art song.

The Preface to “Cleaning the River’s Sand (浣溪沙)” shows that Jiang wrote this *ci* on January 24th, 1191 in Hé Fěi.¹⁴³ It supplies yet more clues about his love affair there.

“Cleaning the River’s Sand” (浣溪沙)

The swallow-clasp that holds her hair is loose tonight;¹⁴⁴

She hopes to tie her lover’s boat with her sash.¹⁴⁵

The parting again this year,

The willow dances solo in the cold night,

The strong wind disturbs the sleep of love-birds,

Do not worry about trifling things.

In 1196, Jiang wrote “Plum Tresses Beside the River” (江梅引).¹⁴⁶ Its Preface reveals that Jiang was in *Wú xī*, an old city in Jiang Su province, but that his wish was to stay in Hé Fěi.¹⁴⁷ This *ci* was written after he recalled a lovesick dream.

“Plum Tresses Beside the River” (江梅引)

Time fled without notice of people’s parting,

See the plum branches;

Recall the lovesickness.

Several times in my dreams, my lover and I went out hand in hand.

¹⁴³ Shuen Fu Lin, “A Structural Study of Chiang Kuei’s Songs.” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1972), p. 147.

¹⁴⁴ Shuen Fu Lin, “A Structural Study,” p. 147.

¹⁴⁵ Shuen Fu Lin, “A Structural Study,” p. 147.

¹⁴⁶ Chéng Dào Xià, *Interpreting Bái Shí’s Cí* (Guǎng Dōng: People’s Publisher, 2005), p. 121.

¹⁴⁷ Yīn, Guāng Xī. *A Critical Reading of Jiang Kui’s Poetry* (Sì Chuān: Ba Shǔ Publisher, 1994), p. 142.

In tonight's dream, I am wandering and searching for my lover in vain.
Cold invades me without knowing.
My tears drench the paper and the words become blurred because of the pain of parting.
No one plays the Gǔ Zhēng, and no wild geese can help deliver the letter.
The places that we went are still the same, but only I am left alone.
The old trees amidst the sunset bring me sorrow.
The oath of our love can hardly be fulfilled, the burden of my heart is heavy.
Singing an old song releases my sorrow.
I am a wanderer, my clothes are wet with my tears.

These four firmly dated *ci* serve as a scaffold for a plausible narrative about Jiang's love for the two sisters. He is believed to have visited them numerous times in Hé Fēi. According to one writer, the last time he visited the sisters he learned that they had moved away without notice. Apparently he never saw either of them again.

The love affair chronicled in these four haunting poems directly motivated the scenario for *Music Draws Blood*. As discussed in Chapter 2, we organized the Western elements around these songs.

Mediating Chinese Conventions

The challenge that hung over this project from the outset was how to bring two disparate styles together in a natural and unforced manner. As we considered this fundamental issue, we came to the realization that the solution was to rearrange and modify both musical styles wherever necessary while maintaining as many of their stylistic features as possible. *Music*

Draws Blood both employs and modifies traditional conventions from both cultures.

Our monodrama needed one person to provide musical continuity between the thirteen numbers (including eleven vocal pieces and a prelude and postlude). With her many years of experience performing (she is a virtuoso of the *erhu*) and arranging many different styles of Chinese music, as well as her broad experience in the West, Prof. Chi Li was uniquely qualified to bridge the gaps between East and West. This required her to work extensively as both arranger and composer. The music of Jiang Kui itself falls within the genre of art song and would normally not be inserted into a musical drama. In addition, Prof. Li needed to arrange the Western numbers in such a way that their inclusion seemed inevitable. What follows describes how Prof. Chi Li wove together the various conventions of Chinese music and opera to create a dramatic whole.

Niàn Bái

While we always planned to sing some of Jiang Kui's poetry using the melodies that he created, we felt that simply presenting them alongside Gluck, Verdi, and Purcell would create a dramatic imbalance. We wanted to find another style of representation in Chinese music that could be sufficiently dramatic in its own.

The performance style of *Niàn Bái* (念白) emerged as the ideal solution. While *Niàn Bái* as a regular structural element of Beijing Opera may date only from the late eighteenth century, its roots can be traced all the way back to the Yuan (1271-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties, and to earlier forms of Chinese folk and regional opera. *Niàn Bái* presents a style somewhere midway between Western recitative and the spoken lines in genres such as *Singspiel*, *opera comique*, or even *Sprechstimme*. However, unlike all three of these *Niàn Bái* consists of pure text without any musical notation. The performers derive the melody and rhythm of *Niàn*

Bái from Chinese phonology (aided greatly by the four tones), using an exaggerated delivery to express the singer’s innermost feelings and thoughts. This delivery can exceed an octave in range. In Chinese opera *Niàn Bái* functions as the bridge between singing and purely speaking styles.¹⁴⁸

In traditional *Niàn Bái* the singer recites the text without any instrumental accompaniment. In *Music Draws Blood* we decided to modify this convention by supplying understated accompaniments underneath, often in the form of Jiang’s own melodies. This decision facilitated the smoothest possible connection between the eleven numbers. *Niàn Bái* also afforded a dramatic intensity that was especially suited to some of Jiang’s poems, four of which I elected to present in this style: “Song of the Pipa” (醉吟商小品), “Secret Fragrance” (暗香), “Song of Autumn Night” (秋宵吟), and the concluding “Immortal” (石湖仙).

Color and the Chinese Orchestra

The Chinese ensemble assembled by Prof. Chi Li contains sounds and colors developed, in some cases, over thousands of years. The type of standard Western orchestra—a string core plus paired winds, brass, and timpani—did not exist in either ancient or modern times in China. Prof. Chi Li decided upon a hybrid orchestra that divides into two complementary categories: ancient (going back thousands of years) and traditional (perhaps with deep historical roots, but coming into regular use more recently). This blend maximized the number of colors available while guaranteeing a core of instruments devoted to dramatic continuity.

¹⁴⁸ Huáng Jūn, Xú Xī Bó, *Peking Opera Culture Dictionary* (Shàng Hǎi: Chinese Dictionary Press, 2001), p. 177.

Five categories of ancient instruments supplied much of the color in our ensemble:

Figure 1: The *Xūn*



The *Xūn* is one of the oldest known wind instruments, dating back to the New Stone Age (ca. 10,000 BCE). Three ancient *xūn* were unearthed in the Jing village of *Wàn Quán* town in *Shānxī* province. The one with a single air hole produces the pitch f^2 ; the one with an air hole and a pitch hole produce two pitches $c\#^3$ and e^3 ; while one with one air hole and two pitch holes produces three pitches e^2 , b^2 , and d^3 . The ancient *xūn* was made by clay firing; the modern *xūn* is made from either ivory or stone. The shape varies, but circular and goose eggs are the most common. Examples with as many as five holes have been found.¹⁴⁹ The *xūn* produces a dark, hoarse sound akin to human sobbing or even ghostly apparitions. Prof. Li applied just this color to the beginning of her prelude.

Figure 2: The *xiao* (also *dongxiao*)



¹⁴⁹ *Chinese Dictionary of Music* (Beijing: People's Publisher, 1984), s. v. "xūn."

The *xiao* is an ancient instrument represented on figurines found as early as the Han Dynasty (206 BCE -220 CE). Unlike the *dizi*, the *xiao* is a vertical notched bamboo flute with four or five finger holes in the front and one hole in the back with a range of d1 – e3. A low register instrument, its volume is small and the tone color gentle and smooth.¹⁵⁰

Figure 3: The *ruǎn*

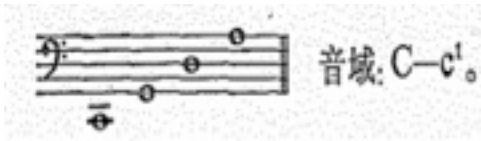


In the *Pipa Annals* by Bo Xuan (East Han dynasty, 25–220 CE), the author states that the *ruǎn* grew out of other plucked instruments such as the *zither*, *zheng*, *zhu*, or *konghou*. It is also called the *Qin Pipa* or *Moon Lute*. The circular body has four strings and comes in sizes of small, medium, and large (medium and large are the most common). The tone color of the tenor *ruǎn* (known as *zhongruan*, abbreviated “zruan”) is mild and gentle, while the large bass *ruǎn* (or *daruan*, abbreviated “DR”) presents a deeper and more resonant tone color.¹⁵¹

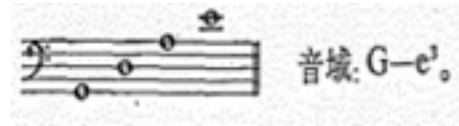
¹⁵⁰ *Chinese Dictionary of Music* (Beijing: People’s publisher, 1984), s. v. “xiao.”

¹⁵¹ *Chinese Dictionary of Music* (Beijing: People’s Publisher, 1984), s. v. “ruǎn.”

Large ruǎn



Medium ruǎn



The strings of the ancient *ruǎn* were made of silk; modern *ruǎn* strings are made of steel, producing a more penetrating and sustained sound. The modern *ruǎn* has 24 frets (made of either ivory or metal) per string, each separated by a semitone.

Figure 4: The *dizi*



The high-register *dizi* (or *di*) is an ancient woodwind known since the time of the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE). The *dizi* is a side-blown bamboo flute with (from top to bottom) an embouchure hole, an air hole, six finger holes, and two (or occasionally four) holes at the end. The average range of the *dizi* is two and half octaves. The *qudi* and *bangdi* are the two most common types of *dizi*, used originally in *Kūn Qǔ* and *Bang zi* opera. The most common range of the *dizi* is from $d^2 - e^4$, or $eb^2 - f^4$. The *qudi* is a medium-range flute with a richer color usually tuned to the keys of d and a. The *bangdi*, shorter in length and with a brighter color, is

tuned a fourth higher.¹⁵²

Figure 5: The *zheng*



The plucked *zheng* is an ancient Chinese folk instrument with a history going back more than 2,500 years. Examples found in the *Qin* area, called the *qinzheng*, date from the Warring State period of the 5th-3rd century BCE. The earliest *zheng* had 12 strings; it gained another string during the Tang and Song dynasties, grew to 15 strings in the Ming and Qing dynasties, and boasts no fewer than 21, or even 23, strings today.

The earliest strings were made from pony's tail and deer tendon, but the modern *zheng* uses nylon or steel strings to increase the volume. Its movable bridges are generally tuned to a pentatonic scale, although the two other pitches of the diatonic scale can be added using the two leftmost strings. The *zheng* produces a remarkable range of sound, alternately evoking a waterfall, horses' hooves, or even thunder. Plucking is generally done with four picks attached to fingers 2-5. Performers use a wide variety of techniques, from vibrato to harmonics, strumming

¹⁵² *Chinese Dictionary of Music* (Beijing: People's Publisher, 1984), s.v. "dizi."

to tremolos. When serving as a melody instrument it can execute highly expressive ornaments.¹⁵³

The most popular of the traditional Chinese instruments is the *erhu*, whose two strings are generally tuned to A⁴ and D⁴.

Figure 6: The *erhu*



The *erhu* enjoys the distinction of having been brought into China by the invading barbarians during the Tang Dynasty. Its medium register, 3 1/2- octave range extends from D⁴ to A⁴.¹⁵⁴ The body is carved from red sandalwood or padauk wood, and the age and color of the wood affects the tone color. The octagonal or hexagonal sound box is made from python or other snakeskin. The horsehair bow always runs between the two strings.¹⁵⁵ Though the tone is soft and slender, the instrument is highly versatile, playing not only in traditional but also in pop and jazz ensembles.

¹⁵³ Robert C. Provine, Yosihiko Tokumaru and J. Lawrence Witzleben, *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 7: East Asia: China, Japan, and Korea* (London: Routledge, 2002), s.v. “zheng.”

¹⁵⁴ Robert C. Provine, Yosihiko Tokumaru and J. Lawrence Witzleben, *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 7: East Asia: China, Japan, and Korea* (London: Routledge, 2002), s.v. “erhu.”

¹⁵⁵ *Chinese Dictionary of Music* (Beijing: People’s Publisher, 1984), s.v. “erhu.”

Figure 7: The *Táng Gǔ*



By Chinese standards, the *táng gǔ* is a fairly recent addition and is commonly heard in folk music and operatic ensembles. Its wood box is slightly rounded, and both sides of the leather skin are struck with wooden mallets. Depending on where it is struck, the pitch can be low and thick (at the center) or higher (at the edge).¹⁵⁶

Figure 8: The Copper Plate



¹⁵⁶ *China Dictionary of Music* (Beijing: People's Publisher, 1984), s.v. "táng gǔ."

In the book, *Musical Record of the Tang Dynasty* (945), we read: “The *copper pull*, also named the *copper plate*, comes from the West Xu and the southern barbarians...” —hence we have yet another instrument *not* of Chinese origin. Recently an early gong was unearthed in Gui county, Guǎngxi Province dating back to the Western Han Dynasty (202 BCE – 9 CE).¹⁵⁷ The large bass gong is used in instrumental ensembles or for operatic accompaniment. Its low, loud, strong, and lingering tone can either be used both to underscore a rhythm or to create an atmosphere.

The Prelude: A Hybrid of Chinese and Western Practices

We can best illustrate the adaptation of other Chinese conventions and the integration of Western elements by looking more closely at Prof. Chi Li’s Prelude to the monodrama. According to Prof. Li, she composed the Prelude last, after she had a complete sense of the overall drama. This procedure can be easily imagined of a Western composer. Indeed, unlike Western opera, the idea of a prelude to a drama does not exist in ancient Chinese opera. The commencement of a Chinese opera is typically announced in the tempo and rhythm of the gong and drum. Loud sounds alerted listeners that the opera was about to commence. At the same time, it alerted the singers backstage to prepare for their imminent entrances. Rather than use this time honored concept, Prof. Li chose instead to compose a brief instrumental piece as a preface to the drama. Nonetheless, she incorporated references to traditional Chinese practice by opening the prelude with the drum, and then announcing the first musical number with the gong.

¹⁵⁷ *China Dictionary of Music* (Beijing: People’s publisher, 1984), s.v. “gong.”

Structure and Scale

Prof. Li employed an organizing feature familiar from the Western Baroque, in which recurring episodes in the ensemble alternate with solo passages in the manner of an Italian *concerto grosso*. Part of the purpose here was to introduce the audience to the extraordinarily varied sounds and colors of Chinese instruments, including the *xūn*, *dizi*, *xiao*, *erhu*, drum, gong, *guzheng*, *daruan* and *zhongruan*.

Prof. Li based the musical content on the diatonic scale (c-d-e-f#-g-a-b, with “c” as the tonic tone) believed by scholars such as Yīn Liǔ Yáng to be central to Jiang Kui’s musical style.¹⁵⁸ Western scholars had long believed that neither 7-tone, much less 12-tone, scales were used in Chinese traditional music. The earliest proof that Chinese musicians employed additional pitches is the *Bian Zhong of Marquis Yi of Zeng*, consisting of a set of bronze bells. In 1978 the *Bian Zhong* was unearthed in Marquis Zeng Hou Yi’s tomb in Sui County, Hubei Province, China. The tomb of Marquis Zeng was constructed like an underground palace that contains three rooms—east, west, and north—and one central hall. The main coffin, eight accompanying coffins, and some string instruments were placed in the east room. The west room contained thirteen coffins, and the north room contained some weapons. The central hall served as a music room filled with ritualistic music instruments; the *Bian Zhong*, consisting of sixty-four bells, is one of the more spectacular.¹⁵⁹ Its lowest center bell was made in 433 BCE, while the entire range covers more than five octaves (from A¹ to C#⁵). It includes twelve half tones that can be ordered to produce a pentatonic scale, a six-tone scale, and a seven-tone scale. The total of sixty-

¹⁵⁸ Yīn Liǔ Yáng and Fǎ Lǚ Yīn , *The Study of Jiang Bai Shi’s Songs* (Běi Jīng: Music Publisher, 1957), 38.

¹⁵⁹ Liú Dōng Shēng and Yuán Quán Yóu, *A Field Guide to The History of Music* (Beijing: People’s Publisher, 2008), 23.

four bells were hung on three levels.¹⁶⁰

Figure 10: The *Bian Zhong*



It is doubtless true that the majority of Chinese traditional music remained pentatonic, and that the more elaborate scales were reserved for the most cultivated and educated users. Jiang Kui certainly was one of these. It is almost certain that the seven notes for which we provide equivalent Western pitches were tuned slightly differently. Scholars disagree as to the precise pitches. For our purposes Prof. Chi Li chose in large measure to observe equal-tempered Western pitches so that the intonation would not clash with the Western arias. These were the compromises we made that proved necessary for dramatic cohesion.

Prof. Li also adopted Western notions of repetition (Themes A and A'), variation (the solos of the *xiao*, *zhongruan*, and *daruan*) and contrast (*xūn* and *dizi*). These instruments raised

¹⁶⁰ Liú dōng shēng, yuán quán yóu. *A Field guide to the History of Music* (Beijing: People's Publisher, 2008), 24.

the issue of the absolute pitch to which we would tune. We decided that all of the instruments except for the *gugin* and *xūn* could best be tuned to the Western A = 440. Among other considerations, it enabled me sing the Western numbers at close to their original pitch.

Use of Cipher Notation

Prof. Li decided that for the Eastern portions of the opera it would be easier for her to use Chinese cipher notation (the genesis of this system is French, but that is not at issue here). In the current Chinese system, the key (i.e. “tonic”) and the time signature (in our monodrama, always 4/4) appear at the upper left. The instruments are listed vertically as in a Western score. “0” indicates a rest in the part. The number “1” indicates the tonic note (here, middle C), “2” the degree above, and so forth. A “.” above a note indicates a pitch an octave higher than the 7-tone gamut; a “.” an octave below indicates a pitch an octave below.

A single number followed by dots on beats 2-4 indicates a whole note. Two evenly spaced notes indicate half notes; four such notes indicate quarter notes. Eighth notes are indicated by two underlined numbers occupying the space of a normal quarter note (a double underline indicates sixteenth notes). With regard to accidentals, sharps, naturals, or flats appear to the left side of the number, e.g. #2 = D#. Ornament appears to the left of the principal note. The notation also specifies instrumental techniques for instruments such as the *zheng* or the *táng gǔ*. For textures that are not highly contrapuntal or rhythmically overly complex, cipher notation is both concise and efficient, as can be seen in the compact score:

Figure 9: The Prelude in Chinese cipher notation

1 Prelude																	
1=F 4/4																	
xun	1	2	4 3 -	2 - - -	6	4 2 - - -	drum	x _w	- - -								
	1	2			3			4									
di	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	7	3	1	
xiao	1	6	4	2	3	4	6	2	7	1	2	-	0	0	0	0	
erhu	-	1	6	4	2	3	4	6	2	7	1	2	-	erhu solo (2#234#45#56#6712)			
ruan	1	6	4	2	3	4	6	2	7	1	2	-	2	-	-	-	
zheng	1	6	4	2	3	4	6	2	7	1	2	-	2	-	-	-	
drum	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	x _w	-	-	-	
	5	6			7			8									
di	7	1	6	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
xiao	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	4	2	3	4	6	2	
erhu	2	-	-	-	2	-	³ 2	³ 2	1	6	4	2	3	4	6	2	
ruan	2	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	6	4	2	3	4	6	2	
zheng	2	-	↘ ↗		2	↘ ↗	-	-	1	6	4	2	3	4	6	2	
drum	x _w	-	-	-	x _w	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	

	9				10				11				12			
di	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
xiao	7	1	6	-	7 6	-	7 6	-	7 6	<u>5 6</u>	<u>1 2</u>	7	6	-	-	-
erhu	7	1	6	-	6 _W	-	-	-	6 _W	-	-	-	6 _W	-	-	-
ruan	7	1	6	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
zheng	7	1	6	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
drum	x	x	x _W	-	x _W	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

	13				14				15				16			
di	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
xiao	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
erhu	6 _W	-	-	-	6 _W	-	3 _W	-	3 _W	-	-	-	3 _W	-	-	-
Zruan	7 6	-	7 6	-	7 6	<u>7 6</u>	<u>5 6</u>	#4	3 _W	-	-	-	3 _W	-	-	-
DR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	#4 3	-	#4 3	-	#4 3	#4 3	<u>2 1</u>	<u>2 7</u>
drum	x _W	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

erhu	6 _W	-	-	-
Zruan	3 _W	-	-	-
DR	6 _W	-	-	-
gong	0	0	0	x

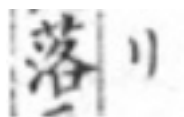
Jiang Kui's Syllabic Melodies

Jiang Kui's *suzi* notation makes clear that all of his melodies set their texts syllabically. The only exceptions were the individual ornaments from above. Prof. Li based her composed music on Jiang's syllabic melodic style but infused it with the operatic character of *Kūn Qǔ* in a style known as "*Singing with Three Sighs*."

“Singing with Three Sighs” — A Convention of *Kūn Qǔ*

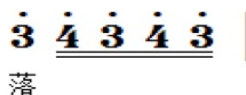
Singing with Three Sighs (一唱三嘆) can be demonstrated in the following example:

Figure 11a: Example of “Singing with Three Sighs” from “Sorrow at Spring”



In this example the central pitch is “3,” or A as a half note. Prof. Chi Li treats it as an initial sigh (A) followed by two more sighs (Bb-A, Bb-A). In cipher notation the result is:

Figure 11b: “Singing with Three Sighs” in Cipher Notation



or, in staff notation:

Figure 11c: “Singing with Three Sighs” in Staff Notation

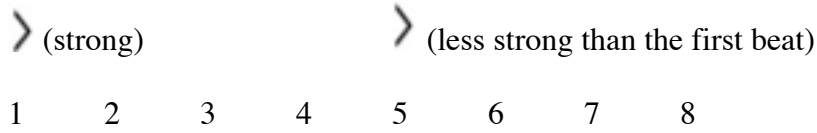


This form of ornamentation provides a recurring form of expression in *Music Draws Blood*.

Use of *Kūn Qǔ* Metric Patterns

Although the general meter of Jiang Kui’s melodies is believed by scholars to be duple, *Kūn Qǔ* opera employs a variant designed to create longer lines. This is known as *yī bǎn sān yǎn* plus *zēng bǎn* (加增板一板三眼). In the first phrase, *yī bǎn* means one strong accent while *sān yǎn* means three softer beats. This metric convention in Chinese opera is analogous to 4/4 in Western opera, though without the secondary stress on beat three. But *yī bǎn sān yǎn* plus *zēng*

bǎn means “4 beats plus another 4 beats,” creating a type of metric pattern found only in *Kūn Qǔ*. The eight beats are conceived of as one unit, with the first beat receiving the primary stress, the fifth beat a secondary stress, and the remaining beats receiving no metric stress:



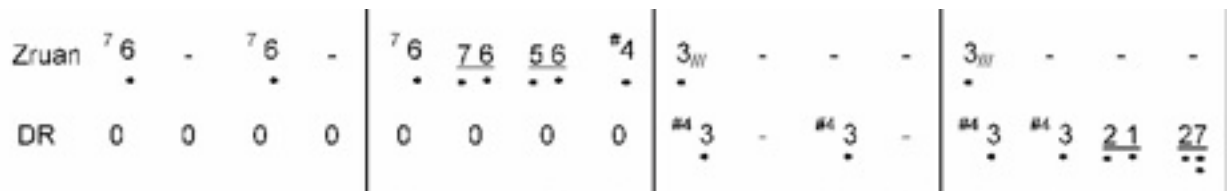
Given that these beats generally move in a leisurely tempo (ca. 60-90 beats per minute), the music created by Prof. Li unfolds in a more deliberate and less square manner.

Ornaments and fermatas

We know from Jiang Kui’s *suzi* notation that ornaments and fermatas formed an important element of his style. Prof. Li reinforced Jiang’s style by employing ornaments as they would have appeared in *Kūn Qǔ*, that is, is based on grace-note approaches a minor second, major second, or minor third above the melody note.

Prof. Li applies these ornaments to the instruments most accustomed to this style of playing: the *erhu*, *xiao*, *zhongruan* and *daruan*. All the ornaments function as lead-ins for the next phrase.

Figure 12: Ornaments Used by Prof. Li



	13				14					15					16				
di	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
xiao	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
erhu	6 _W	-	-	-	6 _W	-	3 _W	-	3 _W	-	-	-	3 _W	-	-	-	-	-	-
Zruan	7 6	-	7 6	-	7 6	7 6	5 6	#4	3 _W	-	-	-	3 _W	-	-	-	-	-	-
DR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	#4 3	-	#4 3	-	#4 3	#4 3	2 1	2 7			
drum	x _W	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

erhu	6 _W	-	-	-				
Zruan	3 _W	-	-	-				
DR	6 _W	-	-	-				
gong	0	0	0	x				

Another type of *Kūn Qǔ* ornamentation appears in “Sorrow at Spring” and encompasses either a major second or minor third in the form of a brief melisma. In the original notation by Jiang Kui; the left side, 離, indicates the word in traditional Chinese and the right side, 离, shows the pitch and its ornament. Prof. Li represents this in simplified Chinese (离) and then applies a *Kūn Qǔ* interpretation:

Figure 13: *Kūn Qǔ* Ornamentation of Jiang Kui’s Melody

	2̇	3̇	4̇	5̇	4̇	5̇	4̇		2̇	-
	过	三	十	六	离				离	

In Jiang Kui's songs a fermata frequently indicates the end of a phrase, usually based on considerations of rhyme. In the following example from "Sorrow at Spring" all four words that

end phrases (瘦可, 秀可, 久了, and 首可) end with an "o" rhyme, whose fermatas

Prof. Li interprets as a whole note:

Figure 14: Fermatas and end rhymes

(Kui)

(Prof. Li)

The figure displays three examples of musical notation for the song "Sorrow at Spring". Each example consists of a staff with original notation (Kui) and a corresponding staff with numbered notation (Prof. Li). The lyrics are written below the numbered notation.

Example 1: The original notation shows a melodic phrase ending with a fermata. The numbered notation is: **6** | **7 6 5** | **1̇ -** | **2̇ - - -** |. The lyrics are: 瘦可 | 为 | 春 | 瘦.

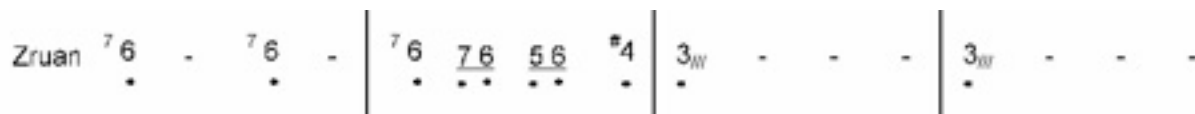
Example 2: The original notation shows a melodic phrase ending with a fermata. The numbered notation is: **6 -** | **1̇ .** | **2̇ 1̇** | **6 - - -** |. The lyrics are: 秀可 | 人 | 争 | 秀.

Example 3: The original notation shows a melodic phrase ending with a fermata. The numbered notation is: **2̇ 1̇ 7** | **1̇ -** | **2̇ 1̇ 7** | **2̇ - - -** |. The lyrics are: 久了 | 君 | 归 | 未 | 久.



In her Prelude Prof. Li applies analogously the notion of the fermata to prolong the ends of instrumental phrases:

Figure 15: Fermata-Like Phrase Endings



Orchestrating with Ancient and Traditional Chinese Instruments

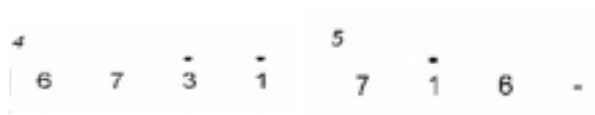
Prof. Li elected to maintain the monophonic style of Jiang’s music but employed all the resources of her Chinese ensemble and *Kūn Qǔ* to create a rich, emotional flow. For instance, using the “Singing with Three Sighs” the *xūn* evokes the sounds of a sobbing woman. The rapid Western chromatic scale in the *erhu* represents the birds singing in the West Lake (symbolic of the woman’s changing mood):

Figure 16: Erhu chromatic solo



The high register of the *dizi* represents the birds singing in springtime:

Figure 17: *Dizi* solo



Within the ensemble the *erhu* and *zhongruan* occupy the medium registers, while the *xiao*, *daruan*, and *táng gǔ* belong to the lower registers. Higher pitched instruments such as the *dizi* play in the higher registers. Just like an orchestrator of Western music, Prof. Li combines these registers in various ways in order to create the dramatic mood. Her goal in the Prelude was to evoke a gently sorrowful feeling within a dream-like springtime, setting up the woman who then sings out her tragic life. Prof. Li applied these same goals and techniques to the various links between musical numbers as well as the Postlude. The latter brings the emotional catharsis around full circle.

Purists of both Eastern and Western styles may rightly point to the manner in which we modified or combined different strands of Chinese and Western musical culture. Yet a drama is less an exercise in historical authenticity than in authentic creation (and re-creation). The imprint of both East and West is everywhere on *Music Draws Blood*.

Postlude

Where We Go from Here

Music Draws Blood grew out of a collaboration in which all the parties came to believe that the whole would exceed the sum of its parts, and that we would all emerge from the process enriched and wiser about our own culture as well as that of another.

What we did not anticipate was the overwhelming feedback after the performance, and the repeated requests that we package the production in some way so that it could be performed in other venues, including in China and on Taiwan. So instead of finishing a project we soon realized that we had just begun one.

We understood from the beginning that advocates of either historical authenticity or cultural purity would object to the most basic premise that inspired the creation of *Music Draws Blood*. It remains our hope that progressive musicians in China will recognize the wholehearted and sincere tribute to their cultural heritage, whether that of the great twelfth-century poet/musician Jiang Qui, or the somewhat later traditions of *Kūn Qǔ* and *Niàn Bái*. We hope that the same will be true of those trained in Western opera and inculcated with Western cultural values. At all times throughout history musicians have both adopted and altered conventions to suit their expressive and dramatic ends.

Ancient Chinese Literature and Song vs. Modern Media Design

Because of budgetary constraints, our first performance took place without any set design. From the outset we had ideas about how varied projections on a large digital screen could help to both clarify and enhance the experience. Take, for example, the metaphors of willow,

plum blossom, and pipa in Jiang’s poetry. In our production we expressed these through bodily movement, facial expression, and the use of the water sleeve.

With digital projection we would be able to visualize even further. The following fragment from “Secret Fragrance” illustrates lovesickness:

I still remember the place where we held hands.
A thousand trees press against the West Lake’s cold green.
Petal after petal is blown away, when shall I see them again?

A simple image of falling petals would enhance the metaphor:

Figure 1: Falling Petals



At many other places in our scenario, minimalist imagery of this sort would provide more keys to the drama. We will need to identify a digital artist who shares our vision and excitement about the project and its interdisciplinary bent.

Subtitles

Operagoers today are both accustomed to, and expect to, have the libretto projected in real time in a language they can understand. In many opera houses, subtitles are projected high above the

stage, forcing audience members to move back and forth between two locations, and sometimes—depending on where they are sitting—even having to crane their necks. We want to explore the possibility of subtitles being built into the scenic design. In any event we would need to accommodate both the English and Chinese languages. Presenting both without cluttering the screen would prove to be a real challenge but one well worth addressing.

Supplementing the Orchestration

The Chinese ensemble assembled by Prof. Chi Li, with its blend of ancient and traditional instruments, provided a remarkable variety of orchestral colors in our first performance. We nonetheless learned a great deal about such an ensemble’s character, especially when supporting Western singing. Traditional Chinese music favors the middle and upper registers. The kind of bass sound fundamental to Western music—engendered in instruments such as double basses, cellos, bassoons, bass clarinets, trombones, and tubas—is not a part of the Chinese sound. Since all three of the arias we incorporated into our first production rely heavily on their bass lines (the Gluck in largely tonic and dominant pairings, the Verdi for chromatic common-tone harmonies, and the Purcell for its ground bass), we now believe that these could be strategically supported with the addition of a few Western foundation instruments—perhaps a single double bass, a cello, and a bassoon.

Mixed Western and Chinese orchestras have been common in China since the 1920s. Anywhere in China where we can locate a professional Chinese ensemble we will definitely be able to find Western performers who already have experience playing in such ensembles. In addition, things we have learned about the early editions of works such as the Gluck “Divinites du Styx” will enable us to make more idiomatic use of Chinese instruments in our next

production.

Providing New Music to Jiang Kui's *ci*

Chapters 1 and 3 confirm that only eight of Jiang's twenty-one *ci* include melodies written by him. The thirteen remaining *ci* might well provide inspiration for Prof. Chi Li to add more music to the drama, and thereby more concrete action. For instance, "Cleaning the River's Sand" (浣溪沙) includes the lines: *The swallow-clasp that holds her hair is loose tonight; She hopes to tie her lover's boat with her sash.* "Pipa Immortal" (琵琶仙) includes the lines: *As the sound of oars rowing approaches from afar, The beauties in the boat recall my old friends Táo Yè and Táo Gē. With dance-fans they collect the petals floating into the boat. How astonishing their beauty!* Without dissolving into an absurd literalness, such moments could intensify and expand the existing scenario.

Further Augmenting the Scenario

As we conceived our original drama it was restricted—for practical as well as artistic reasons—to a single performer. Now that we know the basic idea is tenable, we can look to creating a more extended and concrete narrative. For example, the Preface to Jiang Kui's "Yellow Willow" indicates that he is staying as a guest at his friend's house near the Red Lanna Bridge, just south of the city of Hé Fēi where the geishas resided. Given this information, the Red Lanna Bridge might serve be a location for the scenario. In fact, the Jiang Kui Society of Literary and Artistic Studies in Hé Fēi, the capital of Ān Huī province, have created an entirely Chinese "cottage opera" (i.e. small scale opera) entitled *Died on Red Lanna Bridge* (魂断赤阑桥). The intention of this group is to keep the name and achievements of Jiang Kui alive. As they have constructed

it, the story revolves around a love triangle between Jiang Kui, his wife Xiao, and the geisha Liu Xiao Xiao. This opera ends tragically with the death of Liu Xiao Xiao on the Red Lanna Bridge.

I plan to contact this group to see if they would have any interest in our efforts here.

We also know of Jiang's longstanding friendships with characters such as Fan Cheng Da, Yang Wan Li, and Zhu Xi. These relationships could be woven into an expanded scenario that provides some relief from the overarching theme of heartbreak and loss. The introduction of male characters—possibly including Jiang Kui himself—could provide further balance to the narrative.

Our project will need to progress step-by-step, and along the way we will need to enlist the aid of sponsors and funders. Our hope is that our first effort, which can be shown to any interested parties over the internet, will spark the kind of interest that can not only expand the original vision but enable it to travel to the places where its cultural, historical, and musical debt is greatest.

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