

Cheng-Long Zhou

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I think this project very meaningful, and is different from projects in many places in our country, which deliberately organize many shows for the economy and are influenced by some local officials' urge to display their achievements. Artists call these "fast food culture". China Central Television started and some of its leaders are responsible for this.

This project seems not so large in scale, with a few composers, an ensemble of about a dozen people, funds from the Canadian government, and the support of a group of people with ideals. By watching videos of the project's rehearsals, I listen to some of the works and understand its entire process. Its far-reaching significance is to let everyone calm down to do something culturally. Its energy will get stronger. If more people and more artists calm down to do things, its effect will become more. This project is not going to cause a sensation immediately. Instead, what artists need in university performances is for compositions to produce meanings and effects gradually.

Shanghai Spring International Music Festival has done similar exchange activities twice, bringing French composers to Shanghai to write about Shanghai in one project, and Canadians to do so in another. Though understandable, the publicity was too exaggerated. The team was strong, but unfortunately the compositions were not successful. As long as such projects open their forum, strong views will form among artists. After the first project's forum, there was even a clash, as reported by the critic Dong-hai Dai.

Although the meanings from these projects are many, the leadership and direction are wrong. The French see our development in Shanghai and renders it into big glamour, but without calm, like an hour of Shanghai folksongs with little meanings and worse musical images.

This project has composers writing what they know best. For its six composers, three Canadians and three Chinese, it does not require that the Chinese write something Canadian. I certainly cannot compose Canada, but I write what I am familiar with and things that I favor towards culture. Within this, the combination of things from two countries is already something terrific. I think that for Mr. Bill Lai and B C Chinese Music Association to do this project is indeed quite remarkable. I feel that if this platform continues slowly, its meaning will be deep and far-reaching.

I say what I think, my day to day thinking. To be honest, I guess composers are very frank people, or they can not compose good works. My character is not very cautious, and my music fully reflects my own views. I participated in organizing many activities in Shanghai, such as the Chinese Music concerts for Shanghai Spring

International Music Festival, the 'New Dream on Sea' concerts, etc. As artistic director of Chinese Music concerts, I put forward my point of view. I am now in preparation for Shanghai Spring 2011, not necessarily by composing, but by commissioning works, or by taking composers to trips to collect atmosphere and practices of the folks. I talk, especially to young composers like Ms. Ning Jiang, about the theme of the concert and how one should compose for it. I told her about the theme of 'Towering East', what her musical language and aesthetics should be, etc. I do this because students from music academies are not the same as composers practicing in society and in orchestras.

Music conservatory students are very technical, complacent of what they write for themselves. On the other hand, composers in society need to focus on the taste of the common people. They are responsible to the audience, and should make music sound good instead of merely chase after techniques. This is a conflict of ideals in the long term, and this is a good thing, not a bad thing. As an organizer and an artistic director, 90

however, you have to guide slowly. You cannot demand what to write and what not to write. You can guide composers' attention to the audience, and what the theme of the concert is. I think this is what Hong Kong does well relatively compared to us.

I believe in other countries there are many kinds of composers as well: on the path of techniques, on the path of emotions, on path of the market, and so on. During the lifetimes of composers, there are periods of time for focusing on techniques, on emotions, and possibly on melodies growing out of spontaneous personal feelings, with one period focusing on this and another period focusing on that.

I listen to a few works for the project, and there is a piece called "Four Gardens", which begins with fast pluckings. I think this has a very clear musical image, about lively lantern festival in Chinese garden. I also hear imagery very much in the Chinese composer's "Goddess of Luo River"; it rhymes and tastes very Chinese!

I pay attention to the music itself, and pay follow music image closely. Logically, Jian-ping Tang and Ning Wang as academics upholding their teaching practices are walking their technical path, but their pieces bring feeling to me well, by attending to musical images and expression of musical emotions. The depth of the work and the content expressed affect me especially. This is the essence of the project. Of course, what one hears in a live concert has something to do with acoustics. I watched the project's rehearsal video; it had one microphone, and it sounded a bit unbalanced. I cannot know what the players were intending. I found that my work has the biggest problem. First, the overall expression had it bit of a problem, and the expression of tempos too. For example, it can start a bit slower.

My piece "Colorful Forest" actually is from the trip to visit Yunnan province's Buyi people which I took especially for the project on 2 May, 2010. Because of my longings for Yunnan, I went there in 2000 for the first time, taking two young men of Shanghai Chinese Orchestra to collect folk songs. What impressed me the most was its people. Scenery can be seen everywhere, but the kind of welcome I got from the people there cannot. I went to Yunnan twice in 2010, with one ethnographical trip specifically for composing "Colorful Forest". The Qujing local Mr. Xing-biao Chen took me to Doyi River. I listened to some folk songs there, and then I conceptualize the music with a tune that I am most familiar with. Your ears cannot detect what I have blended into my music. They are buried in the musical elements, cut apart and simplified completely.

I think the two biggest problems for rehearsals are the very calmness to begin with, and for modern people to clam down. Why do I want to write a forest? What it impresses me most is its quietest morning. What is most lacking in city life is

quietness. Quietness is a very extravagant wish for us, rushing to work early among crowds in the bus, sitting down to big pressures from the boss asking about tomorrow and today, and so on. In fact, I myself I can not calm down with so much work piled up, a commission from Hong Kong here, a project from Canada there.

However, without calm one cannot write good music. When I compose, I shut myself into my work-room in my office and the little room where I work at home, hermetically isolated with a small light. My staff members are good and do not disturb me as I write everyday on my writing desk. Even when there is a phone call for me, they would actively deal with it and tell me about it during lunch breaks or other breaks. I think as far as being a composer is concerned, I am very fortunate.

Quietness is therefore a luxury, a wealth, and what is necessary for personal cultural accumulation. I therefore begin "Colorful Forest" with calmness. Because of that, the performer should perform that effect, so that the audience will hear or feel the composer's intention. In the rehearsal process, the conducting gestures of Mr. Rui-Shi Zhuo and the starting points of his beats did not embody the meaning and realm of calm. He is not the one to blame. He did not know at the time. I know that Canada is also an industrialized country, and everyone's pressure there is just as great. This piece by me wants to express a kind of longing, desire, and inner pursuit of the heart!

Have you heard Debussy's "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun"? What it embodies is calm and quietness. 91

It is an impressionist work. France has a deep culture. I adore this composer and his influence on me is rather large. I feel the impressionists as very close to Chinese paintings.

To conduct this piece by me, therefore, requires calm from the conductor and the players. If they are, the audience is going to be. A conductor in a hurry makes the player even more so, and the music dies. The part in the beginning must be very still and must pay attention to the tempo that I marked. I just found out that the Guan player can also play Sheng. I was told that Sheng is not available when I began on the project, and I felt very sorry for that. My piece is actually not suited to Guanzi, because of its extremely individualistic character. I have done Chinese national music all my life, and I do not use Guanzi and Sanxian unless I have to because of their especially strong characters and strong styles.

An example is the concerto that I am now composing called Tai Hang Sui Xiang (Tai hang Mountains Capriccio). To note the untamed boldness of Sanxi province, I must use Guanzi to let out the feeling of desolation and passion. Sheng's timbre is very calm, with a cool tone. Well-played Sheng sounds rich, adorned and calm, so I want to replace the entire Guanzi part with Sheng, as I aim to re-edit the entire piece by the 20th of this month, to fix problems now existing in the work itself, such as unclear or lack of tempo markings. This piece is really particular about colors and combinations of timbres. I am better at color and understanding Chinese instruments. The opening is inversions of seventh chords. How Pipa on top of Zhongruan brings out the latter slightly, forming a transparent sound, calls for softer playing from the players. Very quiet harmonics embodies the morning before dawn, with insects, water rustle, and birds. This is not a type of music engaged in imitation. Rather, it is tone picture writing, a kind of transpositional writing of colors. This is irrelevant. I will discuss with them there in rehearsal.

Transportation for that trip I took to Doyi River was not convenient. Every village further down from the scenic spot was quiet. The dim illumination in the place where we stayed at night was a kind of pleasure, perhaps unbearable by city kids. Because I came out of the army and went all over China, I enjoyed the very quietness. The next morning, we were brought along the Doyi River. The further we walked, the quieter it got, and inspiration happened, prompting me to use as my theme elements of Yi ethnicity, by the means of inversions of chords. But this musical material is from HongHe (Red River) in Yunnan. I tried this clever combination, and found it to be exactly what I wanted. I sought the songs of workers deep in far away forests in the morning before dawn, and I wrote "Colorful Forest" after images of what I saw in Yunnan all rushed to my mind.

I actually used two main chords in "Colorful Forest". It has many seventh chords and many stacked-fifths chords. Stacking fourths and fifths is how traditional

Chinese music does it. In many climatic places of my piece, chords of stacking fourths or fifths are used. It also used many seventh chords in inversions. The chords also progress like this instead of functionally. A seventh chord would connect to the one below. I feel that seventh chords are no big deal in the West; in the Classical period, there were basic and common, but in Chinese ethnic music, their clashing sound forms a pleasing and not irritating thing, which works very well with the music of the Yi ethnicity in Yunnan. Their melodic shape is like the way some folk songs are sung, which goes from one seventh chord to another one. Sounds very good. This inspiration develops the piece, whose very start can be simplified into inversions of seventh chords.

Now take ABCD sections as the first part. Musically, from the fourth measure, the flute part can be reduced into a chord of fourths. This is the combining of the Yi people's and Han people's things. Why is this better stated by the flute? It is a first statement of the theme, a preparation up front, of color. Its lyricism comes up gradually, and by the time we turn to the Clarinet, the feeling is already very happy. The theme goes from flute to plucked strings, then the polyphony of flute turns into the Clarinet's passage of very beautiful music in modal modulation by a third. The theme with the Clarinet is still this theme of fourths, but the musical emotion is transformed into a very joyous one. As the transformation goes into tutti, in the fourth measure of the seventh section, I used stacked fourths and fifths. The harmony is also of perfect fourths.⁹²

This is what I hoped for. The flute's timbre is cool, and I use its middle range to complement the very active plucked instruments, forming a contrast. Turning up later, Liuqin and Zhongruan doubling beautifully let people get excited. Then the modulation up a third of the Clarinet changes the tonality and brings a sense of freshness. The very noticeable freshness immediately opens up a brightness. Still, what I use is a Clarinet, so the waking up process is a slow and gradual one, because the total duration requirement is eight minutes. Within eight minutes, one can only do a sketch embodying a spirit in high concentration, like Ben-shan Zhao's sketch comedy. If I use the sweet tone of oboe, its brighter sound would immediately surpass that of the flute. Since the appearance of the Clarinet's theme entry, I use modulation to turn into tutti. All players playing make the whole forest lively, and the forest wakes up in an instant. Before dawn, changes happen gradually; when the sun comes out, everything wakes up. This is the same with how people live. The sun wakes people up, very passionate. The A and B sections are very peaceful, and the C section is very enthusiastic, but not enough; the Clarinet still needs fuller expression.

After the Clarinet, the land dances. After that, there needs to be another instrument for doubling the Clarinet, but I have not chosen the instrument yet. The polyphony with Guanzi in my imagination is played by Lei Han, a player now transferred to Singapore, or Xiao-zong Hu, a master musician, of Xi-an province. His Guanzi sounds very beautiful. I think it is better to change that part into Sheng, which also has a cool timbre and fits the image of the Earth dancing well. My modulations are actually very clear, from GongDiao to JiaoDiao to YuDiao (tonic to median to sub-median). I know what my music needs even when the sound came out unbalanced. In rehearsal, Guanzi was overwhelming because its player stood up and the cello fell behind the microphone. The passage with the Zheng and Piano should have been so flowing and beautiful, but the piano was in a corner far away and could not be heard. The exchange of the two forms the climax towards the end of the first part of the piece, and makes this image very clearly. These four instruments represent the waking of my entire forest. Originally, I wanted to write a detailed program in Chinese for the music, but later it did not feel right to me. The audience can understand from listening. The first part is the waking, the second a dance filled with lives in the forest, and finally an echo recapitulating the feeling of sunset.

The tempo of the final part in Largo was too fast in rehearsal. It is the climax of the entire piece, and very broad. The most beautiful time of the forest is three o'clock in the afternoon, when the golden sun make the land shine brilliantly, adding touches to the entire image greatly. It is not difficult, to slow the ensemble, to let everyone flow, to bring out every instrument. The final calms start here, in section J, going back slowly, with flowing, long harmonics, recapitulating beauty. This is really

a little tone picture, combining loose and dense rhythms, clashing major seventh chords and stacked fourths and fifths, forming into a musical style of its own. The combining of these two ensembles is wonderful and challenging. They are completely different in timbre. Why was the vibrato of the Erhu so heavy? It should have been less. The section in the meter of eight beats should feel open and relaxed, slowly and lightly; now the bowing is done too heavily. The direction of music I set up is calm. I use this change in which beat to accent in the meter to the fullest, even though it is in eight. Therefore the loudness of other sections also need to change.

This piece of music is completely the thing of Yi people. Therefore, whenever it expresses the brightest moments, I fully take the color of Yi ethnicity, and nationalize it. This image is what I want.

If there is time, I am prepared to make a fuller explanation of the piece and restore its subheadings to let audience understand, because for a small piece of seven or eight minutes like this to speak is not like that of mature works, which allow conductors and ensembles long periods of rehearsals and performances, and of which audience already has an impression. This new work of yours must bring the audience in, and that requires an explanation.

In the conceptualization stage, I thought quite a lot on how to write and to record. I did much homework because I moved my pen. I also found many pictures of forests in Canada and China. Actually forests are the same or similar. I thought about using Canadian folk song materials and adding materials of Chinese Music, but

I later felt that this path does not work; it is too superficial and would just be a kind of folk song medley. Then I realized that Canada is the West; In terms of harmonic color, Western music insists upon or uses more chord changes. My study of the impressionists goes deep, especially with what the French depicts, and I feel they are very suited to be combined with Chinese culture. I feel their vital essence as a bit similar to the XieYi of Chinese music (XieYi is the name of a school or style of Chinese painting which emphasizes a few rapid rhythmic strokes rather than careful delineation). I deliberately chose the folk songs of the Yi people. There are 26 branches within the Yi ethnicity itself, and among the branches there is a great variety in music, speech, and musical idioms. Similarities in a few habits, such as the love for drinking wine, eating meat and climbing mountains, are among them, but the particular specifics are completely different. They differ also in language. I am familiar with the Yi people's music, so I have an accurate grasp of it in my work. I want to explore the path of tone color diversification in this work of mine.

Many players did not pay attention to performance practices. For example the idiomatic performance practice of Zheng playing has many sliding tones (continuous portamento). I marked them in my score, but they did not play them, perhaps because it was a first reading and it was not easy. Some rhythms were not done accurately; players were very nervous. I think it will not matter. Handle this technique of playing well using the sliding tones of Zhongruan, and the audience will know this as something of China upon first hearing, just like the beautiful first impression of the tone of the cello is something of the West. With a good grasp of these performance practices, the music will be touching. We deliberately find them in the melodic methodology of the music. One must consider how to grasp it within eight minutes concisely so that the audience can understand. If it is for eighty minutes, things are different. If the audience cannot understand it, it is also no good.

I never want materials on my atmosphere gathering trips. Mainly, it is humanity, conversations, awareness of insights, and feeling. I am not there to gather stuff from you. This has been a habit of mine for many years, and within this, it gets complicated; it is not as simple as doing music by looking at photos. In a conference in Taiwan many years ago, I emphasized this point, facing many oppositions. I said, to enter into life is a must, a constant, because it is where the awareness is, where composers' souls are uplifted. Without getting this awareness from life, it is very very difficult to compose! It is not working behind close doors. Browsing the internet lets one take in a bit of information, but mainly it is dealing with people, person to person.

I remember vividly one high noon near Doyi River. It was 45 degrees, very hot. Very much heat brings very much passion. In the village, an old comrade took me along to see their canteen, to see how they live at home. At night, their relatives and

villagers were called out, to sing folk songs to me. At that point, my ears were of no use, but my heart was deeply touched by the interaction between people, and all the awareness of insights that I got from my past trips to the region of Sichuan and Yunnan were brought back to mind. This way of living, which takes repeated practice and unsearchable on the computer, is what is the first and foremost. The second is to find the impulse and to find the excitement. In this world, what is hardest to deal with is people, and what is the easiest to deal with is also people. You converse, you chat. Drink a cup of tea, drink local culture. Talk about changes in their life, about their feeling. I listen to their conversation, and in the process I remember many things.

Let me give some examples. Why did Debussy go to that island to write *La Mer*? You can see the sea everywhere, even on photos. But he was different. He lived by the sea, watching it everyday, and in three months he created a masterpiece. Enjoying himself in his farm, Tchaikovsky heard Russian folk songs, and he wrote his Fourth Symphony because he felt how the hardship of Russia lately and the intellectuals' anxious state of mind coupled with his own contradictions. His music has great immortal themes. Without reaching a certain time or age, a composer cannot arrive at such awareness of insights: such a theme must be performed this way because it comes from years of refinement, and the awareness can only come out when it is painted with such themes. Of course, I will mention this idea when I rehearse in Canada.

Technique is only the means. After you have awareness, you can decide what means to use to express. You 94

may use the simplest means. You can use harmonics lightly to express calmness and quietness, little seventh chord to represent sprouting movements gently waking up. Usage of softer Pipa harmonics and more echoes are all your technical means. Techniques need not be complicated to be moving. I think the works of the Shanghai avant-garde use very many techniques, but are not touching.

I want them to go to live lives, to approach common folk, to get close to the living. I hope they can dive into familiar living, and not write behind close doors. The sooner you are aware of this, the less detours you make in life. If you are less aware, that would be the end for you forever. All my life, I have seen how many young composers came to be.

I remember the time when the I led the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra, a music composition student brought a pile of so-called technical stuff to us and our Artistic Committee said: bring us not experimental compositions; bring the most simple and basic things. No, he could not. Later he showed us a score, so I heard, from other students, and we did not take him. He went on into society doing this and that, now a composer for a Chinese Opera company after twenty years has passed. I talked to music students about this. Behind the closed doors of an academy, everyone making these weird moves might seem great. As you head out of the school's doors, there is not career for you. It is very common but nothing can be done about it. Most teachers in the music academic system studied abroad and take the technical path. In society, many projects force you to adapt. Chinese music is now in a relatively complex phase. Officials need markets, of "fast-food culture", of evening parties and of arranging remixes, such as the many shallow and obvious pieces that completely surround the Shanghai World Expo. Those who detach themselves from life while in music academy will find the combination of two paths very difficult.

Good works are from real artists in pursuit. In recent years, I have done things like supporting a group's establishment in Yunnan, or leading communities performances in Shanghai using my connections.

I also spent time on collecting music into books for the good of developing the ethnic and national music of China. I put much energy into organizing the works by my peers such as Sheng-long Ma, Jia-qing Zheng who wrote "Mountain villages have changed appearance", Guan-ren Gu, etc. They are all older than me and the first two of them have passed away. I organized their music into publications. I am happy to do things which I feel to be useful for future generations.

I do work on commissions with the time I have available. I compose for projects meaningful for the society, and not for meaningless party songs. I have my own things to do. Let others do the arranging that I am not suited to do. I am still very fulfilled and busy. Why? I am on my own path. I cannot turn the situation around, but I can manage myself, and remind the colleagues who are good to me and around me.

For young composers, I take them to Yunnan to see and to be aware of life. One cannot predict what China will be in 50 years. Then is the time when we will know how good works should be made, how today's works should be interpreted. We need not worry. Every generation does it on its own. I am not the only one with ideals. Many people have feeling for their own national and ethnic cultural. This does not changed. No need to be anxious.

The situation in the West is similar to ours. They are facing ideological issues too, with many ways for many musics. Good classical music is still persisting on its own way, doing popularization work to youths. I read an article by an American which says that they are also raising money, and also educating the next generation. The progressive path is also taken by some in the West. A representative of what the youths favor is Michael Jackson. It is okay. This is an age of diversity. I see in the rehearsals of this project many Westerners, and many overseas Chinese promoting Chinese Music. Both take the rehearsal very seriously, working hard for culture. I am afraid that this is the real story now. You still do what you should, not what you don't want, and each developes one's own thing. Do not forget that the mainstream culture in the West is very clear. The development of classical music is still doing very well. When Westerners come to us to perform whatever classical music, musicals or pop songs, 95

the standard is always very high. Good quality performances respecting rules of operation and not "fast food culture" are all welcomed by the Chinese people. There are streams of audience here, for classical music and for pop songs; tickets sell well or sell out. This is the situation here now, and I think in the West also. The problems we have here are also there in the West. This is a time of common interests. Therefore, there is no need to worry. People are doing exchanges, big and small. Perhaps this project by BCCMA is doing well and the Canadian or Chinese governments will do another. It is all possible.

Music can not be separated from culture. Culture must have music. Every locality nurtures its own people. What Chinese culture, Chinese composers and performers are familiar with, produced from the deeply rooted growth from the soil, is the music of China. This will not change. The outstanding music of China, in turn, influence its culture. Through the ages, classical poetry and songs, as well as musicians such as Tian-hua Liu and Yan-jun Hua are all influenced by Chinese Culture. Although Tian-hua Liu played the violin and shows formal influence of the West, his works are mainly or almost always based on the Chinese Gong-diao scale. One hears them clearly as music of China despite their Western developments because of the deep Chinese culture in them. A hundred changes in our generation do not separate Chinese Music from its origin because of your language, your culture, what you learn, and what your ears and eyes are exposed to as you grow up.

I hear the piece "Four Gardens" from Canada as a piece with deep Western influence. Chinese composers seldom come out with such a way of writing. It is not strange. I knew not the ethnicity of the composer, but the composer tried to use the music of China to blend into the American cultural influence received as a typical Western-living Chinese-person. The music is Western Music, with sounds and tunes of China also.

People's lives are not apart from the influence of their own culture, and un-separable, un-erasable and un-imitable so. To put this the other way around: because of your deep local cultural basis, the music you come out with has unavoidably the brand of the locale. This brand is a good thing. It means that the planet Earth is ours, forming into this diverse thing. Diversity enriches colors. I therefore do not agree that you must learn something Western in order to have influence on your surroundings. You can refer to, borrow from, learn from, or blend from others, but what is more important is your own culture, to learn it well, to permeate it, and to understand it. I feel this to be the way for you to have your own piece of grounding.

A simple example is comparing me and Guang-ren Gu. I'm a few years younger. After my academic training, which is more influenced by orchestral music, my national or ethnic musical works is quite difference from his. His work is of an earlier

generation, very pleasing, circulating, Chinese branding. Compared to his works, mine are more foreignized, colorful, and fashionable.

Simply, my cultural influence is different from his. I am a bit younger and my personality is different. I am more in touch with and aware of contemporary youths. When I am with him, he looks much more mature. Although our actual ages differ by only ten years, we represent two completely different cultures. He represents an earlier generation and I represent a newer one. That is why I am more active.

There is a gap between our and the next one. There are a few composers now in their mid-30's who know some situations and how to make contact after studying music. We also have the intention of leading and nurturing them. A case in point is Yin Jiang, a graduate student now assigned to Shanghai Chinese Orchestra. There are fewer composers in their 40's in Shanghai. Why? Because of the timing of the Cultural Revolution. A generation of people, who should be most useful now, experienced Chinese economic reform as a chaotic time of being lost, in which various levels of government did not attach importance to them. Because music pedagogy from Cultural Revolution is used ever since, and because of the chaos mentioned, composers of this generation tend to focus on sound effects and techniques, and the purely melodic is harder to hear in their works. I feel Yin Jiang has written relatively few folk songs, and Zhan-hao He, her teacher, has talked to her about that too. Although I commissioned her to compose for Sound of Music 2001, I still try to inspire her and bring her along by talking to her or even giving her lessons.⁹⁶

In terms of new techniques, her usage is extensive and good, and her handling is fresh. Her piece 'A Lao' of Guzhou province is written in a way that we would not write. Our wish for touching, memorable melodies to be passed on is disregarded by her, but the work feels good to me. This is something my eyes see. This is the difference of two generations of composers.

I am not quite familiar with the composers in Beijing. Not many good pieces are passed on. To make a living, some composers changed profession to work on music for advertisements. A good composer of folk music now specializes in advertising music. This matter of value orientation is actually quite controversial. Some composers returning from abroad use their status to work with officials who want the effects of famous people. The government gives out a few tens of millions to bring some people here under the bold overseas banner and does not care whether the music composed is good or not. Among artists and composers there is a debate about this the kind of behavior of the government.

The thing that I am most happy with this project is its provisions of very good conditions, which challenge and yet give a platform to display yourself well. It provides a basis for experimentation, and a quiet space for me to look in detail for problems myself. I deem such a process to be efficient and respectful to composers, and I composed happily. During this year, I spent much time on the project. I was not thinking about forests. First, I live. I become aware, looking at many forests and searching on the internet. As I was deciding this topic, coincidentally people are talking about protecting the planet, and our world expo was promoting ideologies about the Earth belong to everyone, about protecting the forests and the environment.

But my composition is not about environmentalism. What I am expressing is my love for the forests, as my home that I depend my life upon. Invisibly, this results in much effort in looking at pictures of forests, studying and imagining them. I am happy that I have read many books and information about forest. I am happy that I have gotten to know so much about forest through reading.

Through their performance, the performers are getting into a process to understand me and be familiar with me. I think the sense of familiarity will be more so when I arrive there; after the exchanges of ideas, the composition may turn out to be completely different than what it is now. What it is now it not yet in the shape I want. This sense of achievement through collective effort is the most happy thing for me as a composer.

My awareness of the delight of this process bring me insights of the achievement of this process and the meaning of this project. I believe after the final workshop, my composition is ready for the university concert hall with 300 hundred people.

I plan listen carefully to every work in concert. Actually I know a bit about each of the composers already. This is good and meaningful, and an opportunity hard to come by, as their existing works are no longer novel to me. I have heard and am familiar with the Jian-ping Tang's "Hou Tu". His new work is actually his practice and his thinking about how to combine China and the West musically. I have also know the style of Professor Wang. The two of them have for a long time in teaching their unique point of view. I walk my path with my own thinking. When we meet each other, our discussions will do some good to the communication between China and the West.

As far as I know, this is the first time in which two ensembles engage in dialogues as equals. Western Orchestra has done concertos with Chinese instrumental solo, and Chinese Orchestra has done it with piano or violin, such as in a version of the Butterfly Lovers, but this project is a first equal dialogue of the two in the true sense of equal.

I have not seen it as far as I remember. It must be very rare. Nobody is doing it because it is very hard to put together Chinese Orchestra and Western Orchestra at a high enough level. The two are not willing to do it. Composers have no chance for write for that. We have mixed groups before in the army, which was actually Chinese Orchestra. In the 50's and 60's the mix was done with Western Orchestra as basis with first and second violin, and a few major Chinese instruments as additional color. But in the late 60's, that was no more. Chinese 97

color was used a lot as accompaniment. Now as main instruments, Pipa and Erhu are all doing accompaniment, forming into this systemic organization. Good blending is important to composers. The day of the workshop will be important. Composers will be very concerned with the effects getting achieved or not, and how to make things happen by playing and discussing are very important because the concert situation can only be corrected through the discussion. For composers, this is the point of experimentation, a new experience, a basis for future compositions.

I now have that basis too. I now think I should have asked if the project's ensemble has a treble Sheng. I hope there is. I am familiar with the sound. It has a good timbre and the instrument has no problem with semitones. To blend sounds, use fewer individualistic instruments. Sanxian and Guanzi are hard to blend with others. My orchestral work for Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra works well with its very good Guanzi section. I can double the Guanzi with sound of Suona and the section of Sheng to deemphasize the sound of the Guanzi. This also has to do with the control and the level of the Guanzi players.

If I put Guanzi with the Stings, the Guanzi will stick out immediately. This is the organization of accompaniment. If Erhu can be organized well it can support the Violins. Guanzi cannot do that. I guarantee it will emerge in the foreground if you write a sustaining note for it. The level of the Guanzi player also a factor.

I feel no problem with the ensemble. It is what I want and imagine. I am familiar with these instruments. If you bring in an English Horn or Oboe, that would be the end because you need to twist your mind. The very European pastoral sound may need dilution by doubling with other instruments. The Clarinet has a cool timbre and transitioning to Sheng is easier because both have are single reed instruments. So I want to discuss rewriting four parts with doubling as enrichment inside. Email now is quick. I can send the change the day I finish writing, on the 20th or 21st. Then a minute of the old version can be replaced in rehearsal. Doing it is convenient now. This is what I find most rewarding here.

The systematization of Chinese Music, especially for some modern composers from the beginning of their training, has to do with the influence of Russia. You see our deeply rooted chord structures, triadic chords, and stacking intervals are all stereotypical things in Western music, unchangeable even if you want to because it is difficult to diverge even a little bit from your early trainings.

Things should have been different in the 1930's, a time when China had no basis for music of its own, when the music of China used linear material as its subject. No ensemble at the time was qualified to form this rich orchestral sound. Symphonic music in China was born in the 30's. The earliest symphonic ensemble in Shanghai was Shanghai Construction Department's ensemble. Founded in the 30's, it was the precursor of Shanghai Symphony Orchestra. The pedagogy system of music

academies was also mainly influenced by Russia, which should have had more Western influences. Contemporarily, Dun Tan now has discourse power in the West, perhaps because the improving economic conditions of China let the things going out to begin their influence in the West, but in general, China's music was more influenced by the West. Composers back then still had a drive to reform. No individual could have decided that; it was a trend, of the world's development, which can be more deeply analyzed by philosophers and sociologists than us. Nothing could be done about that, not a bit. So many things rushed into China. Orchestral music was better outside, supported by a very mature system of social institutions.

Now in China's provinces, due to a partial understanding of so-called marketization, including that of many Central Leaders, many ensembles developed from then till now are cancelled and dumped into the society. For a government not to nurture what it can nurture is a sad phenomenon. The educational system we had originally was able to produce talents. Back then, there were many good musicians like Shi-kun Liu. I feel the environment of middle schools attached to music conservatories were good when we were little. The state was able to nurture talents.

It was so quiet and no one would disturb you. In the old days, the basis of entering the conservatory was 98

artistic talent, now it is money; good kids from poor families cannot enter. What a pity. Moreover, teachers now look to the money. Teaching used to be a glorious, honorable and pure profession. Back then, our teachers would stand at the door to see if you are not practicing. Now, teachers care not about you, just about their own teachings. Students are merely a type of commodity. This a complete change of essence. Can't do a thing. The case of someone accusing the Central Conservatory of Music of bribery and accepting bad students while rejecting good ones is known all over the country. The West and Hong Kong, who are also market economies, are relatively better off. What is different in Hong Kong is that the performance arts circle in Hong Kong cannot enter through examination into other universities. This is what I know. However, in mainland China, tuition fee is high and the teachers' Saturdays are prime time for making money. Now is a confusing phase for this nation; this will take a long time.

I myself too have personal experience. I came out of a middle school attached to music conservatory. There were student concerts every week or half-month, where teachers sitting down there seriously talked to you. Professionally, there was a rigorous program for each student: what to study in the morning, what to study in the afternoon. You students not doing your practice were asking for trouble and talks from the teachers. Every week, we wrote journals, of problems entered during the week, for the class teacher's critique. You entered the school as treasures and little apexes, unlike current students entering through the filter which says students with rich parents can enter whether you like it or not. The essence is different. After you entered, of course you were loved and protected. Teaching programs and teachers systems chose the best students to participate in the concert at the end of each school term.

For each school term, you composed three to four pieces, two of Northern style, and two of Southern style. You knew how often to practice etudes. Every week, there was a follow-up lesson, or even a second one in 3 days to check up on you. It was very strict. You fell behind, and the subject teacher stared at and criticized you unbearably. The pressure was high. Thus we woke up early to practices instruments. In the morning, sound filled practice rooms completely. Visit a conservatory now, and not much sound is there, especially in the weekends. During our time, we had to fight for a room to practice piano.

This is a speciality of our national music because ethnic music formed many factions. For example, there are nine such schools of styles for Guzheng: from the provinces of Zhejiang, Shandong, Henan, etc. For Dizi, there is the divisions of Southern faction and Northern faction. The Northern style is represented by Song-ting Zhao and Chun-ling Lu; he Southern style's representatives are Zi-cun Feng and Guan-yue Liu. They have many solo works. Our teacher based their

teachings on these works, to make sure both the Southern and the Northern progressed in the student hand-in-hand, and to decide how much of each could the student grasp when the student graduated. The representative of Erhu is Tian-hua Liu, divided into Modern Erhu and Traditional Erhu. Liu's work is fairly traditionally based; at that time his modern works just appeared, such as SanMenXia(Gorge of Three Gateways) and ChuangXiangQu(Inventions).

We first learned strictly traditional techniques. There was a strict plan for learning a few years of Erhu music such as the piece LiangXiao(Beautiful Night). Our teacher at the time was Yi Wang, a specialist of Erhu who wrote the piece FengZiGe(Wind's Song). We also learned from Xiu-tang Lu. They are all master musicians, very serious about what they teach. Now teachers are busy with gathering students to make money.

I remember that there were no ensemble lessons in junior high. In senior high school, ensemble lessons took place on Fridays, according to the teaching plan of the school. At the time, ensemble lessons were not very strict. I guess it was more so in the university. We played sometimes tutti and sometimes in parts in the ensemble lessons, but the students were more obedient. Of course there are ensemble lessons nowadays. I know Shanghai Conservatory of Music is doing well on that. Jian-ping Tang and they are doing it too, but I feel that overall it is not as vigorous and systematic as those in the old days. To not let good students in a very terrible thing. You cannot do with material good enough only for making wooden house as you can do with steel. Nowadays many 99

pieces of steel are discarded.

We began basic musicianship lessons at in junior high school. That were very strict. The content started with tonic, subdominant and dominant chord. It was very clear. Then, it taught us how to sing Western classics and how to arrange Chinese folk songs. It all start here. This foundation was build very solid.

The system in middle school attached to conservatory is different from that at the university level. Composition as a speciality happened at that level. In middle school, only some students had that.

We had two folk songs lessons per week, taught by specialist of the field. Also twice per week, the basic musicianship lessons systematically began with rigorous aural training, from dictation of notes to recognizing intervals. After major and minors intervals and fourths and fifths are clearly learned, chords were introduced. After chords on the first, fourth and fifth degrees were taught, minor and seventh chords were, very precisely. I was a bright student who got things the first time. Every week, we had eight hours of aural dictation of three to five pieces to do, which really put us to test.

I then studied for 3 years in the conservatory of music. The conservatory training involved two years of harmony, the second of which taught us instrumentation, polyphony, and then forms. The arrangement of the courses nowadays are disorderly. Why? Simple. They think traditional things are not suited to avant-garde way of composing. There are now many pedagogies that pay attention to combinations. I guess Jian-ping Tang and Ning Wang are more familiar to these than I am.

There are now two kinds of music conservatories in China. History of Western Music is a compulsory subject. You go to museums of Western Art's specific documents to study the History of Western Music. The History of Chinese Music has its teachers. This is amount of basis and coverage of your knowledge.

The teachers who taught us in the old day were strict and rigorous. From today's perspective, they are all personalities at the national treasure level, because they spent their entire lives in this domain. Ming-zhi Chen taught me polyphony. Er-jing Deng taught me the major courses and he was the head of department. He took an entire year to analyze a theme by Robert Schumann, deeply impressing you on how to use and analyze themes and letting you acquire the ability to pick up good ones after you have the exercise of analyzing so many. Thanks to him, I can analyze my own work now, how my themes begins with which notes and then how transform them into harmony. Jin-yin Xu taught me formal structures, how music contrasts, what the focus of a piece of music is. It was all vigorous training that today's conservatories lack. Young teachers now cannot even calm themselves down.

During bitterest three years of natural disaster in 1958-61, the state fed us. Not now. Now the common folks feed themselves. The admission system lets in those with money instead of talents. Everybody knows. The amounts being stuffed go into the hundreds of thousands. This is very sad. This problem cannot be solved by music and culture alone; it has to do with the greater environment. I see it through and through very early as an old worker of music, but you are powerless against it.

We can only do what oneself deems to be good for the way of music's development. Given the opportunity, I exercise my abilities, energy and my level of thinking to the fullest. Comparing the mutual influences in music between China and the west, strictly speaking, the West has more influence actually. A good thing is the establishment of an ensemble, which I will talk to them about when I get there because I am more familiar with the music of Yunnan province. Among the developments is the setting up of an ensemble of Hulusi (cucurbit flute). I am sure when the charming sound of Hulusi is brought to the west, Westerns would like it.

From the documents I received from the project, I see the promotion of Chinese music as influential among Westerners and very meaningful, but definitely for a minority and not majority: more Overseas Chinese and those Westerners who likes Chinese Music. This kind of work is very hard work. Its impact on the Western culture is minimal, as the rise of China, Beijing Olympics and Shanghai Expo gradually influences Western culture, bringing foreign students to study in China, some of whom are students of Chinese Music. I still feel the influence 100

of Western culture or the drive to make Chinese music step forward, consciously or unconsciously.

I think we should do more projects for exchanges. The government is doing so too, such as our Symphony Orchestra and Chinese Orchestra going abroad last year. I had done this myself and led the ensemble abroad in 1987. In the future, interested parties can do more real exchanges of East and West cultures. This is just an activity of exchange-integration and a cultural point of view.

In more of such exchanges, the format can be varied, but the premises must be for mutual benefits. That is because the Mainstream West does not understand Chinese culture, and what they can understand is only partial. You see Seiji Ozawa and Zubin Mehta to China, but they do big projects that only big financial groups and bosses can see, that common folks cannot enjoy. Do more among the people, in exchange and in private, and the truly harmonious between each other can be. Because of exchanges, the harmonious fears no contradiction of both sides. Only after exchanges can togetherness be. Through exchanges, the impact afterwards will be great.

On the other hand, as we understand Western culture more, we know how we appear in the eye of the West. This is how musical materials form. This awareness of insights is utterly not the same as watching evening variety shows. It is completely different. Memory is like the melting of ice and snow. Melting more deeply is like smearing. It must be so. We are now just two pieces of ice together, slowly melting a bit. The melting is not coming out quite right; a bit of impurities gets out and gets taken out. Then, more melting. After true melting, the resulting music and awareness will lead those who are interested and who are professional, because of a new in musical language and concepts. My "Colorful Forest" far surpasses the big piece that I working on now. Why? The latter has a musical language so familiar to me that I just knew how to make its structure, which took me three days, and I started writing it. But not "Colorful Forest". It is no use to talk to foreigners about musical syllables; cello saying Dong-Da does not work; it takes blending, and brain power. Writing big pieces takes less time. Eighty minutes for eighty people requires a different way to write. A big symphonic passage is actually easier to write than this. Such is the effect of cultural exchange on me; we chat, and I think about what to say, to push you to digest it. After I completed "Colorful Forest" for the first time, I make corrections to it every few months. I did so yesterday. I looked at it in the afternoon and listened to it at night. That was it.

I feel that exchanges of non-governmental common people in the future can think more broadly. The economic condition in the mainland is better. The exchanges used to be unequal. When I was in leadership of the ensemble, all the expense depended on others. Nowadays, this problem is less. Given this condition, through this project, I will propose more actively. The musical ensemble has all instruments from the Han ethnicity. I must go deeper than usual because I spent years on this level traveling many countries and lands. I will bring what I feel to be good to Canada, if they want it. For example, I helped an ensemble of forty musicians of Yi ethnicity to perform towards the end of 2010 in Taipei, also Sino sphere, and they went happily. I also arranged for two sister playing Hulusi to perform there with ensemble accompaniment. This is cultural exchange. People in Yunnan did not understand this. They thought of playing locally as really great. Now they go not only to Shanghai but also overseas, on bigger stages. Now I do these things in combination. This instrument sounds so beautiful, very moving. It can let Canada know the great variety of Chinese culture is like many flowers, not only magnolia and peony, but also cherry blossom and more. This way, I think others will have more feeling towards and better understand China. Such is the effect of cultural exchange. I believe that more co-operation, exchanges and interminglings in the future definitely will better display China's culture in the vast world of overseas!101