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THE INTEGRATION OF CHINESE OPERA TRADITIONS INTO NEW MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS

by

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Thesis

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Volume I: Exegesis

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ABSTRACT

Almost fifty years ago Chinese composer Chou Wen-chung proposed a musical “re-merger” of East and West. For many Chinese composers of today a sense of historical continuity and an awareness of inherited musical traditions are important contributor to cultural identity, and a basis on which to build the future. The generation that emerged after the Cultural Revolution found new freedoms, and has become, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, a significant presence on the international musical stage, as the paradigm shifts away from being European-centered, to a culture belonging to the “global village”.

As with many other Chinese composers of my generation, the creation of new compositions is both a personal expression and a manifestation of cultural roots. Techniques of “integration” and “translation” of musical elements derived from traditional Chinese music and music-theatre are a part of my musical practice. The use of traditional Chinese instruments, often in combination with Western instruments, is a no longer a novelty.

The written exegesis examines some of the characteristic elements of xìqǜ (戏曲) (the generic term for all provincial Chinese operas), including dǎ (打) (percussion - an enlarged interpretation of dà, as found in chuānjù gāoqiāng (川剧高腔) Sichuan gāoqiān opera), bānqiāng (板腔) (The musical style that characterizes Chinese xìqǜ), and niànbaí (念 白) (recitation and dialogue), as well as the kuàibǎnshū (快板书) (storytelling with percussion) of qūyì (曲 艺) (a term to use to include all folk genres), and shāngē (山 歌) (mountain song). The techniques employed in integrating and translating these elements into original compositions are then analyzed.

In the second volume of the thesis the scores of five compositions are presented, four of the five works are set in Chinese, exploring the dramatic aspects of language, and may be considered music-theatre, one being an opera scene intended for stage production.
Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I acknowledge my debt of gratitude to my principal supervisor Jack Body for his patient guidance and unstinting encouragement in all aspects of my study, including the composition of my works, the arranging of performances, and the writing of this thesis, particularly for proper English usage. His insights and understanding of the relationship between Western and Asian musical traditions have been a profound influence on my own musical thinking.

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Completing my composition portfolio and thesis has been a long journey which would have been an impossible undertaking without the significant financial assistance of a Victoria University of Wellington Postgraduate Scholarship for PhD study, and a Top Achiever Doctoral Scholarship from the New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission. I also had great help from the NZ School of Music to undertake research in Australia and China and the final six months of the writing of this thesis was assisted by a Doctoral Completion grant.

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**Xià Sichuān (下四川) Going Down to Sichuan Province**

The Song Company (Sydney), artistic director Roland Peelman
2010 tour of China: Hangzhou, Suzhou, and Beijing
2011 tour of Australia: Brisbane, Canberra, Wollongong, Sydney, Newcastle and Melbourne

Anna Fraser, soprano
Nicole Thomson, soprano
Lanneke Wallace-Wells, mezzo-soprano
Richard Blank, tenor
Mark Donnelly, baritone
Clive Birch, bass

**Wǎngē (挽歌) Elegy**

Vita Brevis Concert
St Mary of Angels Church, Wellington
November 26, 2005
Yono Soekarno, gender
Wang Xingxing, zhēng
Robert Easting, voice
Shen Nalin, voice

also
Hunter Council Chamber, Victoria University of Wellington
April 14, 2009

Budi Putra, gender
Wang Xingxing, zhēng
Jack Body, voice
Shen Nalin, voice

Wang

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November 1-4, 2009
The Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing
November 1, 2009, CCOM Recital Hall

Horomona Horo, nguru, kōauau kōiwi, tumutumu, pūkāea and haka
Cui Yanlin, bonang
Liu Jing, zhēng
Zhang Yuwen, saron
Huang Yuting, shēng
Chen Shubo, tenor
Wei Yunxi, soprano
Wang Yang, mezzo-soprano
Wang Yunpeng, baritone
Shen Nalin, conductor

Jiǔ Dé Sòng (酒德颂) Hymn to the Virtue of Wine
Zuì (醉) Drunkenness

Performances in the Project Liù Yīngshì (六隐士) Six Hermits
Artistic director, Roland Peelman
The Song Company and the Chinese Music Virtuosi
October 26, 2002, Sydney Conservatorium of Music
October 27, 2002, Riverside Theatres, Parramatta
October 30, 2002, St Paul’s Cathedral, Melbourne
November 2, 2006, Loke Yew Hall, University of Hong Kong

Clive Birch, bass
Richard Blank, tenor
Mark Donnelly, baritone
Ruth Kilpatrick, soprano
Nicole Thomson, soprano
Sze-wang Loo, húqín
Hiu-hung Ng, zhēng
Lok-ting Wong, shēng
Shen Nalin, vocal (Australia only)
Roland Peelman, conductor

Chūyè (初夜) Scene of the First Night

Asia Pacific Festival Production, 2007
Te Whaea, National School of Dance and Drama, Wellington
February 12 and 14, 2007

Sara Brodie, director
Gao Ping, conductor
Andrew Brettell, audio-visual designer
Tamsin Lakeman, lighting designer
Judy Huo, costume designer
Laurence Walls, producer

Linden Loader, mezzo-soprano
Wang Xingxing, soprano
James Meng, tenor
Daniel Shen, boy soprano

Contemporary Music Ensemble Korea:

Yi Ji-young, gayageum
Kim Woong-seung, daegeum
Park Chi-wan, piri
Lee Hyang-hee, saenghwang
Kim Woo-jae, guitar
Kim Woong-sik, Korean percussion
Rhee Kyu-bong, Western percussion
Lim Myoung-jin, clarinet
Park Jeung-min, violoncello
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11 CDs & DVD

Audio (I)

1. Xià Sìchuān (下四川) Going Down to Sichuan Province /6’22”
(The recording was made for the Song Company by Matthew McGuigan and Jacob Craig at the Hunter Baillie Church Hall, Sydney, August 2010)
   a. Original Shāngē (山 歌) of Going to Sichuan Province by Li Guizhou /2’50”
      (Studio recording by Roy Carr, 1998)

2. Wǎngē (輈 歌) Elegy /8’42”
(Live recording by Roy Carr, November 2005, Church of St Mary of Angels, Wellington)

3. Wang /16’05”
(Live recording by the Musicology Department of the Central Conservatory of Music, November 2009)

4. Jiǔ Dé Sòng (酒德順) Hymn to the Virtue of Wine /13’38” (including recitation)
   a. Zuì (醉) Drunkenness /2’10” (including recitation)
      (Live recording was from Sydney Conservatorium, October 2002. Produced by Malcolm Batty for ABC Classic FMABC Radio National, Australia)

Audio (II)

5. Chūyè (初 夜) Scene of the First Night (9 individual tracks) /42’56”
(Live recording at Te Whaea, National Dance and Drama Centre by Roy Carr, February 2007)
Video

1. *Wăngê* (輦 歌) **Elegy** /8’42”
   (Domestic recording by Brian Shen, in Hunter Council Chamber VUW, April 2009)

2. *Wang* /16’05”
   (Live recording by the Musicology Department of the Central Conservatory of Music, November 2009)

3. *Chūyè* (初 夜) **Scene of the First Night** /42’56”
   (Live recording at Te Whaea, National Dance and Drama Centre by Paul Wolfram, February 2007)