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THE INTEGRATION OF CHINESE OPERA TRADITIONS INTO NEW MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS

by

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Thesis

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in Composition*

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 *xìqǔ* (戏曲) (the generic term for all provincial Chinese operas), including *dǎ* (打) (percussion - an enlarged interpretation of *dǎ*, as found in *chuānjù gāoqiāng* (川剧高腔) Sichuan *gāoqiān* opera), *bǎnqiāng* (板腔) (The musical style that characterizes Chinese *xìqǔ*), and *niànbái* (念白) (recitation and dialogue), as well as the *kuàibǎnshū* (快板书) (storytelling with percussion) of *qǔyì* (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.

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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
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 April 14, 2009

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World Music Days, International Symposium and Festival Dialogue in Music
 November 1- 4, 2009
 The Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing
 November 1, 2009, CCOM Recital Hall

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 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 Yǐngshì (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
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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* (輓歌) *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* (酒德颂) *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 FM/ABC 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. ***Wǎngē*** (輓 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)