Copyright, imitating and transplanting: three stages in the development of new music in China

Ching Chih LIU

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Introduction: Chinese Music and New Music

During the period from the late 1970s to the late 1980s, a “new tide” in music emerged on the Mainland China — the term “new tide” refers to certain composers of the younger generation who employed “new” approaches and techniques in compositions. As a result, “new” styles began to take shape. This “new” musical tide fascinated the western world of music, composers, critics and musicologists in Europe, the United States, Australia and New Zealand applauded the “new tide” compositions. After all these years, they thought, Chinese composers had begun to catch up with the modern world, i.e. the western world.

The term “New Music” used in the sub-title of this article and the term “New Tide” used in the beginning paragraph require qualifications. The term “new music” that I used in my research during the past two decades denotes that music composed by Chinese composers in the twentieth century in the European style with the following caveats:

(i) In Chinese music, the manner of expression has been distinctly different from that of European music. In the long history of musical culture in China, music was not composed in the same manner as in Europe.

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However, Chinese composers trained in Japan, the United States and Europe started early in the twentieth century to “compose” music in the European style, and this was indeed a fundamentally NEW approach towards music in China.

(ii) Textually Chinese music is full of Chinese flavours and is different from the contrapuntal and harmonic texture, the atonal and tonal series writing of European music. Although some Chinese elements can be found in new music, such as rhythmic patterns, intervals, melodic shapes, instrumental colours, etc., the fundamental techniques and concept of expressions of Chinese music are quite different from that of European music. For example, the fundamental writing techniques of European music were mainly developed to cater to the requirements of church services, i.e. voices which formulate horizontal (contrapuntal) as well as vertical (harmonic) textures, whereas Chinese music is essentially monophonic in nature. If we listen to a piece of choral work composed by a Chinese composer in the European style, for example, *the Yellow River Cantata* 黃河大合唱 by Xian Xinghai 冼星海 (1905-1945) or the *Eternal Lament* 長恨歌 by Huang Zi 黃自 (1904-1938), we will immediately find a NEW flavour in these works, as there are European harmonic and contrapuntal textures, and different forms of expression.

(iii) Structurally, new music in China is strikingly different when compared with “traditional” Chinese music, viz. scholar’s music 文人音樂, religious music, court music, folk music and other types of traditional music such as regional *Xiqu* 地方戲曲. Western-trained Chinese composers therefore compose, in structural term, a new genre: new music, such as art songs with piano accompaniment, choral works, chamber music, symphonies, symphonic poems, etc. These compositions are invariably in ternary, rondo, sonata-allegro and sonata forms and they are fundamentally new to Chinese ears, and they are in fact an additional category of Chinese music.[1]

As regards the term “new tide,” musicologists on the Mainland China interpret it as (i) a “new movement” which is a neutral term on the development at that time; (ii) the extremely important characteristic of the “new tide” music is a relative new compositional technique; and (iii) the “new tide” music is a reflection of the very fact that new music in modern China and the modern world for the first time has made a break-through in the rigid restriction of compositions with a common nature. It further reflects the modern emphasis on individualism, echoing Hegel’s famous diction: “Everyone is an entity, he is a world in himself”.

Before I proceed with my deliberations on “copying, imitating, and transplanting”, I need to clarify the definition of “Chinese music” and the relationship between “Chinese music” and “new music”.

What do the terms Chinese national music and Chinese traditional music mean? People, usually western-trained musicians and musicologists, prefer to call “new music” as “Chinese music” and “Chinese music” as “Chinese traditional music.” It is obvious that new music does not represent the whole of Chinese music and that Chinese music covers all traditional and modern and contemporary musical modes. A few paragraphs from my article may help clarify the distinctions.

The so-called “Chinese national style” embodies the styles of all types of music which were formulated during the long history of Chinese civilization, including music assimilated from other nationalities and cultures. If we accept such an interpretation, then the national styles of Chinese music will vary considerably: firstly, due to the lengthy history of China, a piece of music of the Tang Dynasty would be differently interpreted when it was performed in the Qing Dynasty; secondly, China is a vast country and there are multiple ethnic groups where the styles of folk songs vary from one place to another; and thirdly, there are so many

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kinds of religious music and scholar’s music, with styles different from one another.

In addition, the traditional artistic concept has also strongly influenced the styles of musical compositions. *Yue ji* 樂記 has this to say: “Sound arises from a man’s heart” 凡音起，由人心生也 and “it originates from their feelings being aroused” 其本在人心之感於物也. It has been said that the essence of Chinese music lies in the hidden meaning whereas the essence of European music lies in the sound and form. Therefore Chinese music possesses something which European music does not possess, such as “the process of tone containing the suprasegmental elements” 音腔，but it also possesses similar characteristics that feature European music, such as programmatic music of Romanticism and Impressionism.

Thus, “Chinese music” refers to music in existence over the past several thousands of years on the land of the Middle Kingdom. It can be part of China’s own musical culture or music from other cultures but integrated into the Chinese musical tradition. “Traditional Chinese music” means music in the past, such as *qin* 琴 music in ancient China. However, there has been development in *qin* music and we have contemporary techniques and styles for *qin* music which should also be regarded as Chinese music, and which should not be called “traditional Chinese music.” Furthermore, Chinese music embraces quite a number of musical idioms from the different minorities — the various ethnic musics within China.

The following diagram may help clarify the relationship of the various terms:

**Chinese traditional music**
Music between the Xia Dynasty (ca 27th-16th Centuries BC) and the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)

**Folk music**
Folk music of all (ethnic) nationalities in China from the Xia Dynasty to present

**Modern and contemporary Chinese music, from the Xia Dynasty to present**
(i) the continuation of Chinese “traditional” music after the Qing Dynasty;
(ii) folk music in China; and
(iii) new music: Europeanised Chinese music, from 1885 to
present — an additional category of Chinese music from the late nineteenth century, a new genre transplanting European musical forms which have been inappropriately regarded as the main stream of Chinese music by certain Chinese during the twentieth century, and which have indeed affected other categories of Chinese music.

In China as well as in Taiwan, composers and musicologists frequently maintain that Chinese composers should “compose music with a distinct Chinese national style” 創作富於中國民族風格的音樂.

What is the “Chinese national style”? As discussed in the foregoing paragraphs, there are so many different kinds of music and therefore the styles are inevitably diversified. In China, there is not just one national style, but a variety of national styles.

To preserve a national style in musical compositions has never been an issue to European composers. To them, an individualistic style or a style of individualism, which is what we call “originality,” is far more important to artistic creativeness. A composition with no original qualities means a piece of music without character. The success of Mozart is due to Mozart’s originality and his distinct personal style, and similarly Beethoven has been regarded as the hero of composers, “the composer who liberated music” 音樂的解放者 and who made music a medium of free expression of human feelings. To Europeans, it is not important whether or not Mozart’s music is full of the Austrian national style or whether or not Beethoven’s compositions are distinctly German or Flemish. What is really important is that Mozart is Mozart, and Beethoven is Beethoven.

Then why are Chinese composers and musicologists so concerned with their own national styles? Perhaps it is because of the fact that from the beginning of this century, some western-trained Chinese musicians cast away completely Chinese music and copied, imitated and transplanted European musical forms and languages, viz. German Lieder and compositions in ternary and rondo forms, as represented by Li Shutong 李叔同 (1880-1942), Huang Zi and the like. After half a century’s experiments, composers found out that there was a need for a distinct Chinese character. It might also have something to do with the humiliations China has
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experienced since the Opium War in 1840.[6]

I hope I have by now clarified the interpretations of the following terminology:

(i) “New music” means “westernised Chinese music,” which does not represent “Chinese music” as a whole.[7]

(ii) “Chinese music” covers traditional Chinese music, modern and contemporary Chinese music and new music in China (vide Annex I—The Chart).[8]

(iii) There is a variety of national styles in Chinese music. 如果上述解释合适，我就可以继续探讨新音乐在华的发展，可以大致分为三个阶段——copying, imitating and transplanting, from the turn of the twentieth century to the 1990s.

**Copying: The Initial Stage of New Music**

The “copying” period began early in the 1900s when China suffered a number of humiliations and military defeats, as well as the abolishment of the civil examinations in 1905, which were some of the factors behind China setting up new types of schools modeled on the Western and Japanese education systems. The curricula included subjects like mathematics, physics, languages, etc. There were also singing classes for pupils to have some knowledge of music. This meant that schools needed music teachers as well as teaching materials such as songs suitable for children and instruments and facilities for music classes. Music had never been part of the formal education in the education system of China, until the turn of the century. With such a background, music teachers returned from Japan, such as Zeng


Zhimin 曾志忞 (1879-1929), Shen Xingong 沈心工 (1869-1947) and Li Shutong, adapted the following three ways of producing songs for school children:

(i) setting existing Chinese words to foreign melodies;
(ii) writing lyrics to foreign melodies; and
(iii) composing both the words and the melodies.

There was a genuine need for this kind of instant production of teaching materials for music classes and it seemed that school songs were very well received by the children. These school songs, which later took the form of anti-Japanese songs during the years of 1937 to 1945 and revolutionary mass songs 革命群眾歌曲 during the period from 1946 to 1966, were extremely effective in achieving military and political ends.

The three school song writers brought into China from Japan European songs in binary or ternary forms which were fully utilised by them in their school songs in the three variants described above.

As far as the musical forms and styles are concerned, the three school song writers copied from the European songs in their school songs, and the copying techniques were quite primitive, and with no piano accompaniment. Zeng Zhimin's song The Sea Battle 海戰 and Shen Xingong's The Yellow River 黃河 are two early examples of copying from European song forms and style. Li Shutong’s three-part song The Spring Outing 春遊 is another example, albeit a more advanced one technically, resembling the Lutheran hymn style. From the point of harmony and phrasing, Li Shutong was a much more skillful copier as evidenced by his Spring Outing, Early Autumn 早秋, and Farewell 留別. Of Li’s 98 songs included in A Collection of Li Shutong’s Songs compiled by Qian Renkang 錢仁康, the melodies in the majority of them derive from the folk songs of the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and other European countries, and Lutheran hymns, and operas, symphonies, violin and piano concerto by European composers, such as Vincenzo Bellini’s Norma, Dvorak’s New World Symphony, Carl Maria Ernst von Weber’s Der Freischutz, Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s Pathetique.

Symphony, Ludwig van Beethoven’s *Pianoforte Sonata in e Minor* (Op, 90), Violin *Concerto* (Op, 61) and Choral Symphony, and Jean Sibelius’ *symphonic poem Finlandia*.

For example, the melody of Li’s song entitled *Begging for Survival* 乞命 is copied from the second theme of the first movement of Beethoven’s Violin Concerto (Musical example 1).

Musical Example 1: Li Shutong’s *Begging for Survival*

And the melody of Li’s *The Great China* 大中華 from Bellini’s *Opera Norma* (Musical example 2).

The school songs set a convenient example for the mass singing movement during the anti-Japanese War 1937 to 1945 and the mass revolutionary songs launched by the Chinese Community Party during the anti-Japanese War and after the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 until 1966. Strictly speaking, a large number of these songs were in fact the mass reproduction of school songs.

相生相養, 建五千餘歲! 

Mucostoso ^ ^ ^

Musical Example 2: Li Shutong's The Great China
The copying period stretched from the turn of the century to 1919, initially for the need of education. Songs for resisting the Japanese invasion during 1937 to 1945 and for the Chinese Community Party’s power seizing during 1945 to 1949 are also products of the copying device, because it was easy, economic, practical and effective.

**The Imitating Period**

Zhao Yuanren 趙元任 (1892-1982), a younger contemporary of the three school song writers mentioned above, was a gifted song writer who began writing a Chinese-type of the "art song," largely modeled on Franz Schubert’s Lieder. In 1927, he published *A Collection of Songs of New Poetry* 新詩歌集 which included 14 songs he wrote between 1922 and 1927, with detailed “Notes for Songs” and a preface in which he explored the relationship between “Chanting and Singing,” “Poetry and Songs” and “Chinese Music and European Music,” and analyses of the songs included in this collection. He employed a whole set of the compositional techniques of the early European romantic style, and the four-part choral work entitled *Sea Rhyme* 海韻 serves as a good example in imitation.

The *Sea Rhyme*, for four-part mixed voices, written in 1927, was the only choral work of Zhao’s vocal compositions. It derives from a ballad by Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (1895-1931), a famous poet of that time. Its beginning is as follows:

**The chorus:**

*My girl, my lonely girl.*

**The narrator:**

*Why are you wandering about along the evening seashore? My girl, go home, my girl!*

**The girl:**

*Ah, no,
Go home, I will not,
I love the evening breeze.*

**The chorus:**

*On the beach,
In the evening light,
There is a girl with her loosened hair
wandering, wandering.*[144] (Musical example 3 [153])
Musical Example 3: Zhao Yuanren’s *Sea Rhyme* (Plate 1)
Musical Example 3: Zhao Yuanren’s *Sea Rhyme* (Plate 2)
The poet goes on describing the girl’s hesitation, and her singing with the sea’s accompaniment. Despite the repeated advice urging her to go home, the girl ignores the advice and is finally swallowed by the stormy sea.

In this song, there are three characters: the roles of the girl, the sea and the narrator — the soprano, the piano accompaniment and the chorus, respectively. The piano accompaniment uses broken chords, arpeggios and tremolos to describe the rough and stormy sea. The chorus acts as the narrator from the beginning to the end, giving a full account of the story.

There are five stanzas in the poem and so the melody is also divided into five sections, the structures of these sections are similar to Schubert’s *Erlking*. The five sections of the *Sea Rhyme* are as follows: (i) the dialogue between the chorus (the narrator), and the soprano (the girl); (ii) the girl keeps on singing, ignoring the narrator’s advice; (iii) the girl enjoys dancing, ignoring the narrator’s advice; (iv) the girl keeps on walking and dancing along the stormy seashore; and (v) after the lengthy piano interlude, the girl vanishes — however, in the piano accompaniment there are reoccurrences of the codettas of the previous four sections.

In the *Erlking*, there are four “characters,” viz. the father, the son, the *Erlking* and the narrator, all sung by the baritone. The five sections are: (i) the narrator’s solo singing, with the piano accompaniment imitating the effect of the galloping and strong winds; (ii) the trilogue between the father, the son and the *Erlking*; (iii) the dialogue continues; (iv) the struggle between the son and the *Erlking* intensifies; and (v) the narrator pronounces the victory of *Erlking* and the son dies by the time when they arrive home.

To European ears, Schubert’s *Erlking* is a masterpiece of the *Lieder*, and to some Chinese ears, Zhao’s *Sea Rhyme* is also an remarkable example of the Chinese version of the *Lieder*. We have no idea whether or not Zhao was inspired by Schubert’s *Erlking* written in 1815, more than a century before Zhao’s *Sea Rhyme*, and whether or not Zhao deliberately modeled the structure and style of his work on the former. While people agree that the *Erlking* is a work which stands on the

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14 Unless otherwise indicated, all the English versions are translated from Chinese by Liu Ching-chih.

pinnacle of the Lieder over the past two centuries, the Sea Rhyme has also been enjoying an extremely high regard among the lovers of Chinese art songs. In the Sea Rhyme, there is beautiful choral writing. The piano accompaniment, however, is not intensive enough to reflect the dramatic story of the girl and the sea — especially the 20-bar interlude before the coda section. The eight-bar piano transition, from bars 36 to 43, sounds out of place. Zhao himself was a keen pianist and, for a period of time, learned the instrument with renown piano teachers in the States. Given the differences in the cultural and traditional background, Zhao did an excellent job in writing this choral piece — structurally it is almost identical to the Erlking, but stylistically it lacks the dramatic intensity of the Erlking, and, as far as the compositional techniques are concerned, Schubert excelled Zhao in the precise and economic musical expressions in phrasing and dynamics and in the support provided by the piano accompaniment.

The Sea Rhyme was one of the earlier songs modeled on the German—Austrian Lieder, and one of the typical examples of the imitating period. Huang Zi, another gifted new music song writer, was less obvious as compared with Zhao Yuanren’s Sea Rhyme in imitating the Lieder. However, Huang’s The Flying Righteous Flag 旗正飄飄 employed the contrapuntal and harmonic devices of the late baroque and the classical periods and to some extent the song resembles Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus, an outstanding choral piece in his oratorio Messiah. There are many other such examples amongst the vocal works in the 1930s, e.g. Nie Er’s 聶耳 (1912-1935) The Volunteers’ March 義勇軍進行曲 (which was adopted in 1949 as the National Anthem of the People’s Republic of China) and La Marseillaise (composed in April 1792), He Luting’s 賀綠汀 (1903-1999) Tilling in Spring 堗春泥 which is a contrapuntal choral composition without accompaniment, etc. There are plenty other examples of vocal compositions, indicating the extensive imitating trend during the first half of the twentieth century, and it is too numerous to cite them all.

There are also numerous instrumental works which imitated European musical compositions. He Luting’s Shepherd’s Flute 牧童短笛 composed in 1934 is obviously modeled on Bach’s “Two-Part Inventions” — a typical two-part contrapuntal writing in the early eighteenth century (Musical example 4).[16]

He Zhanhao 何占豪 and Chen Gang 陈钢 jointly wrote a violin concerto entitled *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai Violin Concerto with Orchestra* 梁山伯與祝英台小提琴協奏曲 in 1959, making use of the melodies of *Yuequ* 越劇 *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* 梁山伯與祝英台 and adopting the nineteenth century’s compositional techniques, and the end product was a violin concerto very similar to the *violin concerto* in the nineteenth century. Strictly speaking, *Liang Zhu* is a lengthy work for violin solo with orchestral accompaniment, not a violin concerto with the thematic treatment and tonal structure of European romanticism.

During the First National Musical Festival held in 1956, some 10 symphonies and nine orchestral works were performed, including the well known symphonic poem *Story of a Yellow Crane* 黃鶴的故事 by Shi Yongkang 施詠康 (1929-), *First Symphony* 第一交響樂 by Wang Yunjie 王雲階 (1911-1996), *Spring Festival Suite* 春節組曲 by Li Huanzhi 李煥之 (1919-), *Orchestral Suite* 管弦樂組曲 by Qu Wei 霍維 (1917-), symphonic poem *Song of the Forest* 森林之歌 by Ma Sicong 馬思聰 (1912-1987), etc. From 1956 to 1966, more large scale orchestral compositions appeared, of these, there were 41 symphonies and 33 orchestral works.

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which were considered “representative” and “outstanding,” such as *The Long March Symphony* by Ding Shande 丁善德 (1911-1995), *The First Symphony* and *The Second Symphony* by Luo Zhongrong 羅忠錦 (1924- ), *Fourth Symphony* by Jiang Wenye 江文也 (1910-1983), etc.【18】

Most of the works mentioned above are lengthy works in the nineteenth century’s European romantic style, with traditional harmony and orchestra. In order to show their loyalty towards the Communist Party, revolutionary songs are reflected in such songs as the *Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention* 三大紀律、八項注意, *The East is Red* 東方紅, *The Volunteers’ March* 義勇軍進行曲, *The Internationale* 國際歌, etc.

Dr. Barbara Mittler is probably one of the few musicologists in the West who carried out extensive studies in the instrumental and orchestral compositions written by Chinese composers, both inside and outside the Mainland China, including Hong Kong, Taiwan and overseas, mostly in the United States and Continental Europe【19】. She made very interesting comments on the works written by the composers as mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs, and I quote them to illustrate my analyses.

He Luting, Ding Shande, Qu Wei in Shanghai and Ma Sicong, Jiang Wenye, and Li Huanzhi in Beijing have been classified by Mittler as the “older generation of composers in the PRC” and she claims that they are “probably the stylistically unified.” She writes: “They generally write in a pentatonic style, only seldom do they make use of Bartokian or impressionist idiom”【20】. Her comments on these composers are quoted below:

(i) He Luting’s orchestral works: *Evening Party* 晚會 (1935), a rather typical work of pentatonic romanticism (Musical example 5【21】); *Senjidemtic* 森吉德馬 (1945) does not depart from romanticism;

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【18】Liu Ching-chih, “New Music during the Civil War and the First Seventeen Years after the Founding of PRC 1946-1949, 1949-1966” and Note 66 on pp. 90-95.
【20】Barbara Mittler, *Dangerous Tunes*, p. 149.
Allegretto con giocoso

Musical Example 5: He Luting's *Evening Party* (plate 1)
Musical Example 5: He Luting's *Evening Party* (plate 2)
(ii) Ding Shande’s *Spring Trip Suite* 春之旅 (1945), *Sonata in E Major* (1946), *Three Preludes* (1948), and *Variations on a Chinese Folk Song* (1948) are an attempt to combine not very homogenous elements of “pentatonic romanticism with tonal and Bartokian idiom”; his *Long March Symphony* (1959-1962) is a clear example for pentatonic romanticism, using a folksong of the Yao 瑶 minority in the second movement and leading to a victorious brassy apotheosis depicting the triumph of the revolutionary army (Musical example 6 [22]); and

(iii) Ma Sicong’s works are technically accomplished examples of pentatonic romanticism (Musical example 7 [23]), often full of beautiful melodies and virtuoso passages reminiscent of Wieniawski but showing little trace of contemporary musical spirit.[24]

Frank Kouwenhoven, another musicologist based in the Netherlands, concentrates on the contemporary new music composers and compositions. We will look at his comments on the contemporary composers and compositions in the following part of this article, especially his views on Tan Xiaolin 譚小麟 (1911-1948), Ma Sicong and Jiang Wenye, which are very interesting:

(i) Tan Xiaolin: Tan was among the first to experiment with Western tonality in Chinese ensembles, had “a better understanding both of Chinese traditional and Western classical music than most of his contemporaries”[25]. Tan’s *String Trio and Duet for Violin and Viola* are elegant blends of Chinese melodic flavour and Hindemith harmony, but they carry too much the imprint of his German teacher (Musical example 8 [26]);

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Musical Example 6: Ding Shande's *Long March Symphony* (plate 1)
Musical Example 6: Ding Shande’s *Long March Symphony* (plate 2)
Musical Example 7: Ma Sicom’s Pianoforte Quintet
—Second Movement (plate 1)
Musical Example 7: Ma Sicong’s Pianoforte Quintet
—Second Movement (plate 2)
Musical Example 8: Tan Xiaolin's *String Trio*  
—First Movement (plate 1)
Musical Example 8: Tan Xiaolin’s String Trio
—First Movement (plate 2)
(ii) Ma Sicong “never completely lost the imprint of French romanticism (Lalo style) which he acquired in France in youth” [27]; and

(iii) Jiang Wenye “was fond of Bartók and Stravinsky” (Musical example 9 [28] and Musical example 10 [29]); “but neither freed himself from classical tonality and overt romanticism” [30].

Both Dr. Mittler and Mr. Kouwenhoven used “romanticism” to describe the styles of the works of the older generation of Chinese composers during the period from the 1930s to the 1960s when the destructive Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution began. Dr. Mittler used the term “pentatonic romanticism” to distinguish the compositions of the older generation from the European romanticism during the nineteenth century. Ma Sicong, Ding Shande and Tan Xiaolin studied in France during the thirties and forties; and Jiang Wenye learned the romantic and early modern techniques when he was in Japan. What were the reasons for these composers to acquire the romantic style and techniques during the 1930s and 1940s? Was it because their teachers were conservative and, as a result, only learned the out-of-date romantic techniques? Possibly, as in the case of Huang Zi who studied at Oberlin College and Yale University where the professors of composition during the 1920s were conservative [31]. Then why did these composers fail to mature after they finished their studies and returned home? Surely they could have developed their potential and talents during all these years of their creative life, but apparently they did not. Apart from making use of the musical sources in China, they failed to break through the confinement of romanticism and embark on the road of modernism. The reasons are simple: the environment did not allow them to develop further — there was the war against the Japanese, there was no built-in

[27] CHIME, 2 (Autumn 1990), p. 84.
Musical Example 9: Jiang Wenye's Piano Trio
On the High Mountains of Taiwan — the Prelude
Musical Example 10: Jiang Wenye’s *Piano Trio*  
*On the High Mountains of Taiwan — the Bonfire*
infrastructure for composers, viz. the orchestras, the audience, relevant literature and readings, the management, etc. In short, the economy, the cultural tradition and the education system of China were unable to support the development of such an alien musical art. What is most important is that there has never been a tradition for European music in China.

The "revolutionary model works" 革命樣板戲 during the Cultural Revolution comprise three types of works: (i) five "revolutionary modern Jingju" 革命現代京劇; (ii) two "revolutionary modern ballets" 革命現代舞劇; and (iii) one "revolutionary symphonic music" 革命交響音樂. There are obvious elements of imitation: the five "revolutionary modern Jingju" employ both Chinese and western instruments and there are tutti passages, previously and in accordance with the tradition and practice, there has never been orchestral accompaniment to Jingju singing and acting; the two "revolutionary modern ballets" are entirely European in form and essence. They are definitely imitating the European ballet; and the one "revolutionary symphonic music," Sajiabang 沙家浜 is, strictly speaking, a choral work with orchestral accompaniment. However, the term "symphony" already indicates its very nature as of an European musical form.

The Transplanting Period

China has many talented people, such as poets Li Bo 李白 and Su Dongbo 蘇東坡, but China has been unable to breed talents like Bach and Beethoven. This is because China has a different cultural tradition, different social habits and different aesthetic values. For the same reasons, musicians returned to China after they studied music in Europe or the United States, often found they were unable to practise what he had learned abroad and consequently were unable to further develop themselves in the music profession. As mentioned above, due to the different cultural tradition, there are not many churches for choral singing, not enough concert halls for performing symphonies and instrumental ensembles, no opera house for opera acting and singing, nor are there sufficient orchestras and chamber music groups for instrumental players. In short, China, Hong Kong and Taiwan are not the best places for performing and developing European music.

These were the very factors contributing to the lack of development of the
creative capacity of the older generation of composers in China. In the 1930s, 1940s and 1960s, they acquired the European compositional techniques of the nineteenth century, and returned to China to compose music in the nineteenth century style and they stuck to the pentatonic romanticism style ever since. Tan Xiaolin's teacher was Paul Hindemith (1895-1963), and Tan's style was therefore more "modern and contemporary"; Jiang Wenye studied thoroughly the scores of Bartók and Stravinsky, and therefore Jiang's orchestration was more innovative and sophisticated. Even though Tan and Jiang are considered the more innovative composers, they nevertheless remained where they were, and they never tried to venture beyond the world of pentatonic romanticism.

The ten years of the Cultural Revolution almost destroyed what had been built up over the first seventeen years since the founding of the People's Republic of China. However, the 1983 graduates of the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, together with several other young composers in Shanghai and Sichuan sent shock waves to the musical world by their "new tide" style. The 1983 graduates included Qu Xiaosong 瞿小松 (1952-), Zhou Long 周龍 (1953-), Chen Yi 陈怡 (1953-), Ye Xiaogang 葉小鋼 (1955-), Tan Dun 谭盾 (1957-), etc.; the representatives in Sichuan were He Xuntian 何訓田 (1953-) and Zhang Qianyi 张千一 (1959-); and in Shanghai there were Xu Shuya 許舒亞 (1959-), Xu Jixing 徐紀星 (1960-), etc. [33]

A musicologist in Beijing describes the characteristics of the "new tide" music as follows:

A very important aspect of the "new tide" music is the innovative techniques in composition, absorbing the western modern compositional techniques, as compared with those of the past. It is obvious that we need to evaluate the relative proportion of its


[33] Some musicologists also include Huang Anlun 黄安倫 (1949-), Luo Jingjing 羅京京 (1953-), Su Cong 蘇聰 (1957-), and Chen Qigang 陳其鋼 (1955-) who are now living abroad.
creativity and imitativeness. However, there is also a need for evaluating the cultural value of the “new tide” musical compositions, in relation to the influence of western music.[34]

Xiu Hailin 修海林 implies that while Western influence increases, Chinese nationalistic characteristics suffer. In Europe, during the past several centuries, there has always been a mainstream style to dominate the music of a particular period of time, e.g. the baroque style, the classical style, the romantic style and the impressionistic style. However, since the early twentieth century, composers in Europe began to favour individualism. They have been free to follow whatever style they desire, whether it was neoclassicism or the whole tone series. The mainstream tradition no longer existed in the works of Stravinsky, Schonberg and the like. On Mainland China, composers and musicologists continued to stress the importance of “having a distinct Chinese style,” until now. Li Xiwei 李羲微 called such a concept “composition with a common nature” 共性創作:

New music of the modern China and the world for the first time made a break-through in the strong restriction of “compositions with a common nature,” all the traditional regulations for the common nature have lost its mandatory status and composers are enjoying an unprecedented freedom. [35]

The term “compositions with a common nature” means compositions having a common style, characteristic and flavour, such as the “mass revolutionary songs,” the “revolutionary model works” during the Cultural Revolution, songs set to Mao Zedong’s poems, etc. Overemphasis on nationalism and “serving the proletariat” may lead to compositions with a common nature. Li Xiwei describes such compositions as the “variations of the same style” 同種的變體, and the “new tide” music as the “co-existence of different styles” 異種的並存. Li Xiwei also said that “the modern trend is toward individualism” and that “art is the product of free-will,

and individual style is the life of artistic creation.” According to the findings of a research, the best guarantee for the creativity is the individualistic freedom” [36]. Well said indeed.

The “new tide” music is the reoccurrence of the freedom once enjoyed by the composers during the 1920s and 1930s when Zhao Yuanren and Huang Zi were able to express their musical thoughts freely, and therefore their compositions were the outcome of free expression. Individual styles are the essential qualities of the “new tide” music, much more important than the influence of the western techniques.

The imitating period covers the period from 1920 to 1976 during which compositions with a common character dominated. The negative example of the Cultural Revolution in a way helped the composers, and statesmen and the people of China liberated their thinking and began to search for their individual styles. This is the very reason for classifying the “new tide” music as the product of “transplanting” European music, as compared with the compositions written during the imitating period. The “new tide” composers employed western techniques to write music to express their individual ideas — they used the devices to express their own feelings and emotions.

Qu Xiaosong’s Mong Dong is a typical composition which violates the cardinal rules of “composition with a common nature” — it is a work with a strong individualistic style, like a breeze of fresh air: people fell in love with it immediately (Musical example 11 [37]). Technically, this work explores the possibility of combining both the European and Chinese orchestras. It produces a promising blend of a Chinese flavour through the medium of a mixed chamber orchestras. In short, this piece of work has for the first time and for over half a century made a break-through against the restrictions of political indoctrination and nationalism. Qu joined western composers in writing music of free expression and individualism. In this sense, Qu and his contemporaries of the “new tide” music started to transplant European musical languages, forms and manner of expression into the soil of Chinese musical culture.

In Zhou Long’s early works, such as his symphony Guanglingsan 廣陵散

Musical Example 11: Qu Xiaosong's *Mong Dong* (plate 1)

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Musical Example 11: Qu Xiaosong's *Mong Dong* (plate 2)

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(1983), *Dongshi Xiaopin* 東施效顰 (1983), *Valley Stream* 空谷流水 (1983), and *Su* 溯 (1984) (Musical example 12 [38]), there are traces of pentatonic romanticism and early modernism, especially Stravinsky’s influence. Zhou’s wife Chen Yi is also a key member of the “new tide” group. Her composition *Duo Ye* 多耶 for piano solo won the first prize at the Fourth National Musical Compositions Competition in 1984 (Musical example 13 [39]). She went to the United States in 1986 and studied with Zhou Wenzhong 周文中 and Mario Davidovsky. In the early 1990s, Chen took up the post of Resident Composer of the Women’s Philharmonic in San Francisco. On the whole, Chen is rather conservative but occasionally there are master strokes in which she exploits to a considerable extent the strong flavour of her Chineseness.

Guo Wenjing 郭文景 studied with Li Yinghai 黎英海 and Su Xia 蘇夏. Guo returned to his home town and worked for the Chongqing Municipal Singing and Dancing Troupe. At the invitation of his alma mater, he took up teaching at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing in the early 1990s. His major works include *Suspended Coffins on the Precipices of Sichuan* 川崖懸葬 (1982) for orchestra, *Ba* 巴 (1983) for Cello and Piano, *Sichuan Tune* 川調 (1985), *Violin Concerto* (1986) and *Bamboo Flute Concerto* 笛子協奏 (1992). His early works such as *Gorge* 峽 are romantic in style, and there are traces of modernism in his later works and sometimes with impressionistic inclinations. Guo loves to employ Sichuanese folk tunes and *Ba* is a typical example, full of Sichuan flavour, especially in the second half of *Ba* (Musical example 14 [40]).

Chen Qigang studied with Luo Zhongrong at the Central Conservatory of Music in 1977 and went to France on a scholarship in 1984 to study with Messiaen, Malec and Bailiff. His major works include *Fantasy* 隨想曲 (1979), *Introductory Ground Bass and Fugue* 引子固定低音與賦格 (1983), *Contradictory* 矛盾 (1985), *Memories* 回憶 (1985) and *Four Melodies of Guangling* 廣陵寫意四闋 (1986). Barbara Mittler considers him as “introvert, philosophical and ‘soundic’ and as a neo-romanticist.” The piece *Memories*, composed in 1985, shows the composer’s

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Musical Example 12: Zhou Long’s Su (plate 1).
Musical Example 12: Zhou Long’s Su (plate 2)
Musical Example 13: Chen Yi's *Duo Ye* (plate 1).
Musical Example 13: Chen Yi's *Duo Ye* (plate 2)
Musical Example 14: Guo Wenjing's Ba (plate 1)
Musical Example 14: Guo Wenjing’s Ba (plate 2)
inner world (Musical example 15) which reflects the initial influence of the modern French style.

Tan Dun is a prolific composer who has won quite a few prizes. Between 1978 and 1985, he studied at the Central Conservatory of Music with Li Yinghai. In 1986, he went to New York and studied with Zhou Wenzhong. After graduation from Columbia University, he remained in the States and continued with his composing career, and later conducting as well. Tan is well-versed in orchestral writing, capable of manipulating the instrumental colours. During his early years, his works already showed a strong individual style, although within the parameters of pentatonic romanticism, these works have nevertheless brought out a taste of modernism. It is the way he handles the vertical as well as horizontal texture and the effective instrumentation and orchestration which have made all the difference as compared with the older generation. His major works include *The Pearl* (1980), *The Fire* (1983), string quartet *Feng, Ya, Song* (a prize winner of the Weber International Chamber Music Competition in 1982) (Musical example 16), *Li Sao Symphony* (a prize winner of a competition of the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing in 1980), *Two-Movement Symphony* (1985), *Piano Concerto* (1983), *Trio for Orchestra and Three Tone-Colours* (1985), etc. In the 1990s, Tan has been working very hard on his way up and he is now, in the eyes of western musical circles, the representative of the contemporary Chinese composers. His *Nine Songs* was performed at the Lyrical Theater of the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts in the early 1990s. His opera *Marco Polo* was staged at the Grand Theater of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, as one of the major programmes of the Hong Kong Arts Festival in 1997. In July 1997, his Symphony 1997: *Heaven, Earth, Man* commissioned by the Hong Kong Organising Committee for the Handover of Hong Kong to China, was performed at the Handover Celebration’s performance on 1 July 1997. In a review, I had this to say: “I feel that this Symphony reminds me of *chop-suey* offered at a Chinese restaurant in China Town of a western country” and “I believe Tan Dun will continue to be successful, because he composes for the European and

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Musical Example 15: Chen Qigang's Memories (plate 1)
Musical Example 15: Chen Qigang's *Memories* (plate 2)
Rubato
Sul G non vibrato

Musical Example 16: Tan Dun's String Quartet
Feng, Ya, Song (plate 1)
Musical Example 16: Tan Dun's String Quartet

Feng, Ya, Song (plate 2)
American audiences, but his compositions are largely unpalatable to the Chinese.”[43]

Ye Xiaogang is another graduate of the Central Conservatory of Music in 1983. His father was also a composer in Hong Kong and later a musicologist in Shanghai. Ye studied with Du Mingxin (1928-). His works include Poetry of China for Cello and Piano (prize-winner of a competition by the American Tcherepnin Association in 1982), First Violin Concerto (1983) (Musical example 17 [44]), Symphony The Moon over the West River (1984), Vocal Cycle Sketches of Jianghan (1985), One Movement Symphony Story of an Old Man (1985), etc.

Xu Shuya, Zhang Qianyi, Xu Jixing and Luo Jingjing do not belong to the group of the 1983 graduates of the Central Conservatory of Music. Xu Shuya graduated from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1983; Zhang Qianyi composed his well-known work The Northern Forest (1981) (Musical example 18 [45]) when he was 22 years of age; Xu Jixing was also a graduate of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and her work Reaction to the Painting on the Flower Mountain (1983) for Chinese instrumental ensemble won the first prize at the Third National Musical Competition in 1983. Luo Jingjing was very active in musical circles during the 1980s, wrote quite a few works for piano and orchestra, as she majored in piano at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1975 and later moved to the Composition Department. Her major works include Piano and Orchestra (which won the second prize at the National Symphonic Music Competition in 1981), The Sound (1986) and Chant (1986) for Female Voice, Piano and Violin.

As mentioned in the beginning paragraph of “The Transplanting Period” section, the most outstanding characteristic of this period is the individual styles of the composers of the younger generation during the period 1977 to 1985. Innovative techniques and modernism are of only secondary importance. Compared with the “Copying Period” during the early 1900s and the “Imitating Period” between the

Musical Example 17: Ye Xiaogang’s First Violin Concerto
Musical Example 18: Zhan Qianyi's *The Northern Forest* (plate 1)
Musical Example 18: Zhan Qianyi's *The Northern Forest* (plate 2)
1920s and 1970s, the "new tide" music was indeed a great "leap forward." However, the "new tide" composers continued to imitate European music, in compositional techniques, formal structure, texture, instrumentation and orchestration, as well as aesthetic values.

**Concluding Remarks**

I have briefly given a brief account of the development of new music in China during the twentieth century, which can roughly be divided into three stages, viz. copying, imitating and transplanting. Strictly speaking, there is no clear demarcation between copying and imitating: Zeng Zhimin, Shen Xingong and Li Shutong copied the melodies of the works of European composers; Zhao Yuanren, He Luting, Ma Sicong, Tan Xiaolin, Ding Shande and Jiang Wenye also copied the forms and structure of the Lieder, the Sonta-allegro form, the harmonic and contrapuntal texture, the orchestration techniques, etc., based on the aesthetic values of European music, and they never broke through what they had learned from their teachers in the United States, France, Germany and Japan. The same also applies to the new music composers in Taiwan and Hong Kong — they are more or less all pentatonic romanticists, and their compositions more or less belong to a "common genre." The "new tide" music did display something different, however, what the "new tide" composers did were due to several factors: (i) in view of the "open-door" policy of China, composers were comparatively free to express their personal styles; and (ii) they were taught by European, including Russian-trained teachers — composers in China and therefore the technical knowledge and skills they acquired were fundamentally European. However, they were also nourished in the Chinese culture: they were required to go to the countryside to collect folk music materials; they had to memorise a large number of Chinese folk tunes; and they were also required to learn Chinese instruments.

Frank Kouwenhoven in his report on Mainland China's new music says: "China has no composers like Prokofiev or Shostakovich, not even second-rate ones like Kabalevsky. When governmental policies started taking their toll, Chinese composers had no way of defending themselves, and they had no international reputation to use as a shield and their technical knowledge was so poor that it hardly
provided a basis for continuation" [46].

Such a comment is very unfair, because Kouwenhoven did not take the cultural tradition into consideration. Russia, after Alexander the Great, as compared with China, is much closer to Europe, if not a constituent part of Europe. In Russia there were composers of international standing such as Glinka, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Prokevief, Stravinsky, Shostakovich, etc. Russian people believe in Orthodox Christianity and there are churches for them to worship and to sing hymns to praise their God. China did not have composers in the European context until the mid-twentieth century and most Chinese people believe in Buddhism and Taoism. Christianity is an imported religion and four-part singing is also alien to the ears of the Chinese people[47]. There were great Jingju 京剧 actors such as Mei Lanfang 梅兰芳 and Zhou Xinfang 周信芳, but there were no composers like Bach, Beethoven and Brahms, nor Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky, because the cultural traditions are different.

China is simply not a place, until now, for the kind of great composers that Europe has nourished. Europeanised Chinese music, i.e. new music, has only a history of one century and it has not yet become part of the Chinese musical culture. It took Buddhism more than a thousand years to be absorbed into Chinese culture, so it would be too ambitious and impractical to expect new music to become part of Chinese musical culture in such a short time.

12 September 1998


[47] Liu Ching-chih, “The Direction of Tan Dun’s Career,” Music Weekly, New Evening Post, Hong Kong, 23 June 1996. In this short article, I commented on Tan Dun’s compositions: “In order to survive, Tan Dun has to compose for the audiences of Europe and the United States, similar to Stravinsky. However, there is one aspect we should bear in mind: Alexander the Great transformed Russia into an European country, and therefore there were Glinka, ‘The Five’, Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky in Russia. For this very factor, although Stravinsky lived and Tan Dun is still living in the States, they should be viewed in a different perspective — Stravinsky did not separate from his cultural and musical soil, but Tan Dun has indeed been removed from his environment. Tan Dun’s survival is not entirely compatible with his composing career.”
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<tr>
<th>Dynasty</th>
<th>Period</th>
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<td>Qing Dynasty</td>
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<tr>
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<td>of China (1949-)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- **Continuing**
  - New Music

- **1885**
  - The Scholars class disintegrated after 1911, however, there have been scholar-type of qin players.

- **Continuing**
  - Folk Music
  - Religious Music

- **Came to an end after the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911**
  - Court Music

**Chart I: New Music — a new category added to Chinese Music since late 19th century**