

UNDERSTANDING OF AUTHENTIC PERFORMANCE PRACTICE IN
BRIGHT SHENG'S *SEVEN TUNES HEARD IN CHINA* FOR SOLO CELLO

A Monograph

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ABSTRACT

This document will attempt to put Bright Sheng's *Seven Tunes Heard in China* in a context of solo works for the cello that follows a universal tradition of concert works based on folk music and dance style. In this case, these seven works emanate from seven diverse regions of China, and all represent a different style and character which Sheng has translated to a single work for solo cello. Based on preexisting models of folk song tradition, I am seeking parallels between the work of Mr. Sheng and the original traditions behind this composition. I will discuss the various regional influences and the methods in which Sheng exploits the cello to produce the sounds, character and general feeling of these different folk idioms.

There are many performance practice issues in this demanding work, which I will address throughout the paper, occasionally offering suggestions for the facilitation of these ideas. Mr. Sheng is obviously using the cello to portray and imitate a range of Chinese indigenous instruments, and has created a codification of such sounds as they occur throughout the work. Although these seven movements are based on actual folk material, the bulk of the writing is Sheng's personal elaboration and representation of music in the style of the folk songs, and he writes freely around the various tunes even observing a prescribed form from the folk song genres.

I will also present formal analysis of each individual song to help the performer delineate the various sections and various tempi and character relationships that are presented in this collection. In my communication with Mr. Bright Sheng, he related to me that he only has 3 recordings of this work and perhaps six other dissertations about this music in general.¹ I felt compelled to study his work more deeply and learn more about his unique compositional style,

¹ Replied Email from Bright Sheng, June 6, 2015.

integrating the eastern folk tradition with a western instrumental genre, specifically the solo cello, in this *Seven Tunes Heard in China*.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: BRIEF CONTEXT FOR *SEVEN TUNES HEARD IN CHINA*

By 1995, the year this work was composed for Yo Yo Ma, Bright Sheng was a 40-year-old professor at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. At that young age he was already one of the most decorated and celebrated composers of his time, having garnered several important awards, including the Guggenheim, Naumburg, and the Kennedy Center Award.² His work to this point had included the cello in his three String Quartets, and in his *Four Movements for Piano Trio*, but he was yet to write something specifically for the solo cello until this commission.

Sheng was a great admirer of Bela Bartok due to his ability to combine folk music with western forms, instruments, and genres. Sheng himself was also searching for a method to integrate or fuse the Chinese and Western musical cultures without losing the integrity of either style. Earlier compositional styles like serialism had been explored in his past works as a possible vehicle, but this solo cello work was to be a new genre for Sheng to explore. Basing the work on Folk Tunes, Sheng embarked to use the cello's voice to sing these lyric ballads, sometimes in a linear and vocal style, other times with a heavily weighted rhythmic and percussive quality, imitating provincial and regional dances. His tonal language, not unlike Bartok's modal harmonic structure, clearly "absorbed certain elements of Bartok's own chromatic melodic style, with its emphasis upon percussive dissonant timbres and driving rhythmic energy."³ Bright Sheng's music was often based on the Chinese Modes, and he in this work mixes original and folk material so freely and cleverly, that it is difficult to discern where

² Weihua Zhang, "Sheng, Bright," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music & Musicians* Vol.23, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd ed. (London, 2001): 252.

³ Peter Chang, "Bright Sheng's Music: An Expression of Cross-cultural Experience— Illustrated through the Motivic, Contrapuntal and Tonal Treatment of the Chinese Folk Song The Stream Flows," *Contemporary music Review* Vol. 26, Nos. 5/6 (October/December 2007): 622.

one ends and the other takes over. He had in earlier works already begun to imitate the sounds of Chinese instruments, and he takes this technique further in the cello writing, inventing sounds and effects that had not yet entered the cello's musical vocabulary. He often imitated the timbres, affectation, and inflections of the Chinese Erhu, Qin, and uses myriad vocal techniques of note connection, pitch and ornamentation. Sometimes the writing is driven by its percussive style, with pulses dominating entire sections.

It is more than coincidental that Sheng chooses *Seasons* as his first tune, which is originally from Qinghai where Sheng was exiled during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). It was in Qinghai, that he was spared the tortures and atrocities that befell his family and countless others. His assignment to a dance troupe in southwest China during those dark years enabled him to research and document Chinese folk music of that region. Sheng's experience in Qinghai influences his choice to use the *Seasons* as the first tune of the entire cycle; moreover, since Qinghai and Tibet are quite close to each other geographically, this might be the reason that he concludes this cycle with the *Tibetan Dance*, a highly kinetic and colorful movement providing a firm cadence to this work. Being exposed to the Chinese folk music for the first time in Qinghai, Sheng acquired the first hand experience of Chinese folk song elements which would eventually serve as a foundation for his large and serious compositions.

In 1982, Sheng immigrated to the United States. He studied composition at Queens College in New York, and gained exposure to world music. He continued to develop his personal attraction to, and alignments with the music of Bartok, Bernstein, Stravinsky, and Ravel, among others.⁴ *The Seven Tunes Heard in China* is indeed a successful blend of many stylistic influences, yet maintains a unique national, ethnic, and geographic place.

⁴ Peter Chang, "Bright Sheng's Music: An Expression of Cross-cultural Experience— Illustrated through the Motivic, Contrapuntal and Tonal Treatment of the Chinese Folk Song The Stream Flows," *Contemporary music Review* Vol. 26, Nos. 5/6 (October/December 2007): 622.

CHAPTER 2. FIRST TUNE SEASONS

The folk song, *Seasons*, on which this first movement is based, comes from the region of *Qinghai* in south-central China (Figure 1).

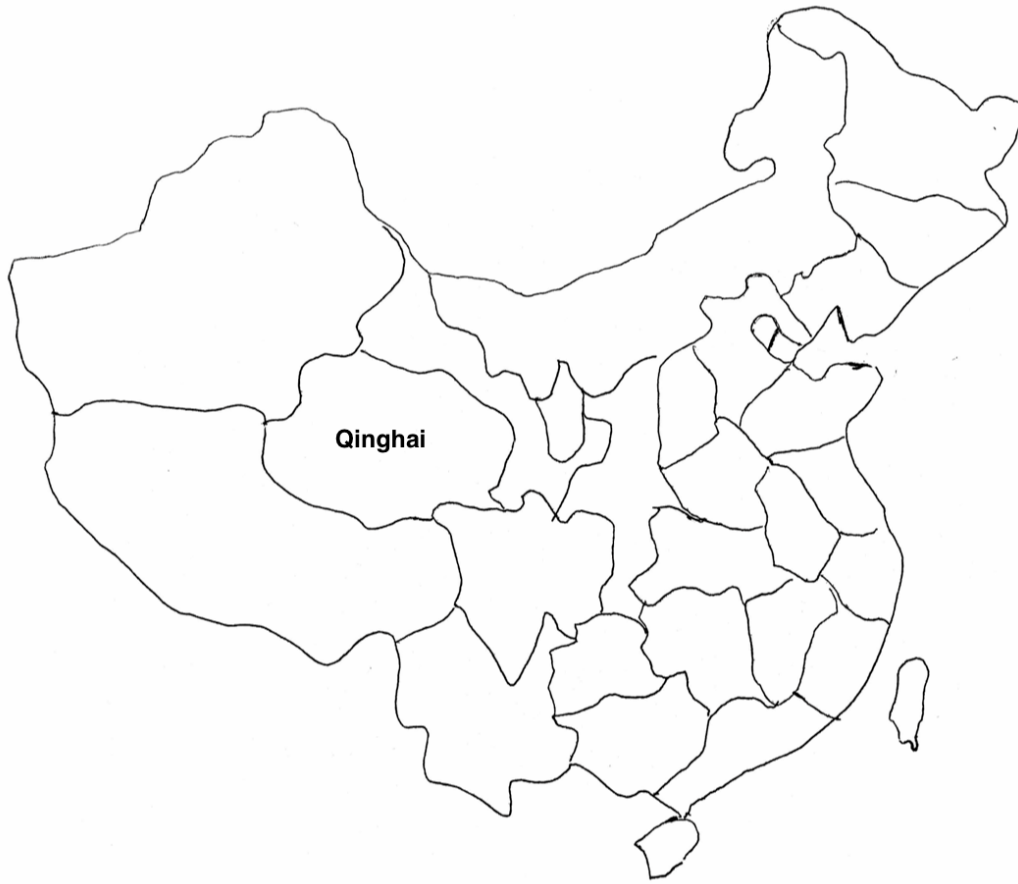


Figure 1. Qinghai

This region is predominantly mountainous and the song style is often referred to as “mountain song.” Mountain Songs typically were used to communicate from mountain to mountain with a wide range of styles. The style used for the particular original folk song of *Four Seasons* (Figure 2) is *Hua Er*. *Hua Er* refers to a song sung between lovers either sung solo, in duo, or in groups. In traditional Chinese beliefs and values it is considered inappropriate

behavior to sing a *Hua Er* in the presence of one's family, parents, or children.⁵ These are rather improvisational songs, composed often on the spot to express feelings at a particularly emotional moment, or experience. Although there are existing lyrics for many of these songs, it is common performance practice to embellish, add text, and rewrite much of the language content on the spot. Within the structure of these verses, the first lines are always related to the setting, and conditions of the song; the last line(s) will be the essence of the theme of the song, whether about love, or other subjects.⁶



Figure 2. The score of the original folk song, *Four Seasons*, vocal part ⁷

2.1 Seasons Analysis

Bright Sheng's use of the *Seasons*'s original thematic material is occasional, and recurrent throughout this movement. The very first phrase begins with a partially literal quote

⁵ Ye Ji, *Qinghai Minge Xuan (The Collection of Qinghai Folk Songs)* (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1954), 208.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁷ Rong-Ling Liang, *Zhongguo Minge Baiquji (The Collection of Hundred Chinese Folk Songs)* (Taipei: Tiantong Chubanshe, 1993), 36–38.

from the folk song, *Seasons*, which is extended almost three measures, and only concluded after the same amount of his own original material is also presented. Although each movement has differing quantities, fragmentation, and uses of the folk material, this alternation and juxtaposition of his ideas with folk text proves to be an underlying, and unifying technique for the remainder of this movement. What connect the original thematic fragments are cells of imitative, and recognizable smaller motives that lend cohesiveness to the body of the movement. These measures employ fragments from the folk song, and sequence them in transitional and cadential shapes to reconnect to the original folk song.

A more specific analysis of this movement would break down into the following: Measures 1–3 (Figure 3), 13–14, 24, and 26–27 are all clear presentations of the literal folk song, as anyone would recognize. The short cadence of this first melody is reiterated, almost as a refrain, or chorus within measures mm. 5–6 (Figure 4), 11–12, 23, 25–26.



Figure 3. Bright Sheng, *Seasons*, mm. 1–3⁸



Figure 4. Bright Sheng, *Seasons*, mm. 5–6

Structurally the movement divides neatly into three presentations of this principle theme. Within these sections, Sheng remains steadfast in his presentation of the original partial statement, and then his own material, and finally the repetition of the cadential motive. This

⁸ Cite as musical score. All successive musical examples from Bright Sheng are used by permission of G. Schirmer.

occurs two times, and finally the third time serves as a four-measure coda, using just two small parts of the theme itself in mm. 24–25, plus further additional fragments from the theme in mm. 26.3–27.

A numerical graph of these themes would show Section A extending from mm. 1–12. Within section A, there are three sub phrases: the first, mm. 1–4.2, the second mm. 4.3 (offbeat)–6, and the third mm. 7–12.3. Section A1 from mm. 13–23 divides into three phrases as well. The first phrase is from m. 13 (with syncopated upbeat from m. 12), to the beginning of m. 17. The second phrase, mm. 17.2 (offbeat)–19, is thematically comparable to Section A’s phrase of mm. 4.3 (offbeat)–5. The third phrase appears in mm. 20–23, which the thematic idea in m. 20 is similar to the ones in m. 9 and m. 11 of section A. There is a subtle difference between these two similar thematic ideas that their respective presentations are metrically reorganized. The first instance is the two fragments of m. 9 and m. 11 in cut time, separated by a 3/8 measure of his innovative compositional idea; and the second one appeared in m. 20 is a combination of m. 9 and m. 11 but in the time signature of 4/4 without the interruption of the 3/8 measure. The second occurrence in m. 22 is reminiscent of section A’s m. 10 in that the 3/8 Sheng insertion has reappeared. Section A2 (Coda) is from mm. 24–27.

Tonally speaking, since the *Seven Tunes Heard in China* is based on Chinese folk songs, it is obvious, and natural to assume that these folk songs are written in Chinese modes. In a conversation with Bright Sheng “I did think of Chinese modes, but based on the basic principle for transposition, modulation, or harmony.”⁹ With this “basic” advice, I have attempted to provide a harmonic analysis of this movement, however, as it is only partially adherent to

⁹ Replied Email from Bright Sheng, January 27, 2016.

Chinese modality, certain measures simply did not fit in this mold. This first movement employs the Chinese mode most similar to what is referred to as Pentatonic.

The arrangement of the five pitches of a pentatonic scale determines the literal scale that is being created. That is to say, that depending on the first note used of the five, the ensuing intervals in this order will arrange themselves differently. The *Yu* mode is actually the last inversion of a pentatonic scale. Let's say, for example like a pentatonic scale of *CDEGA*, beginning on the *A*, and continuing *CDEG*. In the original row order (*CDEGA*), the intervals were M2, M2, m3, M2, and in this example the *Yu* inversion beginning on the pitch *A*, (*Yu* in *A*) creates an intervallic order of the pentatonic scale which is now m3, M2, M2, m3, and M2 as a return to *A*. A more complete explanation appears in the Table 1 below. Certain melodic aspects of the *Gong* and *Zhi* modes remind the western ear of a Major mode, while the *Yu* and *Jiao* are thusly more similar to the sound of Western minor mode, and the *Shang* is somewhere ambiguously between the two modes.¹⁰

Table 1. Chinese pentatonic-modes.

Name of the scale	Row order	Interval	Western chordal arrangements
<i>Gong</i> in <i>C</i>	<i>C D E G A</i>	M2, M2, m3, M2	Root
<i>Shang</i> in <i>D</i>	<i>D E G A C</i>	M2, m3, M2, m3	1st inversion
<i>Jiao</i> in <i>E</i>	<i>E G A C D</i>	m3, M2, m3, M2	2nd inversion
<i>Zhi</i> in <i>G</i>	<i>G A C D E</i>	M2, m3, M2, M2	3rd inversion
<i>Yu</i> in <i>A</i>	<i>A C D E G</i>	m3, M2, M2, m3	4th inversion

My first challenge, or task was to discern which mode Sheng had applied to this first piece, *Seasons*. Discounting the “grace-note” pitches within these phrases, the principal

¹⁰ Ying-Hai Li, *Hanzu Diaoshi Jiqi Hesheng (The Modes and Harmony of Han)* (Shanghai: Shanghai Yinyue Chubanshe, 2001), 15.

Pentatonic Row in mm. 1–3 is *Gong* in *C* (*CDEGA*). In an effort to relate and translate explanation of the pentatonic structures to western musical terms, I will refer to the Pentatonic Mode Orders (*CDEGA*, *DEGAC*, *EGACD*, *GACDE*, *ACDEG*) as inversions, similar to the inversion of a western chordal sonority. For example, root position, first inversion, 2nd, 3rd etc., and will also refer to the final pitch as if it were akin to a cadence point in western music. I refer to the *Gong* mode at first (*CDEGA*), and simply determine which pitch within this mode we are beginning with. Because the phrase ends on note *A*, which is the fifth note of *Gong*, this *A* is the determinant because the phrase has rested, or cadenced on *A*. Therefore the mode begins from *A* (4th inversion) and is followed by the notes *CDEG* thus creating the *Yu* in *A*. At this point as we refer to Table 1, we can observe the modal structure of this phrase. Rather than interpret this first phrase as a hexachord (if we are trying to include the *B* natural in m. 1.3), we can simply regard this note as a passing interval towards *A*, since the rest of the entire movement is in. This additional note, in this part of the folk melody will be transposed and will recur a few more times when the theme returns throughout the movement.

The modal outline, or format of this movement is as follows: Section A (mm. 1–3) in *Yu* in *A* (*ACDEG*). The following measures are Sheng’s own material which does not always remain faithful to this mode, but rather modulates towards the A1 section beginning in (m. 13) where the folk melody returns in *Yu* in *Eb* (*Eb Gb Ab Bb Db*). Under close examination one can see that neither Sheng’s material nor the folk song always uses all five pitches, however enough of them are present to imply one mode more than any other. This is followed again by his own melodic turns when in mm. 14–15 (Figure 5) he uses bitonality, *Shang* in *E* (*E F# A B D*) and in *Bb* (*Bb C Eb F Ab*). Finally at the A2 (Coda) Section, we are now in *Yu* in *E* (*E G A B D*) in m. 24 and

m. 26.3–26.4 until the m. 27 which is *Yu* in *Eb* (*Eb Gb Ab Bb Db*) to the end. Sheng has simply lowered the mode by a half step.



Figure 5. Bright Sheng, *Seasons*, mm. 14–15

2.2 *Seasons* Authentic Performance Practice

Since the pieces no. 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 are originally vocal works, I had originally believed the imitated sounds in these movements to resemble those of the *Gehu* (Figure 6), a four-stringed “cello-like” Chinese instrument that has a timbre not unlike the Chinese, *Erhu*.

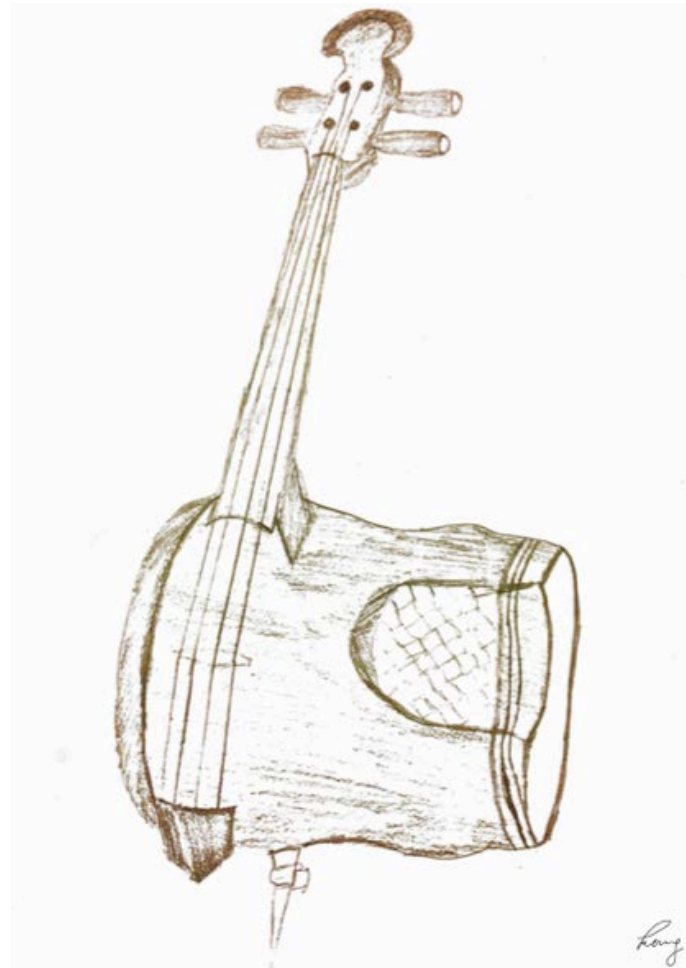


Figure 6. *Gehu*.

The *Gehu* is an instrument modeled on the *Erhu*, and has large cello-like features.¹¹ It is four-stringed (*C2 G2 D3 A3*), the bow is similar in that it rides on top of the strings, and it has an endpin. Its range extends from the growly low C of the cello upwards 2 octaves+ to F natural. Unfortunately, its resonance chamber (sound box) is positioned too low and does not produce a strong enough vibration or sound for the *Gehu* to be used as a solo instrument. Most often in ensembles these days, the *Gehu* is replaced by modern cello. Therefore, I believe that the *Erhu* is what Bright Sheng had in mind for us to imitate, not the *Gehu*.

Erhu (Figure 7), a two-stringed instrument (*D4 A4*) is also known as *Nanhu*, and nicknamed the “Chinese violin” an instrument especially popular in the south of China, and is the most often engaged and represented instrument in Chinese stringed instrumental ensembles.¹² Its melodic range can cover a range from *D4* to *G6*, a register more parallel to that of the cello in its best voice. The intervallic relationship of the two strings is always a fifth, although on occasions scordatura can raise or lower the fifth by a tone, or more. There are major differences in the sound production between a cello and the *Erhu*. The bow of a cello rests atop the strings and produces its vibrations with a varied amount of pressure and speed and weight of the bow, and the arm of the player. The bow can easily leave the strings, thus creating a certain range of articulations. The bow of the *Erhu* is made from bamboo, and is much more flexible than that of the cello. Its horsehair is placed, or spun between the two strings. To play on the superior string, the A, pressure is applied forward (pushed) to contact this string; to play on the lower, inferior string, the bow is pulled backwards toward the D string.

¹¹ Xiu-Wen Tan, *Zhongguo Yinyue Jianshi (A Brief History of Chinese Music)* (Taipei: Quanyin Chubanshe, 2011), 126.

¹² *Ibid.*, 122–123.

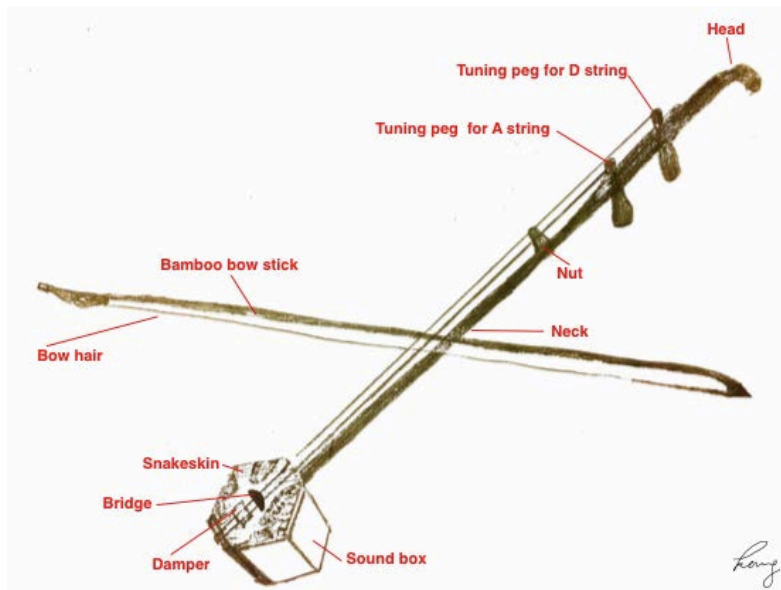


Figure 7. *Erhu* and bamboo bow

One other notable difference in the techniques used by both cello and *Erhu* pertains to the use of portamento. In Western music, it is extremely rare to see any indication from a composer to include a glissando, or slide to a note from a note. If this is the gesture a performer chooses to include, it is most often done in ascending direction, rather than descending, which is considered as a bad taste if over used. In Eastern music, and in Bright Sheng's renditions of these folk songs, the indications to slide move in both upward and downward directions. This is characteristic and typical of the expressive devices used in the performance of the *Erhu*, and is thus recreated by the cello in these songs.

One variation on this glissando technique is a short slide that is never to be used for an interval greater than a Major 3rd upwards or downwards. This is called *Xia Mo Yin* and *Shang Mo Yin* in Chinese.¹³ Another subtle inflection or affectation of this type is a similar gesture to a glissando, that does not need to either be contained within a Major 3rd range, and does not need to truly define the objective pitch, or the second note of the gesture. This note is a rough

¹³ Zong-Ming Xue, *Zhongguo Yinyueshi Yueqi Pian-Xia (Chinese History of Music of Instrumental Segment-Part II)*, eds. Guoli Bianyiguan and Zhonghua Wenhua Fuxing Yundong Tuixing Weiyuanhui (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1983), 825.

estimation of the secondary pitch, not a literal pitch arrival. This gesture also has a specific name for the upward *Hua Yin* or downward *Hui Hua Yin*.¹⁴ A third type seemingly is reserved for connecting intervals over an octave, and also can move upward *Da Hua Yin*, or downward where it has the same name, *Hui Hua Yin* as in the previous technique.¹⁵ Often a grace note is indicated with a slur connecting it to the following pitch.¹⁶ It is assumed that these two pitches occur in legato, without any need for a re-articulation of the second pitch. Here is a brief chart below in Table 2 of three types of glissandi that are discussed above.

Table 2. Three types of glissandi

Type	Glissando Interval	Chinese Name
1	Smaller than a Major 3 rd	<i>Xia Mo Yin</i> and <i>Shang Mo Yin</i>
2	Bigger than a Major 3 rd	<i>Hua Yin</i> and <i>Hui Hua Yin</i>
3	Bigger than an octave	<i>Da Hua Yin</i>

The bow grip for the *Erhu* is significantly different than that of a modern cello bow. The stick of the *Erhu*'s bow is held at the talon (frog) and is rested between the thumb and the point of the index finger, with the stick resting just above the first joint of the middle finger. This position is not so different that holding a pencil, although the angle of the arm/hand is more horizontal than vertical. The middle finger is bent to apply varying degrees of pressure on the hair depending on whether contact with the bow is intended towards the inner, or outer string.¹⁷

¹⁴ Zong-Ming Xue, *Zhongguo Yinyueshi Yueqi Pian-Xia (Chinese History of Music of Instrumental Segment-Part II)*, eds. Guoli Bianyiguan and Zhonghua Wenhua Fuxing Yundong Tuixing Weiyuanhui (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1983), 826.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 830.

¹⁷ Yi-Zhi Liu, *Erhu De Yanjiu- Guoyue Jinliang- Di Si Ce (Research of Erhu- Chinese Music Guide- Volume IV)* (Taipei: Zhongguo Minzu Yinyue Xuehui, 1972), 45.

With close examination of the *Seasons* (mvt. 1) we can see that the grace note gesture is the most prevalent. All three types of glissandi mentioned earlier are present in this movement. Sheng indicates, “All grace notes occur on the beat.”¹⁸ These grace note pitches must sound as strong beats, regardless of their placement within the measure. If, for example, the grace note is written before the 2nd eighth in m. 1, the grace note is emphasized exactly on this second eighth note, not as anticipation to the second. I choose to interpret the symbols in this first movement to correspond to all three types mentioned above. The grace note connected to the following note by a slur, and using the same finger (as suggested by the editor, YoYo Ma) would appear to be of the glissando type 2 that is used outside the range of a Major 3rd, since it is attached to an interval larger than a Major 3rd (Figure 8). There are two other examples (Figure 9 and Figure 10) within this movement of this same use of glissando. It seems that when this gesture recurs, it is usually the smoothest if executed with the same finger from the grace note to the larger target note, as suggested in the first occurrence.



Figure 8. Bright Sheng, *Seasons*, m. 1

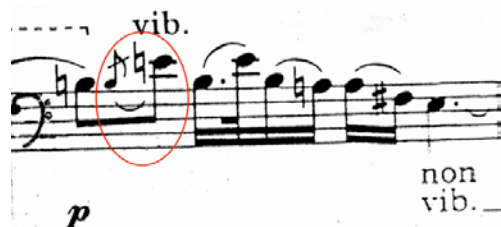


Figure 9. Bright Sheng, *Seasons*, m. 24

¹⁸ Bright Sheng, *Seven Tunes Heard In China*, ed. Yo-Yo Ma. (New York: G. Schirmer, 2001), performance notes no.1.



Figure 10. Bright Sheng, *Seasons*, m. 26

The other glissando type 1, which seems to connect more closely related pitches, is often represented by the slur or diagonal lines between certain notes in these phrases (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Bright Sheng, *Seasons*, m. 2

Lastly, Sheng also uses the 3rd type of glissando to cover a wide range interval (A–Bb: minor 9th) already between the first two measures (Figure 12).



Figure 12. Bright Sheng, *Seasons*, mm. 1-2

Generally speaking, when two sliding gestures happen consecutively (Figure 13), it is more easily understood, and more expressively felt if these gestures are given a bit more time to sing.



Figure 13. Bright Sheng, *Seasons*, m. 20

The third beat of mm. 7–8 presents another fingering dilemma. At least two options exist here, although neither is completely satisfactory for one reason or another. The dyad *A/D–C#* is played across the *A* and *D* strings with 1st and 3rd fingers. This enables a bit of glissando backwards to the *C#*. Once that has occurred, the position of the 1st and 3rd fingers is highly extended and compromised. One can then just move upward on the *D* string to the 4th finger allows for that next glissando, and can then simply descend the *D* string afterwards. (Figure 14)



Figure 14. Bright Sheng, *Seasons*, mm. 7–8

The other fingering option is more comfortable for the hand, using the open *A* string as a drone while performing the other notes on the *D*. This choice however prevents the ability to create the glissando as Sheng has indicated. (Figure 15)



Figure 15. Bright Sheng, *Seasons*, mm. 7–8

A possible third solution to this is to play with open *A* and all fingered notes on the *D* string. At the time the *A* is needed melodically, one can actually play a doubled *A* on string I and II, which will provide the spring point for the glissando that is missing in the previous arrangement of the fingers. (Figure 16)



Figure 16. Bright Sheng, *Seasons*, mm. 7–8

The fingering for the phrase at mm. 25–26 needed to be constructed from the end to the beginning. (Figure 17)



Figure 17. Bright Sheng, *Seasons*, mm. 25–26

The reason for the Figure 17 above is that it is the ending that contains two glissandi and they must both be possible to execute and preferably on the same string, the *G*. What happened fingering-wise before that was simply an effort to place the hand in the correct position for this necessary ending.

CHAPTER 3. SECOND TUNE *GUESSING SONG*

The music that serves as the basis for this *Guessing Song* is from one of the southern most provinces, Yunnan (Figure 18).



Figure 18. Yunnan

The more vernacular translation of this folk song is more something like a “Riddle song” (Figure 19). This song is aboriginal to this region’s children. The underlying idea of this song is somewhat of play on words, or tongue twisting of the language in unexpected and clever ways.¹⁹ The song is responsorial in that the first to sing presents a riddle, or joke in the form of a lyric poetry. The respondent must quickly come up with a suitable verse without pause. The riddle

¹⁹ Ming-Yuan Zhong, *Zhongguo Yinyue Shengdian (Chambers Essential Chinese Music Dictionary)* (Beijing: Jiuzhou Chubanshe, 2005), 119.

Song is a genre in and of itself that is specifically for children. The characteristics of this genre are songs that are highly animated and rhythmically intense.²⁰



Figure 19. The score of the original folk song, *Riddle song*, mm. 1–8²¹

3.1 *Guessing Song* Analysis

In *Guessing Song* Sheng first lays down the original folk tune for 7 measures in mm. 1–8.1 (Figure 20). This material is only slightly altered and is accompanied by a rhythmic drone on “A”. Once again in m. 3, he employs a semi-tonal relationship for a moment, from *Gb* ascending upwards through *G* natural, which should have remained *Gb* if it is compared with the original folk song version (refer back to Figure 19). This creates a dissonance, or chromatic alteration that is not original to this Folk tune. Measure 8 begins with *Eb* which functions as the final pitch of the previous phrase, as well as the first pitch of the next phrase, and is a partial restatement of the

²⁰ Tai-Xiang Lee, *Zhongguo Jiaoxiang Shiji (Chinese Symphonic Century)* (Taipei: Jinge Changpian Gufen Youxian Gongsi, 1997), 59.

²¹ Rong-Ling Liang, *Zhongguo Minge Baiquji (The Collection of Hundred Chinese Folk Songs)* (Taipei: Tiantong Chubanshe, 1993), 112.

folk song, however an octave lowers this time. For the next three measures in mm. 8–10, Sheng uses patterns from the original theme in an inventive, and not always literal way, mostly using shaping and quasi-rhythmic imitation (mm. 9.2 second note–10.2 second note resembles mm. 4.2–5.2 second note) of the *Guessing Song* theme.

Figure 20. Bright Sheng, *Guessing Song*, mm. 1–8

From the upbeat 16th note to m. 11, Sheng begins an elaborate, rhapsodic section built on kernels of material from the earlier motives heard, however in a free-style. This section preserves the dance spirit and pulse of the movement while serving as transition to his next modal goal. Finally, by m. 23.3 we are returned to the original theme, an octave higher this time if compared with the original theme from mm. 1–8.1, which is literally presented until the cadence in the beginning of m. 30. The underlying harmonic support given by the rhythmic accompaniment throughout this song seems to reflect a palindromic one. It first rests on pitch A (mm. 1–8), then D (mm. 9–10), G (mm. 11–14), Ab (mm. 16–21) then back to G (mm. 23–24), D (mm. 24–29), and finally, only on the last sonority in m. 32, A again.

The structure of this movement is simply outlined by these lines is ABA. The first A section being the original theme is *Shang* in Eb, the B section is Sheng's own departure through imitative motives and is written in *Jiao* in F (mm. 11–15.2), and on to *Jiao* in D (mm. 15.3–

23.2), and then a return to the A section of *Shang* in *Eb* (m. 23.3) is the final section until the cadence. The pitches of *Shang* in *Eb* should be *Eb, F, Ab, Bb, Db*, however the original folk song also includes a *Gb* (not belong to the Pentatonic group) which Sheng includes here as well, and beyond this puts a *G* natural of his own. (Figure 21)



Figure 21. Bright Sheng, *Guessing Song*, mm. 1–8

In mm. 11–15, the *Jiao* in *F* mode is originally *F, Ab, Bb, Db, Eb*, and similarly interchanged a *D* natural for a *Db*. (Figure 22)



Figure 22. Bright Sheng, *Guessing Song*, mm. 11–15

In mm. 16–21, the *Jiao* in *D* should originally sound *D, F, G, Bb, C*, and this time *B* natural replaces *Bb* for the whole duration of this mode. (Figure 23)



Figure 23. Bright Sheng, *Guessing Song*, mm. 16–21

3.2 *Guessing Song* Authentic Performance Practice

From the first to the second note of *Guessing Song*, it is evident that Bright Sheng is going to use the sliding, *Erhu* sound frequently. Odd accentuation and groupings of these notes

present certain cellistic challenges, and although the movement is in a sprite 2/4 meter, these accents and slurred groupings offset, and confuse the pulse, as well as the performance of these rhythms until they are well internalized. The example of mm. 5–6 (Figure 24) presents an interesting effect. The descending *Eb–Gb*: Major 6th must be played on the *D* string due to the need for the open *A* string to sound simultaneously. Therefore, it is almost impossible that in legato those two pitches will not be connected with some degree of portamento downwards each time they occur. This is a sound that is often heard on *Erhu* as we mentioned in the previous chapter Table 2 of glissando type 2. Curiously Bright Sheng does not place a glissando indication here. Perhaps he already assumes that this would take place, and does not want to over-state the case.



Figure 24. Bright Sheng, *Guessing Song*, mm. 5-6

Measure 16 (Figure 25) places a glissando, between its first two notes *B* natural and *C* a semitone above. In Western music, these two pitches would almost always be fingered 3, 4 in a semi-tonal scale of this type. However in this situation, due to the slide between, the same finger 3, is going to be used for both pitches, creating a blur between the two that becomes a single impulse, musically speaking.



Figure 25. Bright Sheng, *Guessing Song*, m. 16

Measures 18–19 (Figure 26) present another coordination challenge. A few performance issues confound this rhythm. The accents on the dyad: *D/Ab* always occurs on the weaker up-bow stroke. Nature would have it the other way around. It is a bit of a stretch back to this dyad each time from the 3rd finger B to the 3rd finger C. This creates a bit of a time lapse. We are must be ultra aware that the upstroke will need to be the stronger and that these notes appear in grouplets of three sixteenth notes.



Figure 26. Bright Sheng, *Guessing Song*, mm. 18-19

Regardless, these mm. 18–19 are most easily expressed and played if we consider the inner hemiola beginning with the *B* natural (3rd finger), *C* (3rd finger), *D/Ab* (open string, 1st finger) which repeats within these bars. Regrouping from each down-bow facilitates the cohesiveness of this rhythm, as well as the coordination in playing these notes.

CHAPTER 4. THIRD TUNE *THE LITTLE CABBAGE*

Sheng has this time chosen a folk song from Hebei (Figure 27), a North-Central-Eastern Chinese province.



Figure 27. Hebei

The original folk song *The Little Cabbage* (Figure 28) belongs to the *Xiao Diao* genre, which is primarily connected to peoples of urban centers, as opposed to other genres from more provincial areas, or mountain areas, where the musical styles would be a bit rougher, more primitive. In remote regions the general population were subsistent in all ways. In the more densely populated urban centers, the idea of work through mutual cooperation was more the norm, and therefore, a somewhat greater ease of living was reflected in the lyric, and delicate

musical style, thus permitting the rise of this genre.²² Characteristically, this genre is literarily based, and there is no improvisational component to this type of folk song. Presentation of this genre may be as a solo or duet, at times accompanied by *Erhu* and other instruments adding ornamentation to enrich to the melodic line, and occasionally being featured during interludes and in structural transitions.²³



Figure 28. The score of the original folk song, *The Little Cabbage*, mm. 1–6²⁴

4.1 *The Little Cabbage* Analysis

This short movement, based on this Folk song is entirely a literal rendition of the original version. It presents the theme in *Zhi* in *Ab*, first in an incomplete phrase of mm. 1–8.1 (Figure 29), then with the entire phrase (mm. 8–15) and lastly, through recalled fragments of the theme (mm. 16–18), the movement concludes.

²² Gu-Fang Lin, *Chuantong Yinyue Gailun (Introduction of traditional music)* (Taipei: Han-Guang Wenhua, 1998), 15.

²³ Yao-Hua Wang, *Zhongguo Chuantong Yinyue Gailun (Introduction of traditional Chinese music)* (Taipei: Hai-Tang Shiye Wenhua Youxian Gongsi, 1990), 53.

²⁴ Yuankai Bao, *Chinese Sights and Sounds: 24 Pieces by Themes on Chinese Folktunes for Piano/ Arranged by Zhu Peibin* (Beijing: People’s Music Publishing House, 2008), 1.



Figure 29. Bright Sheng, *The Little Cabbage*, mm. 1–8

The first phrase of mm. 1–7 (A section) is monophonic, that is without any form of rhythmic, or harmonic underpinnings. The A1 section of mm. 8–15 then presents the theme with a counterpoint created by Sheng to accompany the repetition of this theme. In this phrase from mm. 8–10, the accompanying pitches are mirrored *F, Bb, F, Ab, Eb* when they return in opposite order *Eb, Ab, F, Bb, F* (Figure 30). The Coda is basically one voice with minor use of double-stopping to thicken the harmonic soup, with fourths and fifths to stabilize the final cadence.



Figure 30. Bright Sheng, *The Little Cabbage*, mm. 8–10

4.2 *The Little Cabbage* Authentic Performance Practice

This shortest piece of the seven, *The Little Cabbage* uses the practice of the repeated finger more than most any other technique. Since the musical character of this is “melanconico”, “dolce” and marked at a 58-60 BPM of quarter note tempo to be played with sourdine. All these clues hint at this music being particularly languid, and connected sonically. That is to say that sound definition and articulation is not an issue. Rather, we must find ways to fill in the gaps between notes. The first and most obvious way in which to achieve this is to not lift the fingers. Reusing and sliding with the same finger, where possible will most naturally give this sense of continuous sound, to these pitches. The gesture of sliding evokes the sound of crying, or sobbing.

The first phrase is written in monody, and therefore, is basically laid out over one string by the 2nd finger especially from mm. 1–3 (Figure 31).



Figure 31. Bright Sheng, *The Little Cabbage*, mm. 1–3

The next line is suddenly a two strings texture, with the melodic line being held almost continually by the thumb in m. 10 (Figure 32), while the other notes must be created by a random assortment of angles and hand positions that will not interfere with the held note.



Figure 32. Bright Sheng, *The Little Cabbage*, m. 10

The final phrase (mm. 16–18) returns in “meno mosso” and begins monodically, ending in double stops, which deserve and need a special amount of harmonic attention to their fingering and tuning.

CHAPTER 5. FOURTH TUNE *THE DRUNKEN FISHERMAN*

The Drunken Fisherman does not come from any particular region of China. The original folk song (Figure 33–36) is not a vocal work, as many of the other songs are, but was originally composed to play on the Chinese instrument *Qin*. It dates back to 1549 A.D. (Tang Dynasty) and reports to have been composed by two poets who went boating and saw a drunken fisherman who inspired the song's composition.²⁵ The most obvious characteristic of this piece is the use of syncopated rhythm, sliding sounds, and the use of the Major second interval in a slow trill pattern. These types of sonic effects, odd rhythms and slippery, wobbly pitch were naturally all pointed towards the portrayal of someone under the influence of alcohol.

Figure 33 shows two staves of musical notation in bass clef. The first staff is marked "散板" (Sanban) and "(入拍) ♩ = 40". Below the staff are Chinese characters: (一) 蓬 四 鸂 鸂 鸂 勺 四 鸂 鸂 秋 鸂 并. The second staff continues the melody with a red bar line at the end. Below the staff are Chinese characters: 昨 向 五 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 并 四 五 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂.

Figure 33. The excerpt from the original folk song, *The Drunken Fisherman*, mm. 1–8²⁶

Figure 34 shows two staves of musical notation in bass clef. The first staff is marked "跌宕" (Diegong) and "♩ = 58". Below the staff are Chinese characters: 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂. The second staff continues the melody with a red bar line at the end. Below the staff are Chinese characters: 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂 鸂.

Figure 34. The excerpt from the original folk song, *The Drunken Fisherman*, mm. 17–24²⁷

²⁵ Yi Gong, *Quqin Yanzoufa (Performing Method of Quqin)* (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2002), 309.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.



Figure 35. The excerpt from the original folk song, *The Drunken Fisherman*, mm. 37–46²⁸



Figure 36. The excerpt of the original folk song, *The Drunken Fisherman*, mm. 106–114²⁹

5.1 *The Drunken Fisherman* Analysis

The A section of this Drunken tune lasts from the beginning through m. 27, and its first theme ending in m. 12 is in *Gong* in *B* (Figure 37). Measure 13 begins a secondary theme within this section in *Shang* in *E_b* (Figure 38), and yet a third theme from m. 20 presents ideas reminiscent of the first theme in its melodic fragments, yet is in a different mode, *Zhi* in *A_b*.

²⁷ Yi Gong, *Quqin Yanzoufa (Performing Method of Quqin)* (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2002), 146.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

Figure 37. Bright Sheng, *The Drunken Fisherman*, mm. 1–12

Figure 38. Bright Sheng, *The Drunken Fisherman*, mm. 13–19

The B section (from mid mm. 27–68) is marked *poco piu mosso* and is mainly Sheng's own composition starting as the first eleven measures in *Yu* in *Eb*. This phrase, as well as later parts of this B section, is characterized by glissandi between the coupled eighth note groups. Sheng occasionally punctuates with open stringed pizzicato *D*, *G* iterations in mm. 32–35, which clash with the *Db* and *Gb* from *Yu* in *Eb* mode in mm. 32–37 (Figure 39), and also uses open stringed pizzicato *Eb*, *Ab* in mm. 55–59, which clash with the *E* natural and *A* natural from *Shang* in *D* mode in mm. 54–61. The same dissonance is already presented in the opening bars of A section where the open *C* natural is in dissonance with the *C#* and *D#* in the other voice.

Figure 39. Bright Sheng, *The Drunken Fisherman*, mm. 32–37

In m. 38, the three-note sub-motive *Db, Cb, Ab* (Figure 40) is pivotal enharmonically to the pitches found in the next phrase *C#, B, G#* which make up 3/5 of the *Yu* in *C#* mode in the following phrase from mm. 39–44.

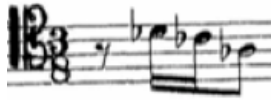


Figure 40. Bright Sheng, *The Drunken Fisherman*, m. 38

Measure 45 has now modulated to *Gong* in *D* where it arrives at the downbeat of m. 52. The next two measures (mm. 52–53), are transitional built on natural harmonics (*D E G A*). Here he has created a loose quotation from the Drunken Fisherman song, imitating its melodic shape and through octave displacement has subtly disguised the tune (Compared Figure 41 with Figure 42).



Figure 41. The excerpt of the original folk song *The Drunken Fisherman* mm. 37–40³⁰



Figure 42. Bright Sheng, *The Drunken Fisherman*, mm. 52–53

Also within the B section, Sheng travels briefly through the *Shang* in *D* (mm. 54–61), *Yu* in *C* (mm. 62–65), and *Jiao* in *F* (mm. 66–68), eventually arriving in Section C in *Shang* in *Ab* mode, which begins in m. 70.

³⁰ Yi Gong, *Quqin Yanzoufa (Performing Method of Quqin)* (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2002), 147.

The C Section (m. 70–the fermata in mid m. 95) is a curious combination of folk elements. From (mm. 70–71) this material is derived from the same fragments of the folk song used in mm. 52–53, and this time only imitated rhythmically in *Shang* in *Ab* (Compared Figure 43 back to Figure 41).



Figure 43. Bright Sheng, *The Drunken Fisherman*, mm. 70–71

In m. 72 is another melodic idea extracted from the A section and material presented earlier (between mm. 7–12), this time in *Zhi* in *Db*. This collage-like effect interrupts the melody with rhythmic outbursts that each time allows for the theme to play itself a measure longer before interruption occurs again. Finally, the theme is allowed to conclude (mm. 77–79.1). From the middle of mm. 79–85 is transitional material likened to the material from (mm. 52–53). Measure 86 returns us to the original rhythmic material found in mm. 70–71. As the song moves towards its climax in m. 95 (*fff* on *C#*), Sheng has heightened the rhythmic activity through rhythmic augmentation from eighth-note patterns, to quarter note pulses to half notes at the very end. This broadening of the pulse signals the approaching cadence at the fermata. What follows is a Cadenza-like Coda which imitates the Chinese instrument *Qin* through the trilling whole-stepped dyads, (an unusually wide trill), accelerating polyagogically until the end of m. 97.

The final moments are three bars of lightly played natural harmonics (Figure 44), which send us back to the original melody of the folk song, heard this final time in *Zhi* in *G*. The final measure is a sustained “lunga” fermata of silence, not an uncommon ending in this genre.



Figure 44. Bright Sheng, *The Drunken Fisherman*, mm. 98–100

5.2 *The Drunken Fisherman* Authentic Performance Practice

There are many extended pizzicato techniques found in this fourth movement. This folk song was originally written to perform by a *Qin* (Figure 45), so there are many of its sounds in this movement that Bright Sheng is attempting to imitate.

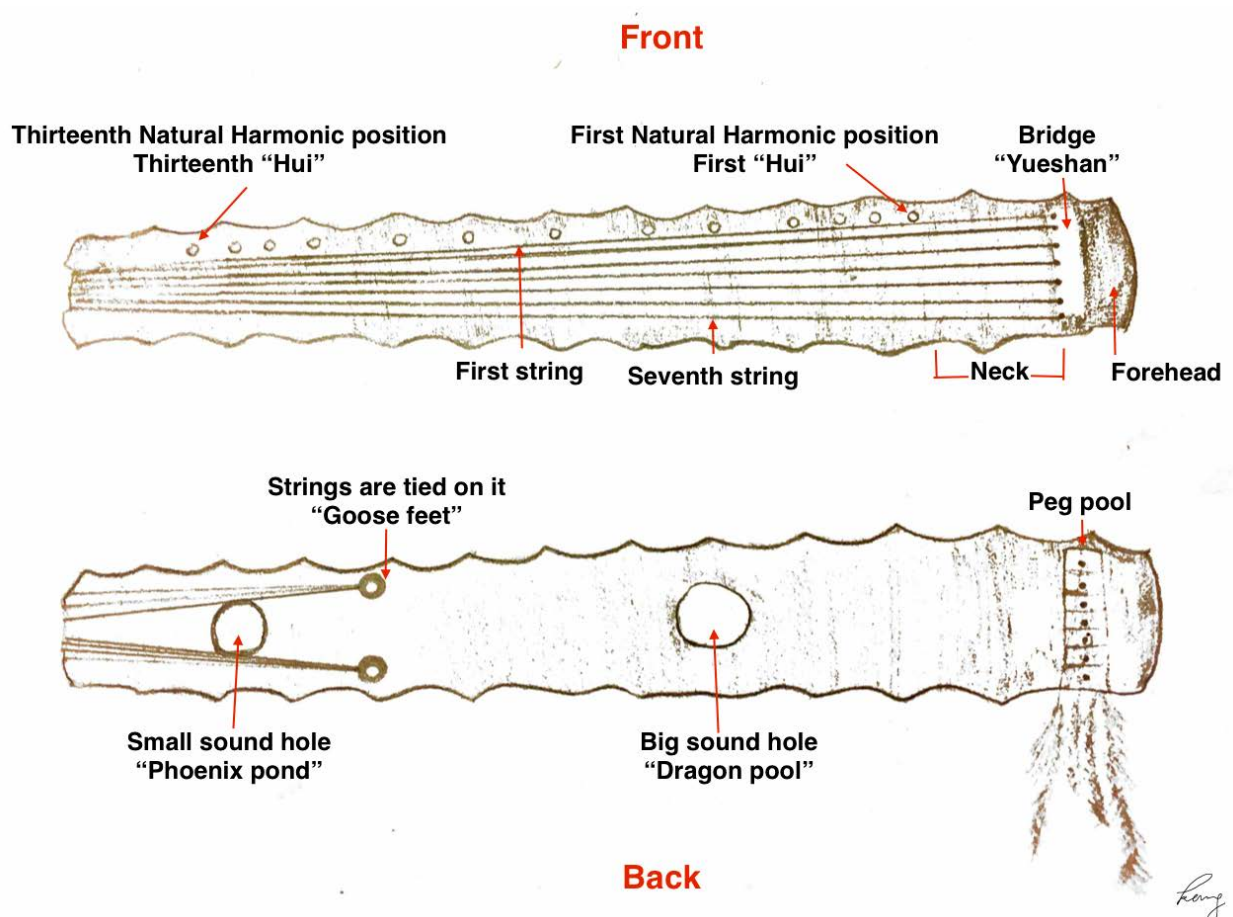


Figure 45. Construction of *Qin*.

The *Qin* is also called *Guqin*, and is a slightly later version of the same type of stringed instrument that only is picked by the fingernails, but never bowed like an *Erhu*. It also differs in

that it has seven strings to the *Erhu*'s two. Early models of this instrument used silk for strings, but today nylon wrapped steel strings are commonly used. *Qins* are constructed in a range of sizes that changed throughout its history alongside the changes in dynasties. One tuning of the *Qin* is in the *Gong* mode, *C D F G A C D*, but there are several ways in which this instrument can be tuned to create other modes as well; the range of its pitches covers *C2* to *D6*.³¹

The tablature for this instrument is expressed in fragments and symbols, almost glyph-like pieces from Chinese characters, not notes and staff. No rhythm and pitches are notated, however fingering and string specific indications are interpreted and recognized by their relationships with the different symbols present.³² For example, in Figure 46, this form of a diagram shows the “directions” in which the piece should be performed. The upper left quadrant shows the fingering choice and techniques. The upper right shows the *Hui*, which are basically fret stops, and indicate positions along the length of the string. The lower right shows the manner in which the right hand will pluck back and forth, activating various sounds from the designated string. The lower left shows on which string the previous techniques are to be applied.³³

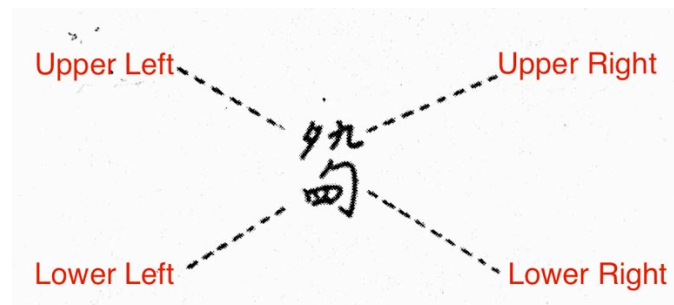


Figure 46. The Chinese symbol from *Qin*'s tablature³⁴

³¹ Feng Zhao, ed., *China Supplementary Volume I Instruments* (Hong Kong: Xianggang Zhuhai Chuban Youxian Gongsi, 1992), 153.

³² Gu-Fang Lin, *Chuantong Yinyue Gailun (Introduction of traditional music)* (Taipei: Han-Guang Wenhua, 1998), 50.

³³ Yi Gong, *Quqin Yanzoufa (Performing Method of Quqin)* (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2002), 27.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

There are three basic categories of *Qin* technique. The first, *San Yin* applies to all right hand issues.³⁵ The right hand only makes use of the thumb and next three fingers; the pinky is never used. The different fingers are understood to have different strengths and therefore qualities of pizzicato sound. The thumb, middle and index fingers would customarily be suggested through the symbols in ancient tablature to serve some of the strongest notes, or beats of the folk song. Bright Sheng still follows this rule to compose this movement, but uses guitar pluck (picks) or a plastic card as he mentioned in the footnote to substitute for the middle and index fingers (see Figure 47 and Figure 48). He alternately indicates “pizz” or the symbols he has developed for plucking, therefore inferring this differentiation of these sounds as they would appear in the original instrument to create textural variations within and between these phrases.

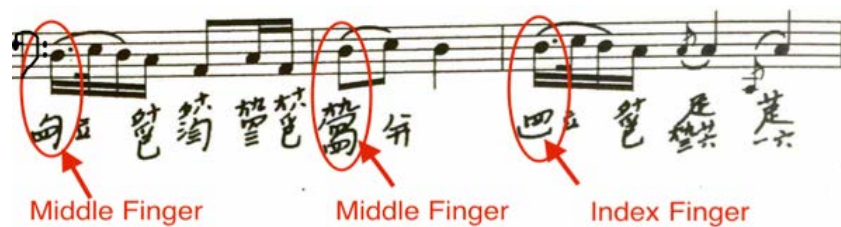


Figure 47. The ancient tablature of the original folk song, *The Drunken Fisherman*, mm. 6–8³⁶



Figure 48. Bright Sheng, *The Drunken Fisherman*, mm. 3–5

The end of Measure 97 (Figure 49) is an example of the alternation of thumb and index fingers to create an ever accelerating and volume strengthening gesture on the *Qin*. On the cello, the same sound is attempted through the use of both sides of the guitar pick. This is a physical

³⁵ Yao-Hua Wang, *Zhongguo Chuantong Yinyue Gailun (Introduction of traditional Chinese music)* (Taipei: Hai-Tang Shiye Wenhua Youxian Gongsì, 1990), 94.

³⁶ Yi Gong, *Quqin Yanzoufa (Performing Method of Quqin)* (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2002), 146.



Figure 50. Bright Sheng, *The Drunken Fisherman*, m. 1



Figure 51. Bright Sheng, *The Drunken Fisherman*, m. 15



Figure 52. Bright Sheng, *The Drunken Fisherman*, m. 3



Figure 53. Bright Sheng, *The Drunken Fisherman*, m. 5



Figure 54. Bright Sheng, *The Drunken Fisherman*, m. 96

The third, *Fan Yin* relates to issues of harmony.³⁸ There will be two kinds of harmonic techniques on *Qin*, first, using right hand's index finger to frequently pluck back the string;

³⁸ Yao-Hua Wang, *Zhongguo Chuantong Yinyue Gailun (Introduction of traditional Chinese music)* (Taipei: Hai-Tang Shiye Wenhua Youxian Gongsi, 1990), 94.

second, using thumb to push forward and ring finger to pull or pluck back.³⁹ In both directions, the right hand executes these actions close to the bridge. This indication appears in mm. 52–53 (Figure 55), and mm. 98–100 where Sheng has created a symbol, footnoted to instruct the use of the fingernail pizzicato.



Figure 55. Bright Sheng, *The Drunken Fisherman*, mm. 52–53

This technique can be another particular challenge, since not everyone grows their cuticles to a length, or strength suitable to perform this trick on a cello with high-tension steel strings. If one simply cannot use this technique without pain, there are substitute substances available such as attachable, artificial fingernails that can extend or strengthen for this musical occasion. On the *Qin*, one plucks close to the bridge because it is a tension that is sustainable and a sound quality that is desirable. On the cello however, one must experiment to find the correct contact point for this extended technique to achieve the proper sound, color, volume etc.

³⁹ Yao-Hua Wang, *Zhongguo Chuantong Yinyue Gailun (Introduction of traditional Chinese music)* (Taipei: Hai-Tang Shiye Wenhua Youxian Gongsi, 1990), 95.

CHAPTER 6. FIFTH TUNE *DIU DIU DONG*

This fifth song, *Diu Diu Dong* is from the Northeastern quarter of Taiwan, Yi-Lan (Figure 56).

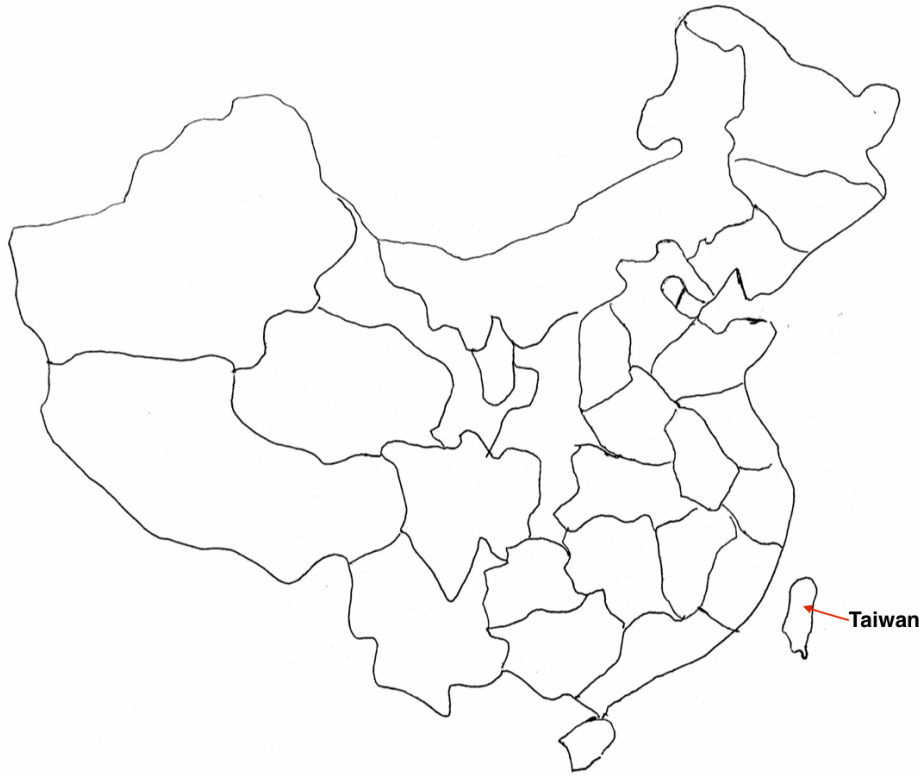


Figure 56. Taiwan

This particular folk song- *Diu Diu Dong* (Figure 57) was first catalogued in 1943 A.D. by Quan-Sheng Lu, although it had been in existence for at least 200 years. There are varying theories on the storyline behind this song; some following the literal text about a train and the sounds associated with water dripping on the train, and passage through a tunnel. Another interpretation involves the sound of tossing of coins, as in a gambling game of some sort; this game may have produced some kind of sound resembling *Diu Diu Dong* as the coins spun and fell.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Shang-Ren Jian, *Taiwan Minyao (Taiwanese folk song)* (Taipei: Zhongwen Tushu Gufen Youxian

Allegretto ♩=115 台湾民歌

Figure 57. The score of the original folk song, *Diu Dui Dong*, mm. 1–18⁴¹

6.1 *Diu Dui Dong* Analysis

After a brief rhythmic introduction (Figure 58), the *Diu Dui Dong* theme begins and plays itself in entirety from mm. 4–23 (Figure 59). The A section (mm. 1–25) *Diu Dui Dong* theme is played in monophony, in artificial harmonics, giving a colloquial, casual musical quality to this phrase. The opening rhythm recurs at mid-phrase (mm. 11–13) joining both halves of the tune with this opening motive. It returns at the conclusion of the A section as well. The mode of this melody is *Zhi* in *A*. As usual, Sheng includes an unrelated *D#* in mm. 6–7 to permit a semi-tonal ‘slide’ between *E* and *D*.

Gongsi, 1990), 69.

⁴¹ Damin Ren, ed., *Zhongguo Minge Zhuti Gangqinqiu 18 Shou (The 18 Piano Pieces Rearranged From Chinese Folksongs)* (Beijing: People’s Music Publishing House, 2000), 39.



Figure 58. Bright Sheng, *Diu Dui Dong*, mm. 1–3



Figure 59. Bright Sheng, *Diu Dui Dong*, mm. 4–23

The B Section begins in m. 26 and runs until m. 76, therefore, twice the length of the previous section. After a brief allusion to the folk song, this B section continues to embellish, or improvise in the style of the folk song, however not literally playing motives from it. The harmonic structure moves through different modal neighborhoods (mm. 26–31 is *Shang* in *A*, mm. 32–39 are then *Yu* in *E \flat* , and then later in mm. 65–76 in *Yu* in *B \flat*). Again, Sheng is loosely adhering to these modes, and often includes pitches that are not of the modes. At times, there is simply not a complete mode present.

The return to A1 occurs in m. 77 and carries the music to the end of the movement (m. 114). After two measures of introductory material, this time the theme is presented in double-stopped, artificial harmonics in fifths and is in *Zhi* in *E* in the top voice, and *Zhi* in *A* on the bottom. Yet again, the phrases are interrupted by the rhythmic pizzicato. A brief Coda is attached

from m. 110 to the end reminiscent of *Shang* mode in *Eb*, if only by using three of its pitches, *F*, *Eb*, *Db*.

The initial rhythm heard in the opening three bars of this song seem at first to be nothing more than a simple harmony/rhythmic pulse on which to decide the tempo, and perhaps the harmony for the movement. As this short cell returns and repeats throughout the song, we sense the increased, frequency, importance and insistence of this motive. In the A1 section, along with the fifth harmonics, Sheng has thickened his use of this motive. Originally two individual notes at the inception of the movement, *G* and *D* in mm. 1–3 (Refer back to Figure 58) and mm. 11–13 (Figure 60), we have later heard *G* and *C* in mm. 22–25 (Figure 61), and then *CG* and *DA* together in mm. 77–78 (Figure 62) and mm. 85–86, or *CG* and *GD* together in mm. 94–96 (Figure 63) as double stopped fifths. Yet later, a third tier of fifths *GDA*, and *DAE* in mm. 96–97 (Figure 64) stacked (all fifths) accompany the double fifth harmonics in the strongest dynamic range of the cello. The final sonority takes this fifth stacking one further, *CGDA* in m. 112 (Figure 65) heard simultaneously. It is understood throughout the piece that these rhythmic/harmonic gestures are to represent the acceleration and increasing intensity of the train mentioned in the poetry of this song’s text. The middle of all this, mm. 50–61 (Figure 66), offers a transitional sequence built primarily on the interval of a perfect fourth, which may also have a mechanical type of character. These perfect intervals and sounds attempt to exemplify the noises, gears, etc. of that train.



Figure 60. Bright Sheng, *Diu Diu Dong*, mm. 11–13



Figure 61. Bright Sheng, *Diu Dui Dong*, mm. 22–25



Figure 62. Bright Sheng, *Diu Dui Dong*, mm. 77–78



Figure 63. Bright Sheng, *Diu Dui Dong*, mm. 94–96

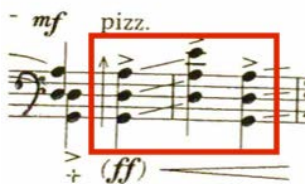


Figure 64. Bright Sheng, *Diu Dui Dong*, mm. 96–97



Figure 65. Bright Sheng, *Diu Dui Dong*, m. 112



Figure 66. Bright Sheng, *Diu Dui Dong*, mm. 50–61

6.2 *Diu Dui Dong* Authentic Performance Practice

The opening phrase in mm. 4-8 (Figure 67) in this movement already throw the cello into a new sound-scape in its use of the artificial harmonics on the A string. The melody is dressed with tenuto indications, therefore all bows are smoothly changed, and there are no unevenly accentuated beats anywhere. Bright Sheng has not directly asked for slides between these notes, but as this sound is actually imitating a train whistle (As described in the original song's text), it is imagined that this whistle is sliding between its pitches rather than clearly articulating any one of them.



Figure 67. Bright Sheng, *Diu Dui Dong*, mm. 4–8

From mm. 79–105, Sheng employs a new technique of parallel fifths in artificial harmonic formation, which is especially used frequently in mm. 79–82 (Figure 68). Here there may be a choice as to whether the upper notes of these non-thumbed notes are best played with one, or two fingers. If one’s fingers are fat enough, placing the 3rd finger between the strings a perfect fourth above the thumb will make contact with the upper and lower notes simultaneously. If one’s fingers are too small, or thin, perhaps two fingers will do the job better (Thumb + 2&3, or thumb + 1&2). Within this phrase, Bright Sheng also uses natural harmonics where they are available to produce the desired harmonic pitches.



Figure 68. Bright Sheng, *Diu Diu Dong*, mm. 79–82

The final phrase from mm. 110–113 (Figure 69) in low artificial harmonics on the C string simply needs to have the proper bow contact and distance from the bridge to engage the fragile and ephemeral sounds in this register in *ppp*. Here, the train is distant and emits a final whistle “Chhh” in *fff* subito.



Figure 69. Bright Sheng, *Diu Diu Dong*, mm. 110–113

CHAPTER 7. SIXTH TUNE *PASTORAL BALLADE*

Pastoral Ballade is of Mongolian origin, the northern most part of China (Figure 70).



Figure 70. Inner Mongolia

This region is represented by two main arteries of folk song tradition: the *Duan Diao*, and the *Chang Diao*, the latter of which Bright Sheng employs as a model in his piece. In songs of this genre, the pastoral quality is depicted mostly through the descriptive texts' surrounding subject of animals, grasslands and this type of serenity. The phrase lengths in this type are comparatively longer than in the *Duan Diao*, creating broad sonic landscapes and imagery.⁴² Typical of Mongolian folk song is the more frequent use of the Chinese modes *Zhi*, and *Yu*, but

⁴² Qing-Qing Zhou, *Zhongguo Minjian Yinyue Gailun (Introduction of Chinese Folk Music)* (Beijing: People's Music Publishing House, 2003), 44-45.

also the occasional use of *Gong* and *Shang*. Also common in this genre is the occurrence of the climax of the song in the middle of the piece, rather than closer to the end as western music.⁴³

The original folk song appears below in Figure 71.



Figure 71. The score of the original folk song, *Pastoral Ballade*, vocal part⁴⁴

7.1 *Pastoral Ballade* Analysis

The first phrase of *Pastoral ballade* is original folk material presented in *Gong* in *F*. In a slow tempo, with indication of warm playing, wide vibrato, and occasionally accompanying notes above the tune, acting as a minor counterpoint, this spins itself until the note following the fermata in m. 8 (Figure 72).



Figure 72. Bright Sheng, *Pastoral Ballade*, mm. 1–8

⁴³ Qing-Qing Zhou, *Zhongguo Minjian Yinyue Gailun (Introduction of Chinese Folk Music)* (Beijing: People's Music Publishing House, 2003), 46.

⁴⁴ Meng Zang Gequ Xuanji Bianshen Xiaozu, ed., *Meng Zang Gequ Xuanji-Duchangpu (The Collection of Mongolian and Tibetan songs- Solo Version)* (Taipei: Meng Zang Weiyuanhui, 1996), 34.

After the fermata in m. 8, we can call this section B already in m. 9, where he now the minor contrapuntal triplets heard during the first theme have become more motivic creating a pulse often more in a 9/8 or 12/8 feel, that also contributes to a pastoral quality here. The meters remain the same 3/4, 4/4, but the inner pulses are gently now in triplet form more often than not. This music advances in the direction of increasing density of texture, and contrapuntal writing from m. 23 onwards, where he has indicated the distinction between upper register melodic notes, and lower register accompanying notes. This section extends until m. 34 where a grand pause separates it from the remaining music.

The final chapter here, m. 36 to the end contains A1 material in *Gong* in *Gb*. The movement ends quietly with a refrain of the A material, with embellished and enriched self-accompaniment, with harmonics at the last sonority. This Coda is marked to be played slower and “*ppp sempre*” more than any other part of this movement, ensuring a pastoral, tranquil cadence.

7.2 Pastoral Ballade Authentic Performance Practice

The slow first theme of the *Pastoral Ballade* is a low, “warmly espressivo” folk song, played on the *G* string from mm. 1–3 and *D* string from the 2nd beat of m. 4 with his personal embellishments and accompanimental, obbligati moments appearing on the neighboring strings. This is asked and expected of the performer because the original style is to connect these collinear pitches with, noticeable, slow glissandi that are almost always present. Here, in some of these melodic configurations, yet a different left hand technique applies itself. Rather than reusing, and repeating the same finger to create this connection (as mentioned earlier in Chapter 4), this is a style that almost involves webbing the left hand in a way that gives each independent finger a certain sprawling range within which a finger can travel and change pitch. So, each

finger is essentially in motion, until the pitch achieved, at which point the next finger may continue the glissando gesture, and so on.

Although the movement begins slowly, by the time the ninth measure arrives, we are instructed to play even slower, however minimally (quarter note = 54–50 BPM). This slight vacillation in tempo could almost go by unnoticed, if it weren't for occasional gestures, and measures “in tempo” the basic character and pacing here is just plain slow. By m. 13, a reversal in this downhill tempo begins. *Accelerando* begins from measure thirteen, and gradually builds toward a climax at m. 34 where the quarter note has now transformed to quarter note = 96 BPM. On the way, there are still a few deliberate attempts to stall and hold this climax back (mm. 16–17 *poco meno mosso*) and m. 19 where tempo stabilization occurs for a single gesture (“a tempo”). Outside of these brief moments of respite the music continues tumbling forward in *accelerando* for a major section of the piece (ending m. 35 with a grand pause). One other measure that seems out of context is m. 25 (Figure 73).



measure in terms of its inner note values. Prior to this measure, Bright Sheng has created tension, and freedom of expression through a careful variation of the rhythms used. Often in triplets, giving forward motion, and otherwise in intricate and syncopated patterns, he is helping the accelerando with his own rhythmic propulsion and freedom. This style is typical of the Mongolian Folk Song style, characteristically long-lined, and rhythmically freer than may be notated.⁴⁵ However within the accelerando, these freely interpreted rhythms must continue to drive and move the phrasing forward, in spite of their freedom.

This freer tempo seems to be the most important stylistic, and musical challenge of this movement. To be able to discern from the beginning the changes in tempo from the initial 50 BPM to 96 BPM is in itself a performance practice technique that Bright Sheng has not yet used in this work until this point. Other western composers may also have been indicating such fluctuation in form/tempo for many generations. For example, polyagogic rhythms used by Lutoslawski (*ad libitum*, a *battuta* indications), metronomic indications *tornando al.* in Bartok's writing, metric modulations in Elliot Carter. Sheng chooses to use traditional Italian language instructions to indicate his timing ideas.

The final section of this movement quarter = 48 BPM (m. 36 to the end) returns suddenly to the original theme, this time now in treble voice, in monophony, again decorated with Bright Sheng's moments, particularly for the last 5 measures where he has written this cadence to the folk song. This section has the indication of half note pulse equals the quarter note pulse of the previous section's end. Therefore, in a loose way, the tempi of these two juxtaposing sections separated by the grand pause, are related. This is almost imperceptible considering that the contrasts are severe in dynamics *fff-ppp*, and that the rhythmic agitation has disappeared.

⁴⁵ Qing-Qing Zhou, *Zhongguo Minjian Yinyue Gailun (Introduction of Chinese Folk Music)* (Beijing: People's Music Publishing House, 2003), 44–45.

CHAPTER 8. SEVENTH TUNE *TIBETAN DANCE*

Tibet is the furthest southwest region within China (Figure 74). Among the many musical influences in this part of China, there are basically two main divisions: music tied to Buddhist traditions, and secular music.



Figure 74. Tibet

According to Bright Sheng's own program notes, he has indeed based this movement on a well-known unnamed Tibetan Folk dance.⁴⁶ It is a wonderful imitation of this style, and reminds me of the folk song, *Aimalinji* (Hey, Listen!) in its motivic use (Figure 75) and melodic shape (Figure 76).



Figure 75. The motivic excerpt from the original folk song, *Aimalinji*, mm. 1–5⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Bright Sheng, *Seven Tunes Heard In China*, ed. Yo-Yo Ma. (New York: G. Schirmer, 2001), program note of mvt. VII.

⁴⁷ Damin Ren, ed., *Zhongguo Mingde Zhuti Gangqin 18 Shou (The 18 Piano Pieces Rearranged From*



Figure 76. The melodic excerpt from the original folk song, *Aimalinji*, mm. 13–31⁴⁸

Aimalinji's style is based on the genre *stod gzhas*.⁴⁹ The best translation of *stod gzhas* is that *stod* represents the location of the art form and *gzhas* pertains to dance song. The combination therefore implies the regional style of a dance.⁵⁰ Within the definition of *stod gzhas*, it is understood that the term can be applied to music that it either sung, danced, or both, or simply an instrumental performance.⁵¹ There are two variations in the structure of the *stod gzhas* according to the occasions on which they may be engaged. The first of these structural models would begin with a slow prelude, slow dance song, fast interlude, fast dance song, and would conclude with a fast postlude; the second model would begin with a fast interlude, a fast dance

Chinese Folksongs) (Beijing: People's Music Publishing House, 2000), 6.

⁴⁸ Damin Ren, ed., *Zhongguo Minge Zhuti Gangqinqiu 18 Shou (The 18 Piano Pieces Rearranged From Chinese Folksongs)* (Beijing: People's Music Publishing House, 2000), 6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 6's footnote.

⁵⁰ Rong-Shun Wu, ed., *Tibetan Music: Sacredness and Secularity* (Taipei: Taipei National University of the Arts, 2007), 59.

⁵¹ Ga Jue, *Xizang Chuantong Yinyue De Jiegou Xingtai Yanjiu (The study of The Traditional Tibetan Music's Structural Patterns)*(Shanghai: Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, 2009), 23.

song, and would finish with a fast postlude.⁵² The next section below will seek to connect Bright Sheng's dance with the structural format of the *stod gzhas*.

8.1 Tibetan Dance Analysis

This Dance is the longest movement of the seven. Its structural divisions lie mainly in the alternation of material initially rhythmic and later more lyrical in styles. Much of the material within this movement is original folk song quotation, however, this only appears well into the movement, and is camouflaged amid lengthy motivic development in the style of the folk the song, however not really melodically, nor rhythmically literal. The following Table 3 will be the outline of the *Tibetan Dance*.

Table 3. Outline of the *Tibetan Dance*

Section	Measure Number	Elements
A (Slow Prelude)	mm. 1–41	Bright Sheng's motivic element.
B (Slow Dance song)	mm. 42–57	Bright Sheng's melodic element.
C + Transition (Fast Interlude)	mm. 58–94 mm. 94–112	Folk song motive. (mm. 59–60.1) Material from A section. (mm. 94–98)
D + Transition (Fast Dance song)	mm. 113–139 mm. 139–160	Folk song melody. (mm. 113–116/ mm. 125–129/ mm. 134–139.1 third note) Folk song motive. (material from C section in mm. 119–120) Material from C and D section. (m. 142 and mm. 150–151)
Coda (Fast postlude)	mm. 161–200	Material from the previous four sections: B section. (mm. 161–174) C section. (mm. 175–182) A section. (mm. 183–195) D section. (mm. 196–200)

⁵² Ga Jue, *Xizang Chuantong Yinyue De Jiegou Xingtai Yanjiu (The study of The Traditional Tibetan Music's Structural Patterns)*(Shanghai: Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, 2009), 23.

Section A (mm. 1–41) is a strongly pulsed *Tibetan Dance*, metrically confusing in its alternation between measure of 2/4, 3/4, 3/8, 5/8, with accents often placed on weak beats to detract from too much attention, and recognition of the downbeats where they are written. Basically in *pp* range, this music is distant, mysterious, self-propelling, and has a drive towards its ultimate cadence when they will immediately be contrasted. There are only three pitches heard at any point during the phrase (initially *C, Eb, F*), at later points these three note cells are transposed (*Eb, Gb, Ab*). This limited melodic range does not imply any complete modal association in this section.

Section B (mm. 42–57) is now much more “dolce”, alternating between natural *legato* sounds and *sul ponticello* indications. Here as well, the meters are mixed, and accents are clearly placed on certain pitches. The closest mode detectible in these lines is a Western a minor feeling, that which is occasionally prevalent in Sheng’s music. He is not limiting himself to Eastern modes at all times.⁵³

Section C (mm. 58–112) contains one of the most literal quotations of this *Tibetan Dance* tune. In mm. 59–60.1 is a single fragment of the tune (Figure 77), which thereafter undergoes a lengthy development, and almost fantasy-like improvisation of Sheng’s own composition on this small original *Tibetan Dance* motive. Within this section the only other iteration of that single measure occurs at m. 72, reminding us of where this other music comes from. The interior shape of this section is a characteristically obvious arching form building towards the strongest dynamic material from mm. 76–86 and then away from this point to the end of Section C. Modally, this section remains in *Yu* mode in *A* (mm. 59–61), and later in *Yu* in transposition in *Eb*

⁵³ Replied Email from Bright Sheng, January 27, 2016.

(mm. 62–63), *G#* (mm. 64–76.1), *C#* (mm. 77–80), *F#* (mm. 80.2–86), and finally in *C#* (mm. 87–94). In m. 92, Sheng inserts a low *C* natural in the previously accentuated place of *C#*s found in this section. This *C* natural signals in some way, the return harmonically to the next motive in the A section (about to return), where *C* natural is one of three recurring pitches (*C Eb F*). These three pitches will of course be sequenced, and eventually serve altogether as transitional matter heading towards the most climactic point of the movement where we begin section D.

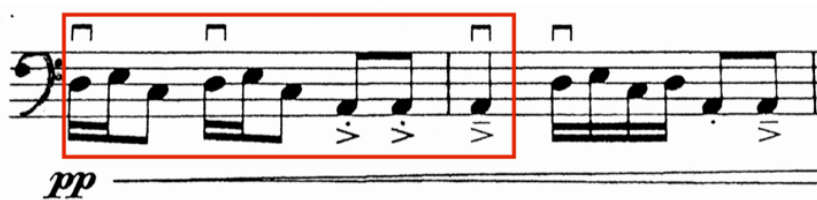


Figure 77. Bright Sheng, *Tibetan Dance*, mm. 59–60

This D section (mm. 113–160) is a combination of the modal qualities of *Gong* in *Db*, and arriving in what is the longest, most augmented presentation of the Tibetan Folk Theme yet heard in this movement in mm. 113–116 (Figure 78) and mm. 125–130 (Figure 79). In mm. 119–120 of *Yu* in *E* are extracted from the C section’s motivic reference, which will be sequenced and imitated in this section. In mm. 134–139 are a sequenced, transposed version of the music heard in mm. 125–130. At m. 139 begins a long and drawn out transition based on rhythmically similar gestures to the C section, as well as brief homage to the D section as well (mm. 150–151), but mainly functions as a vehicle that land the movement back at the more tranquil B section in m. 161. This transitional section starts from recalling the material from C section in m. 139, which modally employs *Shang* in *Bb* (mm. 139–149), and brief material from D section is heard in *Shang* in *F* (mm. 150–151). From m. 152, transition continues in *Jiao* in *C* with a pedal *G* pitch below the entire phrase until m. 160.



Figure 78. Bright Sheng, *Tibetan Dance*, mm. 113–116



Figure 79. Bright Sheng, *Tibetan Dance*, mm. 125–130

In mm. 161–200 can be identified as a Coda. This section begins with thematic material from section B, moves ahead to section C, and later even, section A, mixing and weaving these three ideas until an upwardly climactic last gesture (m. 196 in *Jiao* in $G\#$ plus *Shang* in $C\#$) to the end (Figure 80), “Going out with a Bang”.



Figure 80. Bright Sheng, *Tibetan Dance*, mm. 196–199

8.2 Tibetan Dance Authentic Performance Practice

According to a structural analysis of this movement, it is clear that Bright Sheng has modeled this movement on the genre of the *stod gzhas*, a form that follows the pattern of slow interlude, slow dance song, fast interlude, fast dance song, and fast postlude. At first glance, the movement may appear to not have followed the *stod gzhas* due to the metronome marking of a fast tempo (quarter note = 132-138 BPM) throughout the whole piece. However, Bright Sheng does follow the *stod gzhas*'s genre by basing the pulse on the note values that he uses.

Sheng begins the movement conforming to the characteristics of the slow prelude of the *stod gzhas*. In this A section he has confined his rhythmic tools to mostly eighth, and quarter notes, which gives an overall impression of a tempo that is not so fast. For this reason, this section remains rhythmically solid, without rushing. From mm. 21–23 (Figure 81), a stream of sixteenths begins in crescendo, and with accents on the final six to ensure that the phrase holds back. Bright Sheng uses this accentuation elsewhere in mm. 14–16 (Figure 82), and so on, where he wedges in an accented tapping technique always on the last beat of a rhythm, which holds back the recurrence of the repeated pitched notes. This interruption impedes the forward motion of these measures to a certain degree. This *pesante* quality, sporadically and unpredictably accentuating throughout the section is a technical challenge.



Figure 81. Bright Sheng, *Tibetan Dance*, mm. 21–23



Figure 82. Bright Sheng, *Tibetan Dance*, mm. 14–16

In the B section from mm. 42–57, he is now working exclusively with eighth notes. In this section, Bright Sheng instructs us to play almost continually in legato groups of 3,4,5 notes, in *piano* dynamic, *dolce* and alternating between ordinary sound and *poco ponticello*. His placement of low accented pitches between these legato groups helps hide any feeling of regular meter, thus keeping the forward motion a mystery. However, even with these irregular pulses, there is a slow dance song feeling to this B section when performing, again in keeping with the *stod gzhas* genre.

In measure 59, the second measure of the C section (Figure 83), contains a short motive quoted from the original folk song-*Aimalinji*. It is followed by a development on this motive that alternately uses sixteenth, eighths, and is accentuated in many different ways, creating a general feeling of anxiety, irregularity, and a faster, more panicked feeling to this section. He is also writing dynamics that are much more dramatic, ranging frequently between *pp* and *ff*. This contributes to the agitated tempo of this section and is therefore typical of the third section of *stod gzhas*'s fast interlude.



Figure 83. Bright Sheng, *Tibetan Dance*, m. 59

In spite of the appearance of the folk song, *Aimalinji* melody is at the top of the cello's register in eighth notes, and the pulse in the D section from mm. 113–160 is *tempo firmo*. The initial theme in eighths, is accompanied on its offbeats by the open strings used to accelerate the inner beat excitement, and creates a texture in this section that is predominantly sixteenth note based. This is the strictest tempo of all the sections because the meter barely changes, the

dynamic is furiously loud (*fff*) and the motion is continuous without a single rest. Once again he has adhered to the form of the *stod gzhas*'s fast dance song.

The final section, Coda begins on m. 161. Rather than follow the prescribed form of the *stod gzhas*'s fast postlude, Sheng brings back themes and rhythms, from all sections, including the tapping effect. This mixture of quiet dynamics, legato, non-legato fragments etc. does not lend itself to the feeling of a fast section. Only in the final phrase from m. 196 to the end (Figure 84), will Bright Sheng recall a style from the D section which suddenly then changes the momentum drastically, and the dynamics from *pppp* at the end of m. 195 at the fermata to *fff* in m. 196 without warning. He concludes the entire work with an upward gesture that seems to want to fly off the page, barely possible without a natural *accelerando* occurring simultaneously.

The musical score for Figure 84, measures 196-200, is written for piano. It begins in measure 196 with a dynamic marking of *fff* and a *sub.* (sustained) marking. The music consists of a series of chords and eighth notes in the right hand, and a bass line in the left hand. A fermata is placed over the final note of measure 195, with a dynamic marking of *pppp*. In measure 196, the dynamic changes abruptly to *fff*. The score includes various performance markings such as accents, slurs, and a *sfz* (sforzando) marking. The piece concludes with a final upward gesture in measure 200.

Figure 84. Bright Sheng, *Tibetan Dance*, mm. 196–200

CONCLUSION

Seven Tunes Heard in China is a well-received and important newcomer in the somewhat small canon of works for the solo cello. It is unique in the cultural bridges it crosses between Chinese and Western musical styles, and their fusion has created a language on the cello that is still almost unexplored by other composers. Sheng's technical innovations can transform the listener's ear from the New York concert hall to the mountains of Tibet. Somewhere in between lies his sonic world that is replete with nuances, gestures, expressions, and symbols of ancient Chinese folklore, interwoven with Bright Sheng's own improvisations in the styles of these movements to create seamless and well-shaped folk tunes on a single bowed instrument. Whether imitating the *Erhu*, *Qin* or the vocal gestures of China, Sheng is comfortable in his knowledge of the cello's possibilities, and takes great advantage of its coloristic, melodic, dynamic, rhythmic, and expressive range. In truth, he is limiting himself to small amounts of material to work with. The original songs are short; sometimes only fragments may be heard. Sheng is masterfully able to provide variation and development while conforming and respecting the forms and simplicity of this provincial music, its modal language, and its spirit.

The performance of this work is a challenge unlike any other cello work to date. Naturally, other composers have used their indigenous instruments as models for the sounds that they have exported to modern western instruments. Sheng is joining two dramatically different traditions, that of Western Art Music and that of Ancient Chinese folk music. It is the responsibility of the performer to research, understand and appreciate the subtleties of the Chinese instruments represented in these movements. This is the reference we must look to for a stylistically correct and interesting execution of this music. One need not perform this work as a

traditional cellist, so to speak, but perhaps simply adopt the new palette of cello sounds that have been explored in this original work.

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APPENDIX: PERMISSION LETTER

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February 22, 2016

Chiao-Hsuan Kang
3235 Highland Rd. Apt. 3101C
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SCHEDULE A

SEVEN TUNES HEARD IN CHINA

By Bright Sheng

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Mvt.1: mm.1-3, 5-8, 14-15, 20, 24-26 (total: 13 measures)

Mvt.2: mm.1-8, 11-23 (total: 21 measures)

Mvt.3: mm.1-10 (total: 10 measures)

Mvt.4: mm.1-19, 32-38, 52-53, 70-71, 96-100 (total: 35 measures)

Mvt.5: mm.1-25, 50-61, 77-82, 94-97, 110-113 (total: 51 measures)

Mvt.6: mm. 1-8, 25 (total: 9 measures)

Mvt.7: mm. 14-16, 21-23, 59-60, 113-116, 125-130, 196-200 (total: 23 measures)

VITA

Chiao-Hsuan Kang, originally from Taiwan, earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the National Taiwan Normal University, and Master degree at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where her primary cello teacher was Lee Fiser, the cellist of the LaSalle Quartet. She is currently working toward her doctoral degree in cello performance with Professor Dennis Parker, at Louisiana State University, where she currently is a teaching assistant. She is a candidate to receive her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in May of 2016. During her formative years of study, Kang performed in master classes with cellists Gary Hoffmann, Bion Tsang, Jian Wang, Adriana Contino and pianist, conductor Leon Fleisher.

Kang has won several competitions during her academic career: Second Prize in the International Solo competition at the *Asian Youth Music Competition* in Singapore, Second Prize in the *National Taiwan Normal University Concerto* competition, Third Prize in the *Louisiana State University Concerto* competition (played Dvorak Concerto with LSU symphony orchestra), winner of the *National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra Trio Chamber Music* competition, and also the *Xing-tian Gong* string quartet competition. As the winner of the *Xing-tian Gong* string quartet competition, Kang was invited to participate in the international string master concert and performed with Manhattan School of Music faculty, Marion Feldman-cello, Anton Miller-violin, and Stephanio Baer-violin.