*Chinese Emigré Composers: The Cultural Revolution and Divergent Modernisms 1953-1993*

1 Introduction

The Cultural Revolution ended in September 1976 leaving in its wake a traumatized populace. For ten years, no one was allowed to study or talk about that era, and its remnants quickly disappeared from view, including the *yangbanxi*,[[1]](#footnote-1) the revolutionary model works. A year after Mao’s death, conservatory doors reopened and a generation of young composers who had served in the labor camps matriculated, free to study music without the fear of government reprisal. The luminaries of modernized Beijing opera were dead, but in their wake emerged the beginnings of a genuine revolution in Chinese music. Through the doors passed several young Chinese composers who eventually emigrated to the West, among them Zhou Long and Chen Yi, the first post-revolutionary modernists.

In twentieth-century China, music was largely a tool for social reform and a means for unifying the masses during major political upheavals. Events such as the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931, the rise of Communism under Mao in 1949, and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) prevented any large-scale exposure to Western modernism. The Cultural Revolution’s systematic purge of Western influences meant not only that schools of music were closed, but that all manner of institutionalized Western musical endeavor, particularly experimentalism, were prohibited. By the time Mao died in 1976, the concept of “art for art’s sake” was largely forgotten. Thus, Zhou Long and Chen Yi entered conservatory training when the pedagogical influence of the previous generations was starting anew and gradually returning to Western modernist influences that were underway before the Cultural Revolution. As a result, “new styles–individual styles– emerged from a combination of three things: basic techniques learned… from the first and second generations of composers, modern Western composition techniques, and the individual personalities of the New Wave composers.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Zhou and Chen found novel and highly individualized ways of bringing East and West together in their modernisms as informed by their unique life stories. However, the individualized natures of their music belies the uniformity of their shared experiences as laborers during the Cultural Revolution, students at the Central Conservatory of Music, and advanced degree candidates at Columbia University. This Element will explore the factors that shaped their individual modernisms most powerfully. Through interviews and research on their backgrounds, I will develop a thesis that unique internal and external factors shaped their modernisms including their upbringings and musical experiences at the labor camps and explore the interplay between the personal and external forces that shaped their creativity before, during, and immediately after the Revolution.

Previous scholarship on Chinese “New Wave”[[3]](#footnote-3) composers and their works is substantial, yet is largely focused on cultural identity, the fusion of Eastern and Western compositional philosophies and techniques in their music, or are analytical or thematic discussions of specific works. Contrary to current understandings, I argue that the development of their modernisms cannot be adequately explained by locating them within the macro-political events of their day, and requires an understanding of each one’s contingency as a uniquely situated historical actor. Moreover, I will demonstrate that the description of their music as a synthesis of East and West by critics and scholars alike does not do justice to their uniquely-formed perspectives.

While it is standard practice to treat Western composers as singular products of historical and personal circumstances, comparable understandings of “New Wave” composers have not been adequately developed. This is because the sweeping narrative of the Cultural Revolution’s re-education campaign as understood in the West overshadows the nuances of personal agency that existed, thus keeping their musics from being treated as contingent works. This examination of Zhou Long’s and Chen Yi’s family backgrounds, experiences, and learnings will encourage greater attention to the individuality of these composers in future scholarship and promote a more subtle understanding of the genesis and formation of their musical modernisms, particularly once post-revolutionary political change was underway.

The central question I seek to answer is: Given their “shared” experiences during and after the Cultural Revolution, what accounts for their stylistic heterogeneity? Heterogeneity is most apparent in how Zhou Long and Chen Yi diverged artistically as early as their Central Conservatory years and following. Chen Yi embraced the “uptown” influence of Mario Davidovsky and serial practices of the Second Viennese School. Zhou Long embraced the influence of Chou Wen-chung by adapting the sounds and techniques of ancient Chinese music to the modern instruments and ensembles of the West. This research engages the dynamic of internal and external forces that shaped the creativity of Zhou and Chen by examining the interplay between historical forces at scales ranging from the personal to the societal. I examine their family context, unanticipated opportunities, and influences that interacted with their unique dispositions to advance their modernist perspectives.

This Element will begin with an introduction on *yangbanxi* or government sanctioned “model works,” the single most important musical genre produced during the Cultural Revolution, followed by a brief history of China’s relationship with Western musical culture and pedagogy, beginning in 1916 and concluding with the establishment of the Shanghai and Central Conservatories of Music by 1949. I also include a section on two important pedagogues: Yu Hoiyong, the father of revolutionary operas and Chinese ethnomusicology and Chou Wen-chung, the patron saint of Chinese modernism. Chou played a critical role not only in bringing these composers to the United States, but by sharing his ideals for a pure Chinese modernism, one that both respected traditional Confucian ideals and incorporated Western avant-garde techniques.

Due to six categories of difference which I define in the following paragraph, Zhou Long and Chen Yi developed the foundations for their later eclecticism.[[4]](#footnote-4) The circumstances of their early experiences help to account for not a stylistic unity but a spectrum of transcultural modernist approaches they pioneered—one akin to the “uptown” and “downtown” breadth of America’s own composers.[[5]](#footnote-5) The substance of my argument will be based on virtual interviews I conducted with Chen Yi in 2021 (Aug. 19, Sept. 23, Oct. 22), in 2022 (Jan. 13, Feb. 3, and April 7), and on Jan. 30, 2023, and with Zhou Long in 2021 (Aug.20, Sept. 22, Oct. 20), in 2022 (Jan. 12, Feb. 2, Mar. 9, Dec. 8), and on Feb. 2, 2023. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations and facts are from these interviews.

I define two groups of contingency: external and internal. External contingencies are ones that they could not control which include their family of origin, childhood, and experiences during the Cultural Revolution. Internal contingencies are the factors the composers had agency over which have bearing once they are at the Central Conservatory and after. The six categories of external and internal contingency include: 1) personality and family background, 2) early childhood opportunities, exposures, and learning of Western and indigenous Chinese musics, 3) labor camp assignments with its experiences and demands (location, nature of the work, rigor, and level of government scrutiny), 4) their educations at the conservatories after the Cultural Revolution, 5) their work or training after their undergraduate studies, and 6) personal mentors and influences at Columbia University.[[6]](#footnote-6) I limited my study to the experiences and works running up to 1993, the year Zhou and Chen graduated from Columbia University, because the works from this period are the purest reflections of their modernist proclivities, or in Zhou Long’s words, demonstrate what he “was aiming for.” Once commissions rolled in, their creativity became less experimental.

The final section synthesizes and compares the major factors that shaped Chen Yi’s and Zhou Long’s modernisms. I also incorporate statements of colleagues, family, and friends from one on one interviews. Given the unusual political and social environment of the Cultural Revolution and their unique backgrounds, one is able to identify factors that interacted with their personal dispositions to drive their modernist perspectives.

**2 Musical Context**

This Element’s study of Zhou Long’s and Chen Yi’s divergent modernisms requires a brief history of the sanctioned music during Cultural Revolution and the music institutions and pedagogues that played direct and indirect roles in their educations at the Central Conservatory of Music once they matriculated in 1977. I will first discuss *yangbanxi*, revolutionary works that were mostly reformed Peking operas, then introduce a brief survey of conservatory history in China beginning in 1916, followed by a description of two legendary pedagogues, Yu Hoiyong and Chou Wen-chung.

2.1 *Yangbanxi*

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) extraordinary music reforms were underway, ones that rid Chinese culture of Western bourgeois influence and gave rise to works for public indoctrination. Known as *yangbanxi*,[[7]](#footnote-7) China’s “model works” were the only ones performed, replicated, and filmed for viewing across the entire country during that era. This was a musical fixture for Zhou Long and Chen Yi in the decade prior to entering the Central Conservatory of Music in 1977. The intended purpose of model operas was the indoctrination of illiterate peasants, workers, and soldiers with Mao Zedong’s socialist message.[[8]](#footnote-8) From a historical perspective, however, these works were the fulfillment of a long-standing aspiration to modernize Beijing opera, one that existed since the turn of the century, much before Mao’s ascendancy. Its radical modernization resulted ironically in the incorporation of Western instruments and the synthesis of Western and Eastern compositional techniques—the contingent contributions of Jiang Qing, Mao’s wife and Yu Huiyong, Jiang’s appointed Minister of Culture.

Beijing opera was a cherished national art form that had inherited generations of tradition. Unlike Western opera, traditional Beijing opera was the collective effort of the troupe, and the songs were drawn from a repository of existing folk tunes. The operas were handed down orally, thus requiring a formulaic structure. Highly stylized gestures and delivery, symbolism, stock characters, historic costumes and face masks, and performance conventions such as mime, dance, and martial arts were also typical. The music was largely monophonic, with a single improvised or fixed melody carried by the singer or an instrument and punctuated with percussion. Additionally, the opera orchestras were small ensembles of six to eight members who played four categories of indigenous Chinese instruments: strings, winds, brass, and percussion (each orchestra member played more than one instrument).

In previous centuries, Beijing opera played an important role in translating dynastic values in response to changing social and political climates. During the prosperous years of the Qing dynasty (1646—1911), the subject matter of these operas was largely romantic in nature. But in the nineteenth century, legendary Chinese emperors, military leaders, and statesmen occupied the stage as reminders of China’s illustrious past, and in contrast to its reality of British invasion and defeat in the Opium War. The Qing dynasty’s final Empress Cixi (1835—1908), who raised Beijing opera to its zenith, unified the country and solidified Beijing opera’s status as a national art form. Her investment in it cultivated interest among the masses who identified with its depicted folk stories and legitimized its ongoing refinement and development among the educated Han.[[9]](#footnote-9)

However, Beijing opera, which enjoyed a relatively continuous and stable development in the Qing dynasty, entered a period of political turbulence and ideological change in the first half of the twentieth century along with calls for its reform.[[10]](#footnote-10) Principal influences included the contributions of Western-educated scholars and artists who sought to raise Beijing opera’s stature to that of the West’s. The rise of regional opera traditions (North versus South), exposure to Western film and drama, rising tensions between the educated elite and uneducated masses, and social reforms[[11]](#footnote-11) were other significant forces that encouraged change. Moreover, the epicenter of Beijing opera moved from its city of origin to the prosperous, Western-influenced, and intellectually progressive city of Shanghai. The Shanghai school of Beijing opera incorporated modern themes to reflect societal change (a departure from Confucian tradition) and the use of spoken drama as inspired by Western dramas and film.

During the second half of the twentieth century, China’s premier art form became a ready vehicle for the promulgation of Communist Party ideals. Adapted for socialist political messages, Beijing opera underwent significant reforms to educate the masses through storytelling, dance, and music.[[12]](#footnote-12)

A careful examination of *yangbanxi* begins with Mao’s philosophy of the function of art as presented at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art in 1942. Mao wrote:

All classes in all class societies invariably put the political criterion first and

the artistic criterion second… what we demand is the unity of politics and

art, the unity of content and form, the unity of revolutionary political

content and the highest possible perfection of artistic form… Literature

and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component

part… They operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the

people and for attacking and destroying the enemy.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Approximately two decades later, Premier Zhou Enlai rolled out the policy mandate to “revolutionize, nationalize, and popularize.” This responsibility ultimately fell in the hands of Mao’s wife, Jiang Qing, who possessed the experience necessary to lead this artistic revolution in the areas of Beijing opera, ballet, and symphony.

As Mao’s deputy, Jiang instituted the most comprehensive modernist reforms of Beijing opera and fulfilled Mao’s ideas for socialist-realist art as expressed in his Ya’nan address in 1942—“the unity of politics and art, the unity of content and form, the unity of revolutionary political content and the highest possible perfection of artistic form.” The modernized Beijing opera used themes that were accessible to the general public, employed characters such as soldiers, peasants, workers that the masses could identify with, had modern day sets and costumes, adopted standard spoken Mandarin instead of its highly stylized precedent, and incorporated singing, recited text, performance and martial arts. The original operas include *Shajiabang*, *The Red Lantern*, *On the Docks*, *Raid on the White Tiger Regiment*, and *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*.[[14]](#footnote-14) Jiang also extended political protections to performing artists and collaborators who upheld Mao’s revolutionary values.[[15]](#footnote-15) One of these loyalists, Yu Huiyong, was the talent who made the musical reforms possible. The chief architect, composer, orchestrator, and theorist for the *yangbanxi*, Yu became Jiang’s right hand in making her vision for Beijing opera reform a reality.

Educated during China’s Communist era, Yu Huiyong (1925—1977) was a respected composer and professor at the Shanghai Conservatory. Well-versed in Chinese indigenous music as well as the Western tradition, he was both a music theorist and a composer and fully capable of achieving this “unity of content and form.”[[16]](#footnote-16) Yu transformed Beijing opera by functioning as the composer for the *yangbanxi*, notating the opera scores, amplifying the drama and emotion of the socialist characters, introducing overtures to set the mood for the drama, composing new arias, and abandoning traditional approaches to vocal and instrumental interactions, among other reforms.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Perhaps the most prominent reforms Yu enacted were the use of Western orchestral textures and an orchestration that blended Western and Eastern instruments. He introduced harmony and counterpoint in the orchestra to raise the importance of the instrumental content to that of the voice, all the while maintaining the voice’s audibility. He also included Western instruments in the *yangbanxi* orchestras.[[18]](#footnote-18) Violins, violas, cellos and other instruments supplemented the Beijing opera orchestras to create a sound that more fully supported the drama. Yu toed the line between innovation and tradition carefully. His genius was his ability to preserve the look and feel of the Beijing operatic tradition, while gradually introducing musical innovations in service of Mao’s socialist message. Yu’s principal achievement in reforming Beijing opera was putting Western instruments and compositional approaches in the service of Chinese workers, peasants, and soldiers. Since the dramatic and emotional power resulting from these changes satisfied Jiang’s tastes and Communist Party expectations, Yu maintained the artistic freedom to reform Beijing opera wholesale. Yu Hoiyong’s ability to reform Beijing opera sheds light on how robust Western musical training was prior to the Cultural Revolution, which began with the establishment of the National Conservatory of Music in Shanghai.

2.2 Two Major Conservatories and Two Major Pedagogues

An understanding of Chen Yi’s and Zhou Long’s modernisms necessitates a discussion of two institutions and pedagogues that played an important role in post-revolutionary music education– Yu Hoiyong at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and Chou Wen-chung, a guest at the Central Conservatory of Music. In addition to modernizing Beijing operas, Yu is credited with elevating the stature and legitimacy of Chinese folk music studies which shaped Zhou’s and Chen’s conservatory training. Chou Wen-chung, an expatriate from the U.S., introduced Western modern techniques to students at the Central Conservatory after the school reopened in 1977, and made a way for Zhou, Chen, and other notable composers such as Tan Dun and Bright Sheng to study at Columbia University. Before discussing the legacy of Yu and Chou, however, a brief history of the Shanghai and Central Conservatories of Music is necessary for context.

Liu Ching-chih’s *A Critical History of New Music in Chin*a provides a meticulous coverage of the historical events in Chinese music education that led to the formation of the Shanghai and Central Conservatories and serves as a central source for my discussion. Liu chronicles the developments that facilitated the co-existence of Western and Chinese musical curricula for aspiring professional musicians that spanned most of the 20th century. Although China was introduced to Western music as early the seventeenth century through missionary Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), the absorption of Western styles truly took flight in the twentieth century during the New Culture Movement of the 1910’s and 1920’s.[[19]](#footnote-19)

As early as 1916, efforts to organize a music community around Western and Chinese music were underway at the Peking University. Originating as an extracurricular venture, it evolved into multiple entities, eventually becoming the “Peking University Music Research Society” in 1919 with the support of university president Cai Yuanpei. Cai was a rare visionary with the capacity to see education’s potential to “save the nation.”[[20]](#footnote-20) He emphasized education’s role in promoting the “moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic formations of citizens.[[21]](#footnote-21) The addition of Xiao Youmei, an educator who received his education at the University of Leipzig in philosophy and took classes in music theory and composition, gave this society the pedagogical foundation necessary to launch a university-level music program. An ambitious expansion of classes, performance learning, concerts, and other activities ensued culminating in the creation of the Peking University Institute of Music in 1922 at Xiao’s suggestion. However, after several years of growth, the Northern Warlord government closed the Institute down in 1927.

The collaboration of Cai and Xiao continued undeterred. On November 27, 1927, Xiao Youmei founded the Shanghai National Institute of Music with the help of Cai Yuanpei to avail China’s musical talent of a professional music education and to complete the work he began in Peking to create a music school of higher learning.[[22]](#footnote-22) He fashioned the conservatory after the German educational system.[[23]](#footnote-23) Recruiting top teaching talent was central to Xiao’s strategy. By 1937, he had hired 41 faculty members, 28 non-Chinese, many of whom were from Russia, and 13 Chinese musicians and music scholars, all of whom were trained outside of China with the exception of one.[[24]](#footnote-24)

As the conflict of the Second Sino-Japanese War or “War of Resistance” (1937-1945) intensified, Xiao managed to sustain the National Institute of Music, however, a contingent of students and staff from the Institute moved to Chongqing and established the Qingmuguan College of Music as well as a separate branch called the Songlinggang College of Music. By the end of the conflict in 1945, the Qingmuguan College of Music relocated to Nanjing and became the Nanjing Conservatory of Music. In parallel, the Soonglinggang College of Music moved to Shanghai.[[25]](#footnote-25) Through multiple mergers with schools in Peking, the Nanjing Conservatory eventually became the Central Conservatory of Music and a similar merger for the Soonglinggang College of Music with the Shanghai National Institute of Music resulted in the Shanghai National Conservatory of Music by 1949. Many of the graduates of the original Shanghai National Institute of Music went on to teach at these and other conservatories that sprang up across the country. Of all these schools, the Shanghai and Central Music Conservatories are the largest and most influential.

One of the leading pedagogues at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music leading up to the Cultural Revolution was Yu Hoiyong. Though most recognized for his contributions to *yangbanxi,* which Zhou and Chen absorbed during the Cultural Revolution, Yu Huiyong is also known for establishing Chinese ethnomusicology. He attended and was a professor at the Shanghai Conservatory contributing significantly to the study of Chinese folk music, another significant influence for Zhou and Chen before and during their conservatory training. Though from a poor rural background, Yu developed expertise in playing folk instruments (e.g., erhu, sanxian, and dizi) and learned local folk songs, dance, and theater traditions.[[26]](#footnote-26) Additional hands-on working experience as a member of the regional People’s Liberation Army’s performance troupe developed his skills in singing, playing instruments, acting, and performing in folk operas.[[27]](#footnote-27) This learning equipped him as a future composer, designer, and theorist of revolutionary Beijing operas.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Admitted to the Shanghai Conservatory in 1949 as a beneficiary of free educational opportunities the new Communist government extended to underserved students, Yu pursued formal training in Western music and began his research in musicology. Though advanced in his knowledge of Chinese folk music, Yu had much to learn about Western musical form, counterpoint, harmony, and orchestration. By 1953, he became an instructor and researcher in the national music department and by 1963 led the folk music theory division at the Shanghai Conservatory.[[29]](#footnote-29) Yu collected, transcribed and edited collections of folk songs in the manner of Bela Bartok and Zoltán Kodály, activities that Zhou and Chen would later pursue in their own learning.

Elevating the study of Chinese folk music as an academic endeavor was no small accomplishment considering China’s growing exposure and interest in Western music and the Shanghai Conservatory’s own Euro-centric leanings. As far back as the genesis of the Peking University Research Society in 1919, respect for Western training and scholarship existed, at times ecllipsing China’s own musical heritage. Interest in European music continued to rise in academic circles, so by the 1950’s, the two traditions were not on an equal footing. By its very nature, Chinese folk music, opera, and guqin music resist analytical studies because they were largely improvised, thus handed down through an aural tradition, and emphasized process rather than notation and structure. According Chinese scholar Jiti Li, “In the traditional Chinese concept, music is the presentation of ‘process’ and ‘mood,’ and the key to appreciating it is to not focus on musical form and structure, but to concentrate on its feelings and understand the flowing process of the music and overall mood.”[[30]](#footnote-30)

Yet, Yu’s systematic studies of folk music in particular, lent academic credibility to China’s own indigenous expressions and encouraged ethnomusicological pursuits. According to scholar Yawen Ludden, Yu legitimized Chinese ethnomusicology by integrating “a wide range of individual folk styles and genres, such as folk songs, storytelling, and theater; he also formed a systematic theory of Chinese folk music, which he called, “Comprehensive Research on National and Folk Music.””[[31]](#footnote-31) Ludden’s interviews with celebrated composer and professor Lian Bo of the Shanghai Conservatory highlight his larger influence: Yu’s scholarship made Shanghai Conservatory’s folk music division a model for other conservatories to emulate including the Central Conservatory of Music.[[32]](#footnote-32) Two posthumously published works of Yu’s that shaped Chinese ethnomusicology were *Research on Theatrical Art Music* and *Studies on the Relationship Between Melody and Lyrics of Traditional Chinese Music*. Dai Jiafang, the leading expert on *yangbanxi* said, “from any angle, it cannot be denied that Yu Huiyong was the most influential musician in China from 1950-1970.”[[33]](#footnote-33)

Once conservatories reopened in 1977, Chou Wen-chung, the first Chinese composer to achieve recognition in the West, returned to the Central Conservatory of Music to introduce a post-Cultural Revolution generation to Western modernist techniques and the larger philosophical questions around cultural synthesis. A composers, educator, and cultural ambassador, Chou was responsible for bringing members of the “New Wave” generation to Columbia University for advanced study and for enabling modernism to take root in China. In every sense, he was the forerunner and patron saint of post-revolutionary modernism. In Tan Dun’s words, ''He was the only one who could share a very deep knowledge of the traditions of China, but also bring us into a completely new world. He was the one who built a dream for us.''[[34]](#footnote-34)

Born in Yantai, China in 1923, Chou moved to the United States in 1946 after several years of hardship and displacement brought on by the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). A polymath of sorts, Chou had gifting and interests in the fields of architecture, engineering, aesthetics, and music. Initially accepted to the Yale School of Architecture, he declined a full scholarship opportunity in order to attend the New England Conservatory of Music where he studied with Nicholas Slonimsky. Chou’s contributions as a composer are modest, yet, he played a pivotal role in Chinese modernism by initiating the U.S.-China Arts Exchange in 1978. Once diplomatic relations between the U.S. and China normalized in 1979 after a thirty-year hiatus, Chou brought high-profile musicians such as Isaac Stern and Luciano Pavarotti to China, made teaching trips to the Central Conservatory of Music as a guest lecturer, and paved the way for young Chinese composers to study in the U.S. Zhou Long and Chen Yi were among them, entering Columbia University’s D.M.A. program in 1985 and 1986, respectively.

Chou Wen-chung’s compositional philosophy and influence upon the “New Wave” generation owes much to Chou’s mentor, teacher, and colleague, Edgard Varèse. Known as the “Father of Electronic Music,” Varèse’s musical philosophy and life’s work powerfully shaped Chou’s areas of engagement both as a teacher and cultural ambassador. Varèse’s accomplishments are numerous, but this discussion highlights those that resonate in Chou’s own teachings. Steeped in Chinese philosophy and aesthetics, Chou reintroduced the guqin and ancient artistic and literary traditions to a young generation that was forbidden to study them.[[35]](#footnote-35) In so doing, he put them in touch with the ethos of Chinese creative expressions. Chou states: “Contrary to Western practice, Chinese traditional arts theory does not limit itself to the investigation of materials and structure of any particular art form. It is concerned with concept and perception, how philosophy and aesthetics interpret nature, and the human response to nature; and then how such concerns are expressed in each of the art forms.”[[36]](#footnote-36)

Chou drew much from Varèse treatment of sound “as living matter” and “musical space as open rather than bounded.”[[37]](#footnote-37) Varèse’s mission was to liberate sound and to explore the possibilities of new instruments: “Our musical alphabet must be enriched. We also need new instruments very badly…. In my own works I have always felt the need of new mediums of expression… which can lend themselves to every expression of thought and can keep up with thought.”[[38]](#footnote-38) He believed that treating sound as “living matter” with the “perfect control of its quality, intensity, and pitch” would yield new “auditory perceptions.”[[39]](#footnote-39) As such, composers could treat each tone as having independent intensities with a variation thereof for the duration of the tone.[[40]](#footnote-40) Varèse also elevated the independence of percussion instruments, adding to their vocabulary of timbres, articulations, and endings and drew attention to rhythm as a “simultaneous interplay of unrelated elements that intervene at calculated, but not regular time lapses.”[[41]](#footnote-41)

Treating “musical space as open rather than unbounded” is not only a figurative expression for Varèse, it is literal as well. Invested in cultural exchange, Varèse was responsible for introducing numerous foreign-born composers to American audiences through the International Composers’ Guild, which he founded in 1921. He did similar cultural exchange work in Europe and across North, Central and South America.[[42]](#footnote-42)

Chou’s aesthetic philosophy drew heavily upon Varèse’s avant-garde ideas, extending them to the Far East once China’s doors reopened in 1977. Because of Varèse’s example, Chou was able to introduce cross-cultural applications. I have chosen to sidestep the rich ethnomusicological, anthropological, and sociological implications of Chou’s cross-cultural synthesis in favor of Varèse’s practical bearing on Chou’s teaching and thus Zhou Long’s and Chen Yi’s. Chou experienced aesthetic resonance with Varèse’s thoughts and found they could be applied directly to the Chinese musical and aesthetic traditions. In this regard, Chou identified a nexus where Western avant-garde and Eastern classical expressions might converge.

Though educated in the U.S., Chou remained deeply attuned to Chinese classical aesthetics. Chou encouraged Zhou Long and Chen Yi to draw inspiration from the allied expressions of ancient Chinese poetry, drawing, and calligraphy, all of which were banned by Mao during the Cultural Revolution because he viewed them as “bourgeois and reactionary.”[[43]](#footnote-43) Zhou Long’s frequent incorporation or imitation of the guqin (a plucked seven-stringed instrument often referred to as the instrument/music “of the sages” in its association with Confucious) is evidence of Chou’s influence.

Even as Zhou and Chen learned Western harmony, counterpoint, and orchestration at the Central Conservatory of Music, Chou Wen-chung promoted Chinese aesthetics to this next generation of Chinese modernists. In an article entitled, “East and West, Old and New,” Chou stated:

Western composers are becoming more and more interested in the interplay of all the

properties of sound and the resulting ramifications. In searching for new means of expression

they are advancing beyond the traditional boundaries of the Western polyphonic concept. The more adventurous younger composers already have begun exploring the immense resources in musical expression afforded by controlling and varying the articulation, timbre, and intensity of individual tones - precisely the same resources that have been of primary importance to Eastern Music.[[44]](#footnote-44)

He called attention to the importance of single tones as “living matter”[[45]](#footnote-45) and asked composers to consider individual tones both for their independent characteristics and value as well as the spiritual state of mind the performer adopts in executing the tones. In this manner, guqin performance practices with its intricate approach to individual tones, their attack, intensity, and ending, perfectly aligned with Varèse’s thinking; so does guqin music’s less regularized, organic, and naturalist approach to rhythm. Other connections include the importance of percussion as an elevated musical entity, the identification of “new instruments” like those found in Chinese traditional ensembles, and music’s unbound connection to other artforms (e.g., the motion of a calligraphy brush or the intonation or rhythm of Chinese speech). Lei Liang, an editor of a Chinese edition of Chou Wen-chung’s writings recalled Chou’s question to his students: “When is a line not a line?” Liang continued, ''If you think of a line that is drawn with a pencil or a pen, it is almost an absurd question… but if the line is drawn with a brush, it's of course not just a line: It's emotion, it's expression, it encompasses dimensions, even counterpoint. And [Chou] essentially made himself into a calligrapher with sound.''[[46]](#footnote-46)

Chou’s philosophical and interdisciplinary wisdom was formative as Zhou and Chen sought out an authentic expression, one born of their Chinese heritage and Western modernist training. His appeals for a Chinese modernism that is a genuine cultural synthesis informed by the natural world and Chinese philosophy and aesthetics resonated deeply. For Zhou, this meant Tang poetry, guqin music, and cross-cultural instrumentations and for Chen, *Baban*, the Golden Mean, serialism, and Lutoslawski.[[47]](#footnote-47) The differences are noteworthy.

**3 Zhou Long (b. July 8, 1953 in Beijing, China)**

**3.1 Personality and Family Background:**

The social and political backdrop for both Chen Yi’s and Zhou Long’s early childhood years was one of peace and openness as the turbulence of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-45) and the Communist Revolution (1946-49) subsided. Chen Yi and Zhou Long were born in 1953 when China’s young Communist government was furthering its First Five Year Plan, a Soviet-inspired rapid industrialization agenda. As the building of infrastructure and industrial complexes gained traction, a wave of free expression and thought waxed with the Hundred Flowers Campaign (1956), with Mao lifting bans on intellectuals’ freedom of speech, and waned with the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957-59, a punitive response to the many criticisms that eventually surfaced. These precedents were the birth pangs that culminated in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-76), Mao’s repressive socio-political campaign to eliminate capitalist and traditionalist remnants in Chinese society.

Zhou Long’s complex family background, which was a blend of two worlds– China’s past and China’s future– with landowners on his father’s side and communist revolutionaries on his mother’s, profoundly impacted his experience of the Cultural Revolution. Zhou Long’s mother, He Li Ying whose revolutionary name was He Gaoyong (Oct. 28, 1928 – June 5, 1986), was the step-daughter of Zhu De, a military leader, member of the Communist government, and the eventual Chinese House Speaker. Her biological mother, He Zhihua and Zhu De were some of the earliest Chinese students of Marxism in Berlin and Moscow.[[48]](#footnote-48) Upon returning to China, they became Communist Party members when the party was first established in 1921 and helped catalyze the events that led to the Communist Revolution in 1949. Zhu De and He Zhihua eventually had a daughter, Zhu Min. Zhu Min and He Gaoyong grew up together as half-sisters in Sichuan.

Though Zhou Long’s maternal side was communist aligned, his paternal grandfather’s status as a landowner destined him for a more difficult placement during the Cultural Revolution.[[49]](#footnote-49) After the Communist Revolution in 1949, landowners, particularly those who had laborers working on their land, were subject to government reprisals. There were five blacklisted categories of people, the most reviled class being landlords: “*Di*– landlords, *Fu*– the well-to-do, *Fan*– counterrevolutionaries, *Huai*– criminals, and *You*– rightists who were mostly intellectuals.” Zhou’s paternal grandfather owned land in a suburb of Shanghai and though he was a supporter of the revolutionary movement, he and his descendants were placed on the government’s blacklist.[[50]](#footnote-50)

He Gaoyong, a singer, possessed an unwavering dedication to Zhou Long’s musical formation, but her personal path music was more happenstance– meaning a fortuitous alignment of opportunity and natural gifting. Without any formal education, she earned admission to the National Institute of Music in Shanghai at age fourteen because she possessed a beautiful voice. She also had an interest in pursuing piano studies, but had no financial means to secure an instrument, so she enrolled as a soprano in the voice department.

Before Communist China was established in 1949, the Kuomintang government created the National Institute of Music, later known as the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, the first music school in China. During the Japanese invasion and occupation of Nanjing, the NMIC moved from Shanghai to Sichuan, Chongqing where the central government was established.[[51]](#footnote-51) There, He Gaoyong studied under Ying Shangneng, the first American-trained baritone and former professor from the Eastman School. Ying Shangneng introduced Western vocal arts to China being one of the few singers trained in the West.[[52]](#footnote-52) At nineteen, He Gaoyong completed her education as a member of the first graduating class– the cohort that eventually laid the pedagogical foundation for China’s conservatory-level teaching nationwide. He Gaoyong’s colleagues included legends like Yan LiangKun and Luo Zhongrong, two individuals who later played an important role in Zhou Long’s own musical development.

Upon graduating, He Gaoyong taught at the Taiwan Normal University, an opportunity brokered by Miao Tianrui, the president of the National Institute of Music. But after one year of teaching, the Communist Revolution took place in 1949. With the Communist presence established in Beijing, and Chiang Kai-Shek’s retreat to Taiwan underway, Zhu Min summoned He Gaoyong to return. Upon returning to Beijing, He Gaoyong joined the chorus of the Central Philharmonic Society. Eventually, she went on to teach at the China Conservatory which later merged with the Central Conservatory of Music.[[53]](#footnote-53) (After the Cultural Revolution, these schools separated and He Gaoyong transferred to the Central Conservatory of Music.)

Like He Gaoyong, Zhou Long’s father, Zhou Zutai (Feb. 25, 1920 – Nov. 13, 1986) also discovered the arts by chance, but unlike He Gaoyong, he was an “educated” man, having attended middle school. While creating posters for the anti-Kuomintang government student movement (pre-Mao), he discovered his gift for illustration and drawing. This led him to the China Academy of Art[[54]](#footnote-54) in Hangzhou, the earliest drawing school located outside of Shanghai, where he was classmates with Wu Guanzhong, the father of Chinese modernist painting. Zhou Zutai subsequently attended the Fine Arts Academy in Shanghai. After the Communist Revolution in 1949, the central government recruited Zhou Zu Tai from Shanghai to Beijing to establish the first arts department at The Central Academy of Drama. He taught stage and set design and was head of the department.

Zhou Zutai’s introduction to He Gaoyong happened through their mutual connection to Li Ling, the head of the Central Philharmonic Society (orchestra and choir). Li Ling had deep ties to Zhou Zutai’s family in Shanghai, having received financial support from Zhou Zutai’s landowning father to establish a pioneering new music magazine.  **In 1951**, Zhou Long’s quiet father and mother were married in Beijing. A reserved introvert himself, Zhou Long shared with a smile, “My father couldn’t find a wife otherwise.” Zhou Long grew up as one of six children with aunt Zhu Min’s four children (three biological sons and an adopted daughter) and Zhou’s biological sister, Zhou Feng, who was four years younger.

Thirty-four years later and well after the Cultural Revolution, Li Ling would play another critical role in Zhou Long’s life. On one of Chou Wen-chung’s many exploratory visits to the Central Conservatory of Music as a lecturer and founder of the Center for US-China Arts Exchange, a conversation ensued between Chou and Li Ling about sending talented Chinese composers to Columbia University. Li Ling, the then vice president of the Chinese Musicians Association, recommended Zhou Long as the first Chinese candidate to apply to Columbia’s DMA program. Zhou was accepted and in August 1985 left China for New York City.

**3.2 Childhood Exposure to Music (1953-1966)**

Since Zhou Long was the son of a musician and a visual artist, his artistic formation was always interdisciplinary. His father’s instruction in theatrical set design, his mother’s voice lessons at home, and the lessons and conversations on literature and art at his residential community made for rich experiences that fed his aural impressions and abstract thoughts. Though Zhou did not exhibit a prodigious talent nor interest in playing an instrument, his sensitivity to the voice, visual imagery and design, and sound sharpened.

Zhou Long began studying the piano at five, but his real childhood passion was building things– a radio or motorboat– which sparked an aspiration to become an engineer. Like many mothers, He Gaoyong was challenged by Zhou’s refusal to practice. For two years, Zhou dutifully executed his Beyer and Czerny exercises, and played simple Schumann pieces, Mozart’s “Turkish March,” and an arrangement of the “L’Internationale,” the Communist anthem. Upon commencing his formal education at seven, however, Zhou struck a deal his mother. In his words, “Either I keep practicing, or I don’t go to school. You can’t have both.” So, Zhou’s mother let him quit.

In lieu of piano, He Gaoyong demanded that Zhou study Chinese poetry and literature. While living in the faculty housing at The Central Academy of Drama where his father taught, Zhou was exposed to the teaching of neighbors who were accomplished playwrights and literature professors. He studied Tang poetry and had English language lessons. Although poetry was at his mother’s insistence, the exposure turned out to be an important source of inspiration for his eventual compositions.[[55]](#footnote-55) Between the ages of seven and twelve, Zhou also made art by watching his father teach students how to create oil paintings.[[56]](#footnote-56)

His mother’s voice lessons at home also left a lasting impression. She instructed students how to correct their intonation and to develop their sound– Zhou described some as sounding “awful.” To this day, Zhou remains ultra picky about voice intonation as a result, a characteristic that played a significant role in his choice of singers for *Madame Whitesnake*, the opera that earned Zhou the 2011 Pulitzer Prize. Zhou shared that no matter how accomplished a singer is, he “can not tolerate intonational errors and the use of a wide vibrato to cover them up.” He is similarly careful with instrumentalists and their ability to play in tune.

Zhou credits his mother for his decision to become a composer. As a music lover, she shared her admiration for older colleagues who were composers and conductors. He Gaoyong would say, “My son should become a composer because a composer creates music.” To nurture this aspiration, she had Zhou meet with her music colleagues over meals. His aunt Zhu Min also encouraged this aspiration. Trained at the Lenin Teachers’ College in Moscow, later becaming a Chinese diplomat at the Cultural Education Council in Moscow, Zhu Min provided recordings of Tchaikovsky’s (*Eugene Onegin*) and Smetana’s works and as well as an East German accordion.[[57]](#footnote-57) As a result, Zhou developed a deep love for Russian romantic opera melodies and Western opera in general. Zhou said that the melodic beauty of these operas were imprinted in his childhood psyche and shaped his aesthetic approach to *Madame Whitesnake.* By crafting beautiful melodies, Zhou kept the opera from sounding “ugly.”

Before the Cultural Revolution was underway, Western-trained music faculty like He Gaoyong were also educated in Chinese folk music. She received instruction from teaching masters on singing styles from the Shanxi Province and took up the banhu (two-stringed fiddle) along with other traditional instruments. These endeavors exposed Zhou to the styles and sounds of indigenous Chinese music, which were previously foreign to him. Once the Cultural Revolution began, however, all forms of music making beyond the *yangbanxi* and Mao-inspired works, which included folk music, Peking opera, ancient music, were prohibited.

**3.3 The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976):**

When the Cultural Revolution began on May 16, 1966, Zhou Long and Chen Yi were thirteen years old– Zhou was about to enter middle school and Chen Yi had just completed her first year. As children of urban elites, they were sent into the country to be reeducated by peasants, factory workers, and soldiers through a rotation of assignments. The conditions of these assignments varied and was determined based on the family’s standing with the government. Descendants of landlords, the most distained group, were destined for the toughest locations, thus, Zhou was assigned to a remote farm with harsh conditions near the Soviet border.

Prior to the Cultural Revolution, Zhou planned to attend the #23 middle school in Beijing, but once the Revolution began, the government seized Zhou’s paternal grandfather’s house and land, destroyed his father’s artwork, and sent his parents away to labor on farms, leaving Zhou and his sister at home alone. They were 14 and 10. His No. 23 middle school class was sent to work in a steel factory, so for over three years, Zhou operated heavy machinery, pressing hot steel into thin sheets that were made into rolls for eventual shaping and use. He worked the night shift as the factory was continuously in operation. Meanwhile, his sister, Zhou Feng (who later became a costume designer for the Central Ballet in Beijing), was sent to a youth pioneer program for children, having previously attended the Dingshan China School for gifted students.[[58]](#footnote-58) Zhou thought they could take care of themselves, but a nanny who lived nearby looked after and cooked meals for them. During this time, Zhou picked up the piano again, playing themes from the sanctioned revolutionary operas and improvising off of them. For three years, all that Zhou studied were Mao’s writings, so by the time he was sixteen, he said he had “no knowledge” except for Maoist ideology and how to press metal.

By December 1968, however, Mao released a missive on his re-education program that changed the course of Zhou’s future. “It is very necessary for the educated youth to go to the countryside and undergo re-education by the poor peasants… We must persuade the cadres and others to send their sons and daughters who have graduated from elementary school, middle school and university to the countryside, let’s mobilise. The comrades in the countryside should welcome them.”[[59]](#footnote-59) The re-education policy mandated those who were sixteen years old to be sent to the countryside to work on farms unless the family had only one child. Accordingly, Zhou Long was sent 830 miles northeast to remote Heilongjiang, while his sister Zhou Feng remained in Beijing.

Prior to leaving for Heilongjiang, military delegates from the central government came to Zhou’s school to announce the farm assignments. Camp assignments were managed by the middle school and the school district– a local arm of the centralized national system. The officials divided the students into three groups for three different locations based on their family’s standing with the government. Those who were acceptable according to communist ideology were assigned to closer locations such as inner Mongolia (a 4-5 hour train ride from Beijing) where a state run farm was located. On example is Gu Lan, Zhou’s middle school friend. Currently working for the FDA as a toxicologist, he came from a family of physicians who were deemed “more acceptable.” The second group with a less favorable standing was sent northeast to Heiliongjiang and the least acceptable sent far south to Yunnan, the most remote location with the harshest conditions, to produce rubber trees.

The military delegate described Heiliongjiang to the students in attractive terms. “We have a dormitory. We have a building. We have secured food for you, cooking oil. And we have even a movie theater.” Comforted by these words, the group of fifty students traveled for seventeen hours by train, truck, and tractor-pulled carts, and arrived at a state farm in Hegang, a coal city where they were to work harvesting and producing beans, corn, and wheat.[[60]](#footnote-60) (This state-run farm was managed as a semi-military corporation. Older farmers from the Shandong province worked on this farm as well. Typically poor and in search of food, these farmers went to the Northeast because the soil there is fertile and good for growing soybeans and other crops. Though transplants from Shandong, these farmers married and settled permanently in Heilongjiang, firmly established with housing, work, and a skill base.)

Zhou Long arrived in Heilongjiang in September 1969, just before National Day on Oct.1st. The remoteness of this farm became apparent when with the soldiers transferred the luggage from a truck to tractor-pulled carts. Once the tractor-pulled carts arrived at the destination in the woods, all they could see was a large tent. When told this was their new home, the students wept and were reluctant to leave the cart. In response, Zhou played his East German accordion to “make them laugh.” Slowly, they regained their composure and disembarked.

Relative to Chen Yi’s experiences as a laborer, Zhou’s were more difficult because this remote assignment had harsher conditions and next to no exposure to music education or performances. The tent housing had a curtain in the center to separate the girls from the boys. Sleeping mats covered the wooden floors with students lined up in rows. An outdoor mud kitchen was where they cooked their meals. Summers were hot and rainy made worse by the hordes of mosquitoes that kept them in constant motion or covered from head to toe. Winters were extremely harsh, so cold that the toothpaste froze, and Zhou suffered from infections and swelling in his knees.

Zhou was first assigned to the night shift– maintaining security and keeping a wood fire running continuosly in the kitchen, which ran all day and night due to the extreme cold. Work took place twenty-four hours a day. During the winter, when farming wasn’t possible, the youth would build housing and do other light work. Zhou would cook food for the night shift workers who ate upon their return. One night, after cooking pancakes and vegetables, Zhou fell asleep without extinguishing the flames completely, thus causing a fire. At the morning meeting the next day, he heard about the fire, oblivious to the dramatic events of the previous night. The supervisor subsequently fired Zhou from this duty, but assigned him to drive heavy farm equipment in the spring of 1970. Though Zhou was a muscular, stocky youth and well-suited for demanding field labor, the supervisor’s favor toward Zhou resulted in this easier assignment. After a period of training, Zhou drove a tractor and combine harvester. He recalled the extremely dusty conditions of this work while seeding wheat and soybeans– by the end of the day, he was covered in dirt. Zhou’s other daily work chores included carrying 200 lb. bags of beans.

In addition to physical hardships, Zhou experienced psychological difficulties. As a result of an undeclared military conflict between China and the Soviet Union that began in March 1969, there was heightened tension on both sides of the border.[[61]](#footnote-61) Zhou and his colleagues carried Japanese rifles and flares for self protection, knowing that Soviet spies were near. To provide some relaxation and fun, Zhou improvised and played revolutionary songs and Russian folk tunes (he possessed a book with these songs) on his East German accordion.

After three years in Heilongjiang, a sudden back injury enabled him to return to Beijing for recovery. With the help of Li Ling’s son, Li Xin, Zhou Zutai was able to win Zhou’s release from Heilongjiang and return to Beijing for one year. During this hiatus, Zhou enjoyed the rare privilege of having private lessons with He Gayong’s colleagues as well as access to recordings of Western classical works.[[62]](#footnote-62) Unemployed and living in the city, these veteran professors from the Central Conservatory of Music were eager to teach Zhou basic theory, harmony, counterpoint, conducting, orchestration, and later songwriting on a weekly basis. They equipped Zhou with a foundation in tonal music. Li Yinghai and Gu Danru taught him pentatonic and Western (Sposobin’s *Uchebnik garmonii*) harmony, Luo Zhongrong, theory (Schoenberg’s *Harmonielehre*), counterpoint, and orchestration,[[63]](#footnote-63) Yan Liang Kun, scorereading and conducting, and Fan Tzuyin, songwriting and accompaniment.[[64]](#footnote-64) Zhou learned how to write 2, 3, 4, up to 8-part works and fugues and absorbed harmonic theory through the Sposobin textbook, which he reviewed several times before and during his studies at the Central Conservatory.[[65]](#footnote-65) He remarked that these professors were happy to teach him because he was a “country, not a city boy anymore” and that he became like a “family member” to them. Zhou also had access to recordings made possible through the librarian of The Central Academy of Drama. She supplied Zhou with recordings of the Vienna Boys’ Choir, Prokofiev Symphony No. 7, Rachmaninoff’s Symphonic Dances, and others as did Aunt Zhu Min, who procured recordings of Russian opera as a member of the diplomatic corp in Moscow. Zhu Min later returned to teach Russian at the Beijing Normal University.

With the re-education policy still in effect, Lixun? facilitated Zhou’s transfer to Zhangjiakuo (located 300 miles northwest of Beijing) in 1973 to join the Zhangjiakuo Song and Dance Troupe. This is where he served until he began his training at the Central Conservatory of Music in the fall of 1977.[[66]](#footnote-66) At Zhangjiakuo, Zhou’s rise was meteoric as he learned through application. He began with accompanying singers on his accordion and eventually become a composer, conductor, arranger, and performance organizer.[[67]](#footnote-67) He worked with a choral conductor who was also a songwriter on assignments that were adaptations of Mao’s directives. Upon receiving a new text, the choral conductor would set the text to music and Zhou would begin orchestrating immediately.[[68]](#footnote-68) He would orchestrate a choral work for a small orchestra and rehearsals would commence the following week for performance.[[69]](#footnote-69) The turn around time was very quick.

He also arranged songs for choir and composed short scores for dance that communicated Mao’s education agenda. Entitled, “Bi ye gui lai” (“Graduate Returns Home”), a male dancer “describes how a student comes from the countryside, a village, and studies at the university. This was the goal or the aim during the Cultural Revolution… to encourage farmers to become university students… .” The rural poor (*Gongnonbing xueyuan–* “worker-peasant-soldier students”) were encouraged to attend university in urban centers and the educated elite were sent away to farms to be re-educated by the working poor.[[70]](#footnote-70) William Saywell states:

Three major criteria were used in the selection process for universities in the early 70’s: physical fitness, ‘cultural level’ (i.e. intellectual ability and academic achievement) and political consciousness. It was the third of these that was critical… Only the sons and daughters of workers, peasants and soldiers could apply, although children of other urban groups were eligible by virtue of their two years of labour in the countryside allowing them to be reclassified as peasants!.”[[71]](#footnote-71)

In Zhangjiakuo, Zhou also learned a vast array of ethnic musics that were principally settings of text. Three cultures converged in Zhangjiakuo in inner Mongolia– Shanxi opera,[[72]](#footnote-72) Hebei opera tradition, and Errentai,[[73]](#footnote-73) a unique Mongolian art form that also integrated Shanxi and Hebei influences.[[74]](#footnote-74) Although Zhangjiakuo is located in the Hebei province, their accent is heavily influenced by the Shanxi provinical people. Additionally, the Zhangjiakuo Song and Dance Troupe, which reported directly to the municipal cultural bureau, had a folk music research studio. As such, Zhou had opportunities to collect folksong materials for study and to do field research. He even returned to Heiliongjiang on one such field trip to study the opera tradition of the Oroqen, one of the oldest ethnic minorities of northeast China. These exposures to the musics and dialects of ethnic minorities sensitized Zhou to the art of notating microtonal inflections of pitch and text. Zhou shared, “As a composer, you have to give a very clear direction, because you can’t demonstrate to the musicians every time, if you are not there. So you have to notate it, and we have to notate it by using some notes or directions... And for the instrumental part and the vocal part, we gave them direction how to mimic the style….” Zhou’s visit to inner Mongolia left strong impressions. He recalled learning opera in the Mongolian folksong style. He rode horses and lived in a tent with the Mongolian people. He heard and watched small children riding horses and singing these folk songs. He observed and notated these materials firsthand.

**3.4 Central Conservatory of Music (1978-1983):**

Zhou Long’s work at the Zhangziakuo Song and Dance Troupe put him in a strong position to apply to the Central Conservatory after the Cultural Revolution, which ended when Mao died on September 9, 1976. It also prepared him for the cross-cultural instrumentations he pioneered while at the Central Conservatory.[[75]](#footnote-75) On a trainride into Beijing, Zhou heard an announcement that universities and conservatories were reopening. He submitted his dance score for solo male dancer, triple wind orchestra, and sixty-member chorus that was recorded by the Shijiazhuang (capital of Hebei province) opera hall orchestra and chorus for a provincial art festival.[[76]](#footnote-76) In addition, he submitted revolutionary song settings in the *errenzuan* style. He described them as tonal folk/pop songs: “All the revolutionary songs sound like Broadway… because Madame Mao knew Broadway. She was an actress in the ‘30’s and 40’s… During the Cultural Revolution, all the songs, chords, and the singing and dancing is… pretty much similar.” Zhou went on to say that this adoption of Western musical style was entirely acceptable. What was not acceptable was any hint of 20th-century experimentalism.

After taking entrance exams, which were reinstated for colleges and universities in 1977 by the vice premier Deng Xiaoping, who prioritized the rebuilding of the educational system, Zhou entered the Central Conservatory of Music in the fall of 1977.[[77]](#footnote-77) However, the lack of available housing for the students delayed the start of school until the spring semester of 1978. After a soft start that spring, the students enrolled officially in the fall of 1978. After ten years of dormancy, the school reopened with little to no resources– the shelves of the library were bare. Rebuilding the curriculum and resources started from the ground up. Zhou’s family friend who worked in the Beijing Film Studio Library supplied him with recordings that included his earliest exposures to 20th-century Western works: Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*, Resphigi’s *Fountains of Rome* and *Pines of Rome* as well as Russian classical works. These works made an indelible impression on his musical psyche. The entire class of thirty-two composition and conducting students studied the mini-score of Resphigi’s *Fountain of Rome* while listening to the recording. With so little available, Zhou said he listened to these recordings “a hundred times.” Even though resources were scarce, he found this “most effective because [when] you really want to learn something and that’s the only material you have… you get into it.”[[78]](#footnote-78)

From childhood, Zhou grew up listening to the melodies of Tchaikovsky, Verdi, Puccini, and Smetana, but the exposure to Western orchestral music, however, was completely new. “This [was] the first time we were going to experience it and listen to it. And we were very excited because we [heard] the language. It’s really different from what I find when I heard.. classical opera.” Zhou recalled how difficult it was during the first hearing to follow the meter changes in the score of Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*. “So this Stravinsky, the variety of the rhythm changes, we never experienced before. And for myself, Resphigi’s Fountains of Rome and Pines of Rome, all of this symphonic sound was to me…very fresh. I heard some Impressionism also… but I thought this was more angular.”[[79]](#footnote-79) Zhou happily shared that a critic once described his own works as “angular Impressionism.”

Once at the Central Conservatory, Zhou studied with Su Xia and remained his student for the duration of his bachelor's degree. Su Xia was among the founding faculty members of the Central Conservatory of Music. He had served as head of the composition department and taught a number of successful Chinese art music composers.Su was focussed on building the fundamentals.[[80]](#footnote-80) Though an accomplished composer, Su was not actively composing by the time Zhou became his student. Su taught Zhou how to write in the tonal style and he explored pantonal works as well. Zhou noted the rigor of his instruction.[[81]](#footnote-81) When he taught, he wouldn’t allow the student to play the piece at the piano. He would play the student’s work, one pitch after the other and stop after every chord to think about voiceleading and chord choice and then cross out any extraneous pitches. “He was very critical.”[[82]](#footnote-82) As a result, his students write very clearly and logically.[[83]](#footnote-83)The teaching was quite systematic and disciplined. During the first two years, Zhou worked on small works, first song and choral writing, then chamber compositions and only later large scale works like a symphonic poem. His earliest official compositions from these years include three tonal/pentatonic works: *Song Beneath the Moon* (1978) for piano (also arr. for guanzi– Chinese oboe and yangqin– Chinese dulcimer), inspired by a Dai folk song, *Ballade of the Sea* (1979), a song cycle for soprano and piano based on a text by Tuo Huang, and *Mongolian Folk-Tune* Variations (1980) for solo piano. The variations are based on a pentatonic pastoral folk tune, *Mongolian Xiao Diao*. In Zhou’s words: “At that time, I was looking for a theme for the variation. So I looked through many folk tunes, and I liked this one very much. I thought the major tunes were not very interesting to me, so I picked a minor tune, a melody in the key of *Yu* [one of the Chinese pentatonic modes]. I thought it was very lyrical, very open, and I felt there was potential for this theme to become a variation.”[[84]](#footnote-84)The theme, eight variations, and coda display textures that are contrapuntal, through-composed, and lyrical in nature with occasional hints of French Impressionism and a variety of registral displacements and accompanimental textures that imitate Chinese instruments.[[85]](#footnote-85) Zhou also shared: “There are several long distant modulations. I studied with Su Xia for five years. At that time, he was very strict about it, and very thoughtful. He said you don’t have to be too formal. There are some close related modulations and you could let it flow. Some modulations are sudden modulations and some other places are purposefully designed.”[[86]](#footnote-86)

As a result of Chou Wen-chung’s teaching visits, which began in 1979, Zhou began thinking about cross-cultural instrumentation.[[87]](#footnote-87) “I think Chou Wen-chung’s visits gave me the deepest impression, because … I was already interested in exploring some kind of treatment of traditional Chinese instruments using [a] 20th-century [approach], but I didn’t have the resources. … So, most of my instrumental compositions are heavily influenced by the ideas and philosophies of Chou Wen-chung’s visit to the Conservatory.”[[88]](#footnote-88) Chou brought his own compositions to expose Zhou and his colleagues to the ways he adapted the notation and sound of Chinese instruments to Western ones. Zhou stated, “his own music made a more direct impression on me because of his philosophy… the treatment of the Chinese instrument, the cultural background combined with the 20th-century, and the influence from Varèse.”[[89]](#footnote-89) Chou’s *Yü Ko,* which is based on an ancient ch’in (zither) melody from the thirteenth century and adapted for western instruments, strongly influenced Zhou Long’s first orchestral work, *Fisherman’s Song* (1981), a tone poem. In *Song of Ch’in* (1982) for string quartet, Zhou adapted qin music with its plucked textures, ornamentation, register, and timbres for a string quartet.[[90]](#footnote-90) Guqin music also influenced Zhou’s *Guang Ling San Symphony* (1983) for large orchestra as inspired by a pre-Tang Dynasty legend about a swordmaker. Barbara Mittler describes Zhou’s early works such as the *Guang Ling San Symphony* and the ballet, *Dong Shi xiao pin* (“Dong Shi knits her brows”) as “displaying features of early modernism (especially that of Stravinsky) and pentatonic romanticism.”[[91]](#footnote-91) His 1983 graduation recording, entitled “Duoye”[[92]](#footnote-92)on the China Record Company label, includes *Guang Ling San* Symphony (1983), *Fisherman’s Song* (1981), and *Dong Shi* (1983). His other major work from this period is *Words of the Sun* (1982) for mixed chorus, an impressionistic work based on the poetry of Ai Qing.[[93]](#footnote-93)

With the opening up of cultural exchange, visits from foreign ensembles exposed Zhou to other cross-cultural innovations; ones that inspired a twentieth-century modernist approach to traditional Chinese ensembles. Zhou recalled a visit by a Japanese traditional instrumental ensemble (e.g., shakuhachi and koto) and their modernist approach to this traditional medium that “really opened up [his] mind.” It was this combination of a modernist style in the context of a traditional performance genre that later inspired Zhou to compose *Valley Stream* (1983), his first work for a Chinese ensemble (dizi– transverse Chinese flute, guanzi– Chinese oboe, zheng– plucked zither, and percussion).[[94]](#footnote-94) Zhou pioneered new sonic experiences by introducing Western percussion, namely marimba and glockenspiel into this Chinese traditional ensemble. “[It was] the first time in history, because nobody had done this before. I introduced… some Western percussion set into a Chinese traditional ensemble.”[[95]](#footnote-95) He said that today this work sounds like a folk song work, but right after the Cultural Revolution, it was new. The audience was not used to it because the sound was “not traditional enough.” This was one of the earliest signs of Zhou’s inclination to innovate– to push the boundaries in his exploration of a personal modernism. Zhou described his approach to Chinese traditional ensembles as “revolutionary”-- something others felt “went a bit too far.” Zhou credits Chou Wen-chung for this experiment because he shared Varèse’s innovations with percussion instruments in works such as *Ionisation* (1931). Zhou’s *Taiping Drum* (1983) for violin and piano, a tonal yet modernist work explores a range of percussive (Bartók-like) and evocative melodic treatments.

A Canadian percussion ensemble’s visit to the Central Conservatory also inspired Zhou’s later composition, *Triptych of Bell-Drum Music* (1984), the first work in China for solo percussionist. The work employs a whole set of percussion instruments including bronze bells and chime stones for one player. He shared that at this point in his conservatory training, he was “crazy” about percussion. Orchestrationally speaking, a colorful use of percussion is also what made a work more modern. His *Fisherman’s Song* Zhou employed a battery of percussion instruments such as wood blocks, tamtams, and Chinese cymbals. For his award winning *Wu Kui*, a solo piece for piano based on a celebratory folk dance of the Manchu people, Zhou treated the piano as a percussion instrument à la Bartók with frequent meter changes.[[96]](#footnote-96) *Wu Kui* references celebratory dances of the Manchu people that Zhou witnessed in his visits to Heilongjiang as a member of the Zhangjiakou Song and Dance Troupe.

In the preface to the score, Zhou states that “capturing the original style of this dance, this solo piano piece opens with animated rhythmic patterns, moves into a slower, free-flowing and lyrical middle section, and concludes with a return to the fierce exultant rhythms and motifs of the beginning.”[[97]](#footnote-97) Unlike the regularized rhythms of the dance, he introduces “irregular rhythmic patterns” and the imitation of Chinese drums to drive the energy of the work.[[98]](#footnote-98) Treating the piano as a percussion instrument begins with this work and continues in future solo works.

Although Zhou explored sonic and timbral possibilities through these cross-cultural treatments, he also discovered an opportunity to develop a truly free rhythmic approach by studying guqin music.[[99]](#footnote-99) Guqin music, or the music of the sages, was notated through fingerings on a qin tablature, and realizing these fingerings (which produce specific character qualities) involves their translation into pitches, a process known as “*dapu.*” Though “dapu” informs the pitches, it does not indicate durations. Every guqin master uses an individualized rhythmic approach as guided by the character of the music, a central aspect of guqin interpretation. Furthermore, there are different schools of guqin interpretation: the more rhythmically active approach of the north versus the more relaxed and gentle interpretations of the south. The limitations of Western rhythmic notation present the choice of either using precise metric and rhythmic values to notate every change or adopting a looser notation that freely captures the spirit of the music. At first, Zhou preferred to notate the rhythms precisely, but that came with its difficulties. The challenge is, “the different rhythmic treaments really make the music a different song with a different spirit.” Zhou said some composers who use a fully notated approach explore meter changes for every single bar to which he responds, “You are fooling yourself… you have a 3/8, 5/8, and 9/8 meter, but the pulse is in 8th-notes. Nobody can tell which measure is five, which is nine, and so on. It is just an 8th-note pulse… like a march. … It seems like variety, but it sounds the same.”

Zhou also underwent rigorous and systematic studies of Chinese traditional music, something he noted is not done to the same degree in Chinese conservatories today.[[100]](#footnote-100) These courses continued for 2-3 years and covered the various regions of China from different periods and from the many ethnic minorities. Local opera with its varied styles of dialogue and storytelling, ensemble music with its different instrumentation and playing styles were also part of the curriculum. He had to memorize the regional folk songs and learn the dialects and languages. The Miao minority in the south, the Uyghurs in the northwest, the Mongolians in the north were a sampling of the ethnic representations. Zhou said that some of the people groups like the Mongolians and Uyghurs spoke different languages not dialects, yet they had to learn the pronunciations.

Exposure to ethnic music continued beyond the classroom during the summers. Though Zhou already experienced field work in the north (Heiliongjiang in inner Mongolia) before his conservatory training as a member of the Zhangziakuo Song and Dance Troup, his conservatory trips facilitated visits to the South. He visited the mountainous regions of Guangxi to study the music of the Dong and Yao minorities and Guizhou for the Miao minority as well as a trip to Fujian on China’s southeastern coast. For this fieldwork, Zhou and his colleagues used Arabic numerals instead of Western notation (twelve half-steps) to document the music due to the many micro-tonal inflections. Number notation with arrows going up or down indicated a quarter-tone bending in either direction, so as to capture the singing style with its “heavy vibrato.” A cassette recording device also helped them revisit the songs for more accurate dictation. With these exposures, Zhou composed his *Partita* for violin and piano (1983, rev. 2000), a four-movement work based on original melodies inspired by mountain and work songs from Northern China.

**3.5 Zhou Long: China National Broadcasting Corporation (1983-1985)**

Upon graduating from the Central Conservatory of Music in 1983, Zhou decided to work rather than continuing with a masters degree. He became a member of the creative studio in the radio division of China’s National Broadcasting Corporation (CNBC) as the composer-in-residence for the National Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra. At that time, the place of employment was determined by the government. In Zhou’s words, “It [was] the highest national organization” of employment.

As a composer-in-residence, Zhou gained greater hands-on experience composing and making recordings for the Corporation’s mixed Western and Chinese ensembles.[[101]](#footnote-101) In the 1980’s, this assignment was the apex of opportunities for a young composer. He said that he earned a salary, worked from home with flexible hours, and had a special pass that gave him access to the recording and performing studios in the national ministry. On occasion, “the broadcasting, television station… wanted signature music to open the program. They want 14-seconds or 20-seconds of orchestral music… and you write the signature music.” Overnight, a couple of copyists would create parts for the orchestral musicians and the next morning at ten o’clock, the musicians would assemble in the studio to record the work for broadcast. His description recalled his work at the Zhangziakuo Song and Dance Troupe where he quickly composed works for immediate rehearsal and performance.

Zhou’s pioneering approach to cross-cultural instrumentation and expression continued to blossom in writing for the Corporation’s Western and traditional ensembles. *Green* (1984) for bamboo flute and pipa (arranged for soprano and pipa in 1991) is “a moving… vocalise” for instruments.[[102]](#footnote-102) At the request of guqin master Wu Wenguang, Zhou composed *Su* (1984) for flute and qin (arranged for flute, harp, and pipa in 1990). It is a modernist setting of the first known qin melody “Secluded Orchid.”[[103]](#footnote-103) This Tang Dynasty melody, as influenced by Persian music of that era, uses the eleven-note Persian scale from 4,000 years ago.[[104]](#footnote-104) Zhou was also the first Chinese composer to compose a solo work for a full battery of percussion instruments, *Triptych of Bell-Drum Music* (1984). Made up of three movements, the first features drums, the second, pitched instruments like bronze bells, chime stone (jade) glockenspiel, and vibraphone, and the third, wooden instruments like Chinese tom toms and wood blocks. All of these works were broadcast through Radio Beijing.[[105]](#footnote-105) A second recording from a Radio Beijing broadcast consisting of the *Song of Ch’in* (1982) for string quartet, *WuKui* (1983) for solo piano, and other chamber works also resulted. Zhou mentioned that his assignment at CNBC and these two professional recordings from the two broadcasts (a rare accomplishment for a young composer), opened the doors to his next opportunity, doctoral training at Columbia University.

Zhou’s decision to leave the CNBC was a difficult one. It was not inspired by a need for artistic freedom. Given music’s abstract nature, Zhou felt free to explore musical ideas without drawing unwanted political scrutiny. Additionally, China was a more open society after the Cultural Revolution [build up] and composers from the US and Europe were visiting China and engaging in cultural and intellectual exchange. Rather, the exposure to Western thinking at the Central Conservatory, gave Zhou a taste of new possibilities.[[106]](#footnote-106) Zhou feels his departure was crucial for his growth as a composer. He remarked that if he stayed, he would have become “rich” from creating sound tracks for television and musical transitions for radio broadcasts, but that his own personal style would not have developed.[[107]](#footnote-107) Despite the privileged nature of the CNBC assignment and Zhou’s satisfaction with this post, he left to pursue greater compositional know-how. He wanted to grow: “I just was not satisfied with my knowledge.”

The one challenge at this point was that Zhou Long and Chen Yi were married and had varying degrees of flexibility to leave China. Though Zhou Long was employed by the CNBC, Chen Yi was pursuing her masters degree in composition at the Central Conservatory, a three-year program, and serving as a representative to the People’s Congress in Beijing. There was also the expectation that she would stay on the faculty of the Central Conservatory. With one year remaining in her graduate program, Chen Yi stayed in China and Zhou Long headed for the United States. He said the opportunity to study with the exceptional faculty at Columbia and to experience New York City’s thriving cultural life was too tempting to turn down.

**3.6 Graduate Education at Columbia University (1985-1993)**

Just as the exceptional recording opportunities at the Zhangziakuo Song and Dance Troupe positioned him well for admission to the Central Conservatory of Music, the two professional recordings from his work at the China National Broadcasting Corporation made possible his admission to the Columbia University DMA program. In 1985, Zhou Long became the first student from the Central Conservatory to study in the United States, having been recruited by Chou Wen-chung. Though Zhou didn’t complete a masters degree program nor a TOEFL exam score for English proficiency, Chou Wen-chung successfully advocated for his acceptance based on these submitted works.

Once in America, the adjustment to life in his new setting was difficult. Zhou said he was in a state of “culture shock,” that acquiring English was slow, and thus isolating, since few other students from China were present at that time. It was also a financially challenging time. Zhou’s modest resources were stretched by the high cost of living in New York City. He wanted to return to China, but every evening, he attended art galleries, theater, dance and music performances all over the City that “opened [his] eyes.” It was a kind of artistic immersion that simply wasn’t available in Beijing.

Zhou said he had formative philosophical conversations with Chou about style and cultural synthesis, composition exercises, and forays into atonality. Because Chou was not satisfied with Zhou’s earliest attempts at atonal writing, he introduced him to the ideas and works of other Asian composers such as Tōru Takemitsu and Isang Yun.[[108]](#footnote-108) He insisted that, “As a Chinese composer, you can’t just dig into the Chinese tradition… you really have to know what happened in East Asian culture.” In spite of Chou’s help, Zhou said the challenges of the cultural transition made it difficult to create new music. He couldn’t “really concentrate nor compose for nearly two years.”

The one work he completed during these first two years was for Music from China, an organization based in New York City (founded in 1984) that promoted music for Chinese traditional ensembles including contemporary compositions. Zhou composed a traditional pentatonic work– *Moon Rising* *High* (1986),[[109]](#footnote-109) for dizi (transverse flute), yangqin (hammered dulcimer), zheng (plucked zither), erhu (spike fiddle), daruan (lute), and percussion, as his first submission. For more than thirty years, Zhou served as music director of this ensemble, premiering works annually at Merkin Hall. The following year, Music from China commissioned Zhou to compose the more modernist work *Heng* (“*Eternity*,” 1987) for dizi, pipa (Chinese lute), yangqin, zheng, erhu, and percussion. Zhou describes *Moon Rising High* and *Heng* as works that he was comfortable writing for traditional instruments. Like the *Song of Ch’in*, it was “something he had done before” as a student at the Central Conservatory. Later on, Music from China commissioned works for mixed ensembles of Chinese and Western instruments.[[110]](#footnote-110)

Zhou’s work within the traditional Chinese instrumental medium was continuous and encouraged by his role as Music Director for Music from China. Works in this category include the *Variations on a Poetess’ Lament* (1989) for an ensemble of traditional Chinese instruments and fixed media and *A Poetess’ Lament* for soprano, pipa, zheng and erhu (1989, revised 2000). By 1990, however, Zhou increasingly blended Western and Eastern instrumentations or continued developing techniques for Western instruments to mimic the sounds and textures of Chinese traditional instruments. *Pipa Ballad* (text by Bai Juyi, 1991) for soprano, pipa, and cello, which uses a Cantonese melody, and *Shi Jing Cantata* (text from the Book of Songs, 1990) for soprano, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, strings, and piano (with two sections available as “Two Poems” for mixed chorus) are examples of this, respectively. The cantata, however, does not employ a Chinese tune, but rather an original modernist one, thus departing from his normal practice. Other mixed works include *You Lan* for erhu and piano (1991) with its guqin references and *King Chu Doffs His Armour* (1991), a concerto for pipa and orchestra inspired by a traditional solo pipa work by the same name. The ultimate example of Western and Eastern instrumental convergence occurs in *Da Qu* (1991), a concerto for Chinese percussion and Hong Kong Chinese traditional orchestra that he adapts for Western instruments later that same year. His doctoral dissertation is a comparison of these two treatments. This instrumental interchangability is also present in his *Secluded Orchid* (1992)[NOT 1983?] an arrangement of *You Lan* for violin, cello, and piano, later arranged for pipa, erhu, cello, and percussion (2000). Based on one of the oldest known guqin pieces, *You Lan*, Zhou explores the sound of the guqin through extended techniques. These include stopping piano string vibrations with the finger, exploring harmonics in all three instruments, using *glissando-pizzicati* and fingernail *pizzicati*.[[111]](#footnote-111) *Wild Grass* (1993) for cello, which Zhou also adapted for solo viola that same year, demonstrates his treatment of Western instruments as guqin with the use of pizzicati and glissandi.[[112]](#footnote-112)

Even while building on these cross-cultural adapatations in his compositions, Zhou also felt a need to break away from the familiar, and dove into avant-garde explorations more intentionally beginning in 1987. Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian influences dominated his thinking, brought on by the “culture shock” and “homesickness” he experienced once he arrived in New York City and made worse with the loss of his mother and father in 1986. Zhou said, “I started to question myself. If I study in the States, should I keep doing what I have done before… or discover something new?” This introspection led to the more dissonant *Soul* (1987) for string quartet (later adapted for pipa and string quartet in 1992) and *Wuji* (1987) for piano and fixed media, his most radical experimentations with the “new.” *Wuji* was inspired by Mario Davidovsky’s *Synchronisms* for the same instrumentation and carries forth the Tao concept of limitlessness (“Wu”-- without, “ji”-- limits).

*Wuji* (1987) was initiated by Harold Lewin [Zhou sent program notes– look up via email], a Manhattan-based pianist who had expertise in piano and electronic music.[[113]](#footnote-113) Lewin had heard electronically synthesized Dunhuang ethnic dance music that Zhou wrote for a mutual friend, and commissioned the work. Zhou used a synthesizer, the Yamaha DX7, a first generation of MIDI keyboards and a sequencer to create percussive sounds and those of instruments like the Japanese koto, similar to the zheng (Chinese zither). The MIDI’s sequencer created “amazing rhythmic patterns” that were randomized. Using an 8-track cassette recorder and a mixer, Zhou layered sixteen tracks of recorded material. Although Lewin did not perform the piece, because the randomized rhythms were too complex and lacked cues for the pianist,[[114]](#footnote-114) *Wuji* made a significant mark on Zhou’s compositional thinking by focussing his attention on new rhythmic possibilities. Zhou stated, “I’m not good with pitches. Chen Yi is very good with pitches, but I am very interested in the rhythm….” As a result, Zhou created subsequent versions of this work (absent fixed media) for zheng, piano, and percussion (1991); harp, piano, and percussion (1991); and finally, piano and two percussion (2000). Unlike the piano with fixed media score, which has no barlines, Zhou notated the randomized rhythms and meter for these later versions. This transcription work inspired Zhou, opening up possibilities of metric and rhythmic variety that he had not considered previously and fed his fascination with meter an interest that began with his early exposures to Stravinsky. *Wuji*, which means infinite or limitless, captures the spirit of these creative explorations.

His work with Davidovsky also coincided with a class on 20th-Century Composition taught by visiting professor named Martha Hyde that marked a creative turning point in his outlook. Zhou indicated that Columbia was “dominated by the Second Viennese School during his time.” *Ding (Samadhi)* (1988) for clarinet, percussion, and double bass, which he later arranged for clarinet, zheng, and double bass was the result of this influence.[[115]](#footnote-115) Zhou defines the work’s Buddhist connotations as “the perfect absorption of thought into the one object of meditation.” A twelve-tone melody and tonal melody are cast in an abstract-improvisational style at “slow speed” with a use of instrumental techniques such as blowing (clarinet), striking (percussion), and bowing (double bass), and a wide registral span “from very high to very low.”[[116]](#footnote-116) Microtonal grace notes dot the texture to evoke the sound effects of Chinese traditional instruments.[[117]](#footnote-117) Although it is Zhou’s only serial work, it freed him to explore new approaches more boldly. His *Li Sao Cantata* (1988) for soprano and a 14-member orchestra which is based on the poetry of Qu Yuan is a completely atonal work with a modernized musical style. Zhou said that the use of voice and Chinese poetry demanded more flexibility, so he abandoned serialism in favor of free atonality to better capture the inflection and intonation of the Chinese text. With this work, Zhou decided never to return to the pentatonic music he composed as a professional composer in China. In Zhou’s words, “You can’t recite using the pentatonic [scale],” referring to the tonal inflections of the Chinese language.

After gaining new insights from *Wuji* and *Ding,* Zhou felt the confidence to carry on with this overtly spiritual creativity.[[118]](#footnote-118) *Dhyana* (1990), a quintet for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano. references the deepest meditative states in Buddhist practice that Zhou turned to during his early years in the U.S. Zhou’s program notes state:

The inspiration for Dhyana comes from the Buddhist concept of ‘cultivation of thought’-- the process of gathering scattered thoughts and focusing them on one object to arrive at enlightenment. To express the progression from worldliness to serenity and, finally, to purification, the musical structure moves from complex to simple in pitch, from dense to relaxed in rhythm, from tight to open in range, from colorful to monochrome in timbre, from foreground to background in sonorith.[[119]](#footnote-119)

In Communist China, Zhou’s generation had little knowledge or experience with Asian philosophical or spiritual traditions.[[120]](#footnote-120) So Zhou immersed himself in a central Buddhist concept, one that is embedded in the work, the inextricable oneness of opposition and unity– the “unchanging” and “ever changing” or “fixity” and “unceasing variability.”[[121]](#footnote-121) These opposites are manifest, for example, through the juxtaposition of dynamic contrasts (fp to ppp), registral jumps vs. static pitches, “emptiness” vs. “definiteness” or foreground vs. background treatments.[[122]](#footnote-122) Zhou described the musical process as one without tonal harmonic progressions nor continuity of melodic line. Rather, he adopted a pointillistic texture reminiscent of Webern, but with inflections and portamenti that suggest the influence of Chinese instruments.

Zhou identified 1987 to 1995 as his most modern or experimental period. It began with *Soul* (1987) for string quartet and ended with his first commission– *Poems from Tang* for string quartet and orchestra (1995).[[123]](#footnote-123) Although the titles of the movements and inspiration come from ancient Chinese poetry by well known poets and guqin music, it is modernist in its use of pointillism, dissonance, and abrasiveness.[[124]](#footnote-124) The one exception to this is the second movement, “Fisherman’s Song,” which is based on his earlier symphonic poem by the same name from 1981. Zhou’s training at Columbia and his transition to life in America had significant bearing on these experimentations. Once he completed his doctorate in 1993 and began to freelance, his compositional output slowed. In his words, “not much commission[ing]… happened.” The fact that *Poems from Tang* was not premiered by the Kronos Quartet and the Brooklyn Philharmonic may have impacted his perspective on modernism. With transparency, he acknowledged that once he started receiving commissions he was beholden to another party and their wants. For this reason, “I didn’t really go to modernism… in the end.”

**4 Chen Yi (b. April 4, 1953 in Guangzhou, China)**

**4.1 Personality and Family Background:**

Chen Yi’s family was invested in the arts like Zhou’s, but music was not a happenstance pursuit, rather an integral part of life alongside an exceptional immersion in Western thought, culture, language and people that went back two generations.[[125]](#footnote-125) According to Chen, her background was very unusual in this regard. The convergence of her parents’ interests, their global perspective, and her exposure to international figures through her father’s work advanced Chen’s familiarity with and fluency in Western music.

Her pediatrician mother, Dr. Du Dianqin (1919-2012), and internist father, Dr. Chen Ernan (1919-1990), were avid amateur musicians who immersed their children in Euro-centric classical music from birth. Du was an accomplished pianist and accordionist[[126]](#footnote-126) and Chen, a violinist and record collector. All three children in her family, Chen Yi, her pianist sister Chen Min (b. 1951) and her violinist brother Chen Yun (b. 1955), became professional musicians. Chen Min became a celebrated concert pianist in Beijing and at the age of six performed for Liu Shaoqi, the Vice Chairman of the Communist Party during his 1957 visit to Guangzhou.[[127]](#footnote-127) Chen Yun graduated from the Central Conservatory of Music in 1982, served as acting concert-master of the Singapore Symphony, created an orchestra in Macao and is currently the concertmaster and assistant to the conductor for the China Philharmonic, as well as a professor in violin and chamber music at the Central Conservatory of Music.

Chen Yi’s parents commitment to their children’s learning outside of school was notable and encouraged by her grandparents' influence and exposures to Western culture, faith, and language. Du Dianqin’s parents, who lived in Chaozhou, the countryside of Guangdong province, attended a Baptist missionary school and taught basic subjects like music and literature to school-aged children and youth.[[128]](#footnote-128) Du Dianqin was a practicing Baptist as was Chen Ernan upon marriage, and the faith tradition continues today for Du Dianqin’s brother and his son, both Baptist ministers. As a child, Chen Yi attended church regularly, listened to hymns, and read the Bible on her own.

Her father’s side of the family was highly educated, however, not religious. Also residing in Guangdong, Chen Ernan’s father was the treasurer for Shantou Customs, overseeing the imports and exports at this shipping center. He sent Chen Ernan to receive an elite primary and middle school education in Shanghai, where he also attended a missionary-run school and learned English.[[129]](#footnote-129) Du Dianqin and Chen Ernan met at Lingnan University for medical school.[[130]](#footnote-130) Following the Japanese invasion in 1937, Chen Ernan’s father left China for Hong Kong, but Chen Ernan remained in Guangzhou in order to establish and run hospitals. By the conclusion of World War II, Chen had established two medical centers: the Huaying Hospital and the Shameen Clinic on Shamian Island.[[131]](#footnote-131)

At the Shameen Clinic, Chen Ernan had close ties with foreign service officials from the West. Shamian Island, which is an alluvial sandbar located within Guangzhou City, was home to numerous consulates including those of the U.S., Soviet Union, Poland, France, Germany, and Japan. As a primary school student, Chen Yi went to the airport to welcome foreign dignitaries, receiving candies and toys from these guests. Chen Min’s talent as a piano prodigy also presented opportunities to meet people as she performed on radio, television, and in concert. Chen Yi recalls gifts of over-sized picture books and stories in different languages being sent to her home as a reward. Formative interactions with the West also came by way of Dr. Chen’s patients who were consulate officials from around the world.

Chen Yi’s daily cultural exposures to the West were exceptional because of her parents’ work life, but also due to her parents’ interests and colorful dispositions. Both Chen Ernan and Du Dianqin were outgoing and “loved life.” They were curious, had a wide range of interests, and were driven by a love of helping others, which brought them in contact with many people.[[132]](#footnote-132) Everyday at lunch, they would listen to classical recordings[[133]](#footnote-133) while her parents discussed their patients, the events at the emergency room, and dosages of medications, which they referred to in Latin. They also possessed large maps of China and the world, kept underneath heavy glass on their dining table, and Chen Ernan shared current events that took place all over the world.

Chen Yi absorbed her parents’ way of life. Her global perspective, cultural awareness, and desire to help others stand out in this way. When her parents walked the streets of Guangzhou, former patients would call out, “Dr. Du! Dr. Chen!” As a child, Chen Yi was cognizant that these voices were those of adults and children her parents had saved. With an energetic and joyful disposition, Chen Yi shared, “Action and behavior are more important than words because I learned from what I have seen…. Everywhere I go, I help all my classmates and colleagues, poor people around me, and all others in society.” These expressions of altruism shaped Chen Yi’s priorities as a musician and had real implications for her experiences during the Cultural Revolution and after.

**4.2 Chen Yi: Childhood (1953-66)**

Chen Yi’s native gifting as a musician and student appeared early on. Her fluency at the piano and violin, which were fostered by lessons as a preschooler, encouraged the development of a highly sensitized ear (Chen has perfect pitch), matched by an equally strong aptitude for academic work in the classroom.[[134]](#footnote-134) The combination of these aptitudes with early instrumental instruction, the influence of life-long mentors, and rich cultural exposures at home set Chen Yi up for rapid progress and eventually specialization.[[135]](#footnote-135)

Early music instruction began at a formative age with key mentors who provided a well-rounded musical training. She began weekly piano lessons at the age of three with Li Suzin who taught at the Guangzhou Academy of Music (Xinghai Conservatory) and violin lessons twice per week at age four with Zheng Rihua[[136]](#footnote-136) and on occasion Zheng Zhong, when Rihua was unavailable.[[137]](#footnote-137) (To this day, Chen Yi is fluent as a pianist and violinist and able to sightread complex scores.) These brothers played a central role in Chen’s violin and music training for twenty years until Chen entered the Central Conservatory of Music in 1977. Zheng Zhong was also a composer and supplemented his teachings with lessons in music theory and history. Owing to his efforts, Chen Yi played in string ensembles made up of adults, teens, herself, and her younger brother at the local church. Chen Yi’s mother arranged for the ensemble to rehearse in their home regularly with Chen Yi and Chen Yun playing arrangements of works such as minuets by Mozart and Beethoven.[[138]](#footnote-138) Thus, violin practice, performance, and the academic learning of music became a part of Chen Yi’s life from an early age.

Chen was also one of the fortunate few to listen regularly to works from the Western canon. Her father’s recording collection, Hollywood film melodies, international melodies that consulate and foreign service officers shared, and music from live performances including symphony concerts, filled Chen’s sound world. She watched the *Swan Lake* ballet with Galina Ulanova when the Boshoi Theatre came to town and learned ballet and folk dances from Japan, Romania, and Africa. According to Chen, she was “one in ten-thousand” children in Guangdong Province to have had such exposures.

She also benefitted from her father’s interests in other ways. As an amateur violinist who was fluent in English, Chen Ernan found opportunities to work with local violin makers to prepare instruments for international competitions. As an English to Chinese translator, Chen helped these makers fill out the necessary paperwork, helped test the instruments behind a curtain and learned about the intricacies of violin making– the finish, craftsmanship, and design, elements that he would share with Chen Yi. Chen Ernan also knew a lot about the violinists who visited China during the 1930’s and 40’s and would discuss them in great detail with Zheng Rihua while Chen Yi listened.

Though her exposures to Western music were many and vast in range, Chen Yi recalls a rather limited exposure to Chinese indigenous music during these years. The family’s maid, Huang Li, enjoyed listening to Cantonese opera on the radio while she mopped the floors and did the wash.[[139]](#footnote-139) Her storytelling and sharing of this style was an introduction to the rich repository of indigenous music that would blossom during the Cultural Revolution and after. Chen recalls how much her mother, disliked hearing this music and that she would go to her room and shut the door.

The richness of Chen Yi’s musical learning was matched by that of her formal academic program. Chen Yi attended a primary school on Shamian Island dedicated to gifted students. This primary school took six years of curriculum and condensed it into a five year program. Chen Yi says that she was fortunate to “catch the last train for education before the Cultural Revolution” due to this arrangement. As a result, she received a year of academic learning in the No. 29 Middle School, something Zhou Long missed, having attended the typical six-year primary school program. Chen Yi received top grades in mathematics, literature, and other subjects including physical education. She was a leader in her class and answered questions and did math calculations at the blackboard for public demonstration. In every regard, Chen Yi was a model student, a standing she maintained during the entirety of her formal education.

The end of formal education initiated by the Cultural Revolution in 1966 left Chen Yi’s parents with little hope for their children’s future. Since formal medical training was no longer available, they turned instead to auto-didactic disciplines. Chen Yi’s frequent mention of the Zheng brothers and their influence demonstrates the role apprenticeship and private study played in her formation up until her enrollment at the Central Conservatory. However, it was Chen Ernan’s frequent talks about composers (Mozart, Beethoven, Kreisler, etc.) that made Chen Yi decide to become a composer. Listening together to Irish folksongs that Heifetz adapted for the violin or Kreisler’s works for violin and orchestra, Chen Ernan would say, “Hey, one day, my daughter also will become a composer who can… play her own works.”

**4.3 Chen Yi: Cultural Revolution (1966-76)**

Though the government’s perceptions of Chen Yi’s family impacted her assignments and thus experience of the Cultural Revolution, unanticipated events also played a role in facilitating her growth as a musician and composer. As with Zhou, suspicions about Chen’s family background arose in the years leading up to the Revolution in 1966. In the late 1950’s, Chen Ernan led No. 3 People’s Hospital, the result of a merger between the Shameen (later Shamian) Clinic on Shamian Island and several other local facilities.[[140]](#footnote-140) During the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957-59), he lost his position at the hospital, and the family experienced what would later become the standard practices of the CR– home searches, confiscations, and the checking of identities. In 1965, when Chen Yi applied to a secondary school that was affiliated with the South China Normal University, her family’s categorization as “you” or rightist in the *di fu fan huai you* class system led to her rejection.[[141]](#footnote-141) Chen Yi attended No. 29 Middle School instead.

The same year that Chen Yi began middle school, Mao issued Order 626 that mandated urban physicians work in rural areas to train rural or “barefoot doctors.”[[142]](#footnote-142) Chen Ernan left for the countryside (returning home on weekends) to serve at the Shiling Commune Clinic (Huaxian County). Eventually, he became the associate director of the Huaxian County Hospital and served numerous villagers– saving many farmers’ lives.[[143]](#footnote-143) Though difficult, this remote assignment likely saved Chen Ernan’s life since he was spared the anti-intellectual destruction and violence that ensued in major cities including Guangzhou.[[144]](#footnote-144) An earlier act of service as a medical student, however, raised government suspicions and put the family on the blacklist. During World War II, the President of Lingnan University Medical School asked Chen Ernan to drive an ambulance from Guangzhou City to China’s closed border to facilitate a farewell meeting. It was the the last time Tenenbaum, the American secretary to Soong Ch’ing-ling, the second wife of Sun Yat-sen (Premier of the Kuomintang) would see his brother who was dying of blood cancer. This act of service, the Chen parents’ fluency in English, their contacts with friends and patients from foreign consulates, and receipt of medical supples from the British Red Cross prompted the label “suspected international spies,” an accusation that remained up until Mao’s death in 1976.[[145]](#footnote-145)

On August 8, 1966, Mao launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution with his Sixteen Articles. Teaching students in the countryside to destroy the Four Olds, that is old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits of the “exploiting class,” radicalized youth known as Red Guards who entered Tiananmen Square ready to fight.[[146]](#footnote-146) They attacked, killed, and publicly criticized intellectuals and those associated with the West. In addition, they destroyed historical and cultural sites, artworks, and books. They entered Chen Yi’s home sealing up furniture, but did not commit acts of violence against her parents due to their years of medical service.

It was during this time that Chen Yi and her classmates from No. 29 Middle School left for the countryside to harvest crops, but after ten days, she had a case of pyelonephritis (kidney infection) that required hospitalization and a homestay lasting several months. Du Dianqin continued seeing patients at the hospital and educated her children at home. Since no schools were open,[[147]](#footnote-147) Du taught her children languages, literature, and music. She also had a colleague from the Chao Zhou village whose children tutored Chen Yi and Chen Yun on a weekly basis in German, English, and Japanese. Her mother copied the Japanese textbook, which Chen Yi then typed in its entirety, since there were no copy machines. She also had access to many English novels a famly friend’s son had read in high school and that were sent to Chen Yi and her siblings. He was fluent in English as were many of peers of his generation who later worked for the Chinese government. Du supplemented with other books from the hospital library, which enabled Chen Yi and her brother to read many of the classic Chinese novels and poems. Du also managed to continue her children’s Western musical training by dampening the sound of their Zimmermann upright piano,[[148]](#footnote-148) placing mutes on their violins, and drawing the curtains.[[149]](#footnote-149) Of her own volition, Chen Yi collected all the music scores on the piano and read through them. She learned to play works such as the 24 Paganini *Caprices*, the Bruch and Mendelssohn violin concertos, and Saint-Saëns *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso*.

This was a precarious pursuit given the scrutiny Du was under. Local workers criticized her authority and practices of encouraging hard work and excellence at the No. 3 Hospital. Later on, political authorities at the hospital imprisoned Du for ten months. No longer able to practice medicine, she performed hard labor and was “subjected to demoralizing public self-criticism sessions.”

By September 1968, another wave of violence and scrutiny erupted as invaders from the Revolutionary Committee entered the Chen home, destroying and scattering their possessions on the floor. Previous invasions including one during the Anti-Rightist Campain in 1958 that resulted in the confiscation of valuable items. This time, they left the home in shambles but failed to check the piano bench that Chen Yi resolutely sat on containing classical music scores.[[150]](#footnote-150) The purpose of these raids was to subject the family to public humiliation through the collection and exhibition of questionable items.[[151]](#footnote-151)

Shortly after the raid, students were ordered to their schools and assigned to groups that would fulfill Mao’s “sent-down” youth program, which mandated students from educated families in urban centers to be re-educated by peasants on farms and in factories. Because Chen Yi was not yet sixteen, she was sent to the suburban No. 64 (Middle and High) School in Xincun village of the Shimen District[[152]](#footnote-152) located roughly 100 miles outside of Guangzhou. There she worked barefoot in rice and vegetable fields and learned Maoist doctrine and basic farming science. Chen described herself as an “expert” at farming. In the winter, she would dig the mud from the pond to clean it for the fish that would feed there in the spring. This mineral rich mud would then be used to grow vegetables. She made rows with the soil, distributed the seed, and once the seed sprouted, she would classify the sprouts into bunches, and transplant them to the muddy water. She grew two types of rice, one on drier soil and the other in muddy water. In the summers she would weed these plots, stepping bare foot into the water and using her hands to grab the weeds that sprouted between the rice plants.[[153]](#footnote-153) This learning was central to the curriculum of No. 64 School to “re-educate” the students. They grew the rice to feed themselves. Chen distinguished this kind of farming education from the full-time farming older students performed in the countryside.

During this time, Chen resided with seven other students in a dormitory room and in the evenings, played revolutionary tunes on the violin for the local farmers.[[154]](#footnote-154) Folk tunes of the previous feudalistic era and Western music were strictly forbidden, but Chen recalls sitting on the top bunk bed playing revolutionary songs. At times, she would play for the public.[[155]](#footnote-155) Her first forays into composition began during this period as she adorned these revolutionary and sanctioned folk songs with classical embellishments and virtuosic “Pagagniniesque” cadenzas (double stops and runs). She also managed to practice her Western classical repertoire on occasion.

Then, in 1969, as a result of mounting tensions between China and the Soviet Union over a border clash on Zhenbao Island (located on the border between Primorsky Krai, Russia, and Heilongjiang Province, China) and a Russian attack in Xinjiang region five months later, Chen was sent to on a short-term labor assignment in Conghua, located north of Guangzhou. There, she helped the army build a watch tower on top of a mountain, part of a larger effort to construct a national system of shelters, tunnels, and watch towers. Chen carried cement and large rocks to the top of the mountain for the tower construction efforts. The work was back breaking, torturous, and long. This strenuous labor in Conghua continued for several weeks.

Without notice in January 1970, two officials from the Guangzhou Beijing Opera Troupe summoned Chen to audition for concert master of the opera orchestra, which combined traditional Chinese and Western instruments and consisted of six to ten traditional Chinese instruments and a double-wind orchestra with a small string section of seven to eight players, which Chen ultimately led.[[156]](#footnote-156) That same evening an army review board was to review the troupe’s performance of one of the eight *yangbanxi*.[[157]](#footnote-157) One of the officials, Fu Hongjiu, an oboist and school mate from No. 29 Middle School, had remembered Chen’s exceptional violin abilities and sought her out specifically for this opportunity. Chen Yi auditioned with Sarasate’s *Zigeunerweisen* and sightread passages from the model opera, *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*.[[158]](#footnote-158) Thus began her work with the Troupe that would last for the next eight years.

For the first time, Chen was immersed in the intricacies and notations of Beijing Opera and folk songs, which formed her vast knowledge of Chinese music, but also honed her skills as a musical and cultural translator. Her roommate during this period was pipa player, Zhu Lei. Chen learned about pipa playing and the process of converting Western to cipher notation and vice versa as well as learning fingerings with right hand fingerings notated on the top of the staff and left hand ones on the bottom. With no copy machines available, the members of the ensemble would copy their own parts with Chen’s help. As a result, she learned orchestration for Western instruments as well as other traditional instruments such as the erhu, and qin, which gave her a head start once she entered conservatory. Additionally, she learned how to play Chinese instruments such as the ruan, a four-stringed lute with frets.[[159]](#footnote-159) Singers also approached Chen and asked for help preparing for auditions– bringing a book in cipher notation that Chen was able to read and transpose upon request. There were also a vast number of orally transmitted musical conventions that Chen had to notate for the Western orchestra. These included passages that accompanied martial scenes with cymbals (upbeat) and a drum (downbeat). This learning by doing equipped Chen to navigate Western and Chinese music with ease.

During this time, Chen also practiced the violin extensively (six hours a day) and even worked on Western pieces, which were acceptable because they helped improve her technique for playing model works.[[160]](#footnote-160) She studied the Sibelius Violin Concerto and other Western works with the legendary violin pedagogue Lin Yaoji,[[161]](#footnote-161) who would visit Guangzhou to see his mother. Chen continued studying with him while at the Central Conservatory even though she was a composition major. Other support systems for Chen’s growth in Western musical training included the presence of family members in Hong Kong. Thanks to the efforts of her Baptist missionary uncle whose wife was a piano teacher and principal of a school, Chen Yi was able to receive packages of Western music scores. Though prohibited, Chen would acquire a certificate of permission from the Guangzhou Beijing Opera Troupe to receive these parcels from customs officials. Thus, working as a professional musician in a government sanctioned performance group gave her access to resources that otherwise would have been prohibited.

She quickly absorbed the folk and revolutionary songs in the *yangbanxi*– the only melodies allowed throughout China. The troupe performed ten to twenty times a month to a full house. The repeated performance of these works also enabled the troupe to perform at an extremely high level. Every night after a performance, there was dinner and a meeting to review all the mistakes and imperfections. Since Chen had perfect pitch, she would indicate intonation problems and passages that weren’t played correctly. The next morning, there were rehearsals to correct the problems and to practice scales. This was a period of stifling artistic conformity and control, and yet, it equipped Chen with a musical vocabulary and skills for her future compositions.

Over the eight years, Chen played all of the model works and traveled to various locations in Guangdong Province to perform for audiences. The opera company also viewed exhibitions in Guangzhou by expert Beijing opera groups from the capital. Given the limited number of works repeatedly performed all over the country, the government eventually relaxed the restrictions and gave permission for the regional opera companies to submit their own works for approval. Ideological loyalty, appropriateness of subject matter and compositional quality were scrutinized. With Chen Yi’s participation, the Guangzhou Beijing Opera Troupe contributed a few original works. Chen Yi composed overtures, incidental music, orchestral interludes; created arrangements for smaller ensembles of musicians who made excursions to the countryside, and orchestrated the aria accompaniments.[[162]](#footnote-162) During these visits, Chen also learned to do the work of local people whether it be at a shipping port or on a farm. It was thought that by unloading or loading ships at a port or helping farmers, musicians would better capture their emotions and sentiments as they performed the revolutionary works.

At Zeancheng, a district of Guangzhou, Chen developed deep friendships with a family of farmers. The father of the family traveled into the city to do menial work and his wife tended to the home and raised the children. In the early hours of the morning, Chen walked a long distance to pick up dry wood used for cooking and to carry large jugs of water from a well. She learned how to cook using a large wok over a wood fired stove.[[163]](#footnote-163) Chen “tasted the farmers’ lives” and experienced “what they think, what they work for, and what is important to them.” She gained a genuine connection with and respect for rural people.

And so, I think that this background helped me to recognize the society a little bit, because when I saw the farmers, I thought that maybe I could help because they are so innocent and have no education. I thought about how important the education is. It is for us to help the society, to help poor people. And so that's why, in the spare time, I still could play the instrument… I thought I could educate them.

Though difficult, Chen found her cultural roots through these experiences, a new understanding of her mother country, and a profound appreciation for the working poor. Her experiences also lent extra meaning to her father’s words that were spoken in reference to Mozart’s music: “We played Mozart's music from childhood. [My father said], ‘ If you taste his music you'll feel happiness, you'll feel the brightness. But… you [don’t] know that tears are running on his cheeks because you don't know his life.’” These experiences lent Chen that glimpse of her rural countrymen’s lives.

During this time, Chen and her brother also benefitted from additional academic learning once she had returned to Guangzhou. Since Chen Yi had perfect pitch and could analyze the harmonies by ear, and instruct the orchestra of necessary improvements, the conductor, Ge Wu, suggested she study composition. For this purpose, Chen Ernan hired Zheng Zhong to teach her music theory. Every week, he systematically taught diatonic and chromatic harmony using the Sposobin and Walter Piston textbooks. She also studied music history and theory articles translated by Liao Naixiong, a professor at the Shanghai Conservatory. Other sources include Chinese translations of articles from the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* on Schumann and another on Debussy’s *Nuage*. In addition, Zheng Zhong lent her a book of folk songs. The songs were classified by province and ethnic minority group. She absorbed their styles, forms, and nuanced syllabic treatments. The naturalness of Chen’s ethnic compositional voice began to emerge during this time. When Zheng heard one of the Beijing Opera melodies she composed,[[164]](#footnote-164) he commented: “I love this. This is really from your voice, your heart, your mind… This is the most interesting music to come out from you. As you have black eyes and black hair, your blood is Chinese… You drink water from the Yellow River.”

While home on Shamian Island one day, the head of the Chinese news agency informed Du that “higher education would be reopened soon.” Official word of this was announced in the newspapers, so Chen applied via the Beijing Opera Troupe upon receiving their permission. Chen Yi was ranked the No. 1 candidate from Guangzhou. With her compositional experience at the opera company, she was well-prepared for the entrance examination process.

**4.4 Chen Yi: Central Conservatory (1977-83)**

Chen’s improvisational abilities at the violin equipped her to experiment with composition while serving in the Guangzhou Beijing Opera Troupe’s orchestra. By this time, her understanding of both Western music and *yangbanxi* were well established. Her studies with Zheng Zhong in both Western harmony and theory as well as Chinese folksongs advanced her academic preparedness, but new teachings in both Western modernism and Chinese folk idioms formed the underpinnings of her early modernist voice.

Initially, Chen Yi applied to both the composition and violin departments at the Central Conservatory. She submitted three works that included overtures and incidental music she had written for the Guangzhou Beijing Opera Troupe and its string ensembles that performed in runout concerts in the countryside.[[165]](#footnote-165) In addition, Chen took three days of exams in music fundamentals,[[166]](#footnote-166) ear training, composition,[[167]](#footnote-167) and essay writing[[168]](#footnote-168) to qualify as a composition major. She also performed a a Paganini Caprice and the first movement of the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto for the violin department jury. Because of her extensive performance and practice experience while in the Guangzhou Beijing Opera Troupe, Chen was able to play as many as ten major violin concertos in addition to some violin sonatas. Ultimately, Chen was accepted into both programs. Feeling “too old” to major in violin performance, Chen decided to major in composition.[[169]](#footnote-169) Nevertheless, she continued studying violin performance with Lin Yaoji.

On paper the school opened in the fall of 1977, however, unfinished housing accommodations delayed the school’s start until April 1978. Though classes began that spring, school administrators extended the program a semester, calling September 1978 the official start. Chen said that the students were “so hungry” to learn that they were willing to add on this semester to the five-year bachelors degree program. Chen Yi met students from all over the country who inspired her. For the first time, she was surrounded by musicians from outside of Guangzhou. These colleagues spoke other dialects in addition to the Mandarin and Cantonese. They were also talented in art and writing. Chen referred to them as “real creators.”

Initially, the ideology of the Cultural Revolution bled into the Central Conservatory’s reopening, with an ongoing prohibition of 20th-century modernist or experimental works. Even Impressionism was criticized, as were the works of Shostakovich. The lionshare of her studies were in tonal practice (Classical and Romantic periods) with courses in harmony (a review of the Sposobin textbook), counterpoint, four semesters of ear training, orchestration, piano instruction, and analysis.[[170]](#footnote-170) (Chen shared that Zhou Long had a head start in his learning, having already studied some of these subjects with separate professors prior to entering conservatory.[[171]](#footnote-171)) At first the ear training was “too easy” but that it progressed to four-part dictations at a very fast tempo. She placed at the top of her class in her academics and became a student leader for the freshman class as a result.

Required courses in art song also equipped her with a vast knowledge of Chinese indigenous musics, a critical piece in the development of her compositional style. During the course of her bachelor’s and master’s degree programs, Chen:

began an eight-year, systematic study of Chinese traditional music. … The required courses of Chinese traditional music included Chinese folksongs (from all provinces and ethnic groups, in local dialects), traditional instrumental music (including plucking, bowing, blowing, and percussion instruments), local operas (history and the styles of singing, as well as reciting, acting, accompaniment, makeup, costume, stage setting, etc.), and narrative music (Qu Yi, which is musical storytelling that is half spoken and half sung). We also went to the countryside every year to collect folk songs (for five years in the undergraduate program, plus three years in the Master’s program).[[172]](#footnote-172)

With Zheng Zhong’s efforts prior to conservatory, Chen possessed a basic knowledge of the folk song styles that existed, but wasn’t as familiar with the dialects. Every week for two semesters, Chen memorized two stanzas from four songs, and sang them in the dialect before a faculty group. In exams, students were asked to name within a minute the region and dialect of a song and then had to compose one in the fixed form, rhyme scheme, and style with a given text from the Qing Dynasty.[[173]](#footnote-173) The learning was comprehensive, thorough, and rigorous. This led to an important insight. Chen said, “I could see what is natural– it’s so close to my native language and the customs of my daily life! I felt that if I were to create my music in a language with which I am most familiar, using logical principles that are related to nature, then my compositions would be very natural in emotion and powerful in spirit. This is my ideal.”[[174]](#footnote-174)

As she was less familiar with Chinese indigenous musics, this learning provided a musical vocabulary and knowledge that anchored her cultural sensibility while affording structural principles for her music. “Baban,” *shifan luogu*, and *luogu dianzi* (patterned rhythms inspired by numerical order) informed many of her compositions at Columbia, knowing that proportions in the natural world which gird their theoretics speak to listeners of all backgrounds. Supplemental fieldwork trips to the countryside also fortified this learning. The most memorable trip took place in the winter of 1981 to Guangxi Province, where their hosts sang and danced for their guests.[[175]](#footnote-175) Chen’s first major piano work, *Duo Ye* (1984) composed during her master’s degree drew inspiration for this experience.

Chen’s private composition teacher and mentor during her eight years of study at the Central Conservatory was Wu Zuqiang, an accomplished pedagogue with a keen interest in form and analysis.[[176]](#footnote-176) He came from a family of traditional Chinese scholars, had studied in the Central Conservatory before the Communist takeover in 1949, followed by another five years at the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music. He then returned to China, composing revolutionary model operas for the Central Philharmonic Orchestra, ultimately settling at the Central Conservatory to establish a new composition program.[[177]](#footnote-177) He was fully steeped in the Western tradition of harmony, counterpoint, and orchestration and was supportive of Chen Yi’s compositional explorations. Chen described him as being “so open.” At her lessons she would share new material she had composed by playing the material at the piano, a habit she continued at Columbia as a student of Chou Wen-chung and Mario Davidovsky.[[178]](#footnote-178)

Studies with Wu Zuqiang also consisted of systematically analyzing the works of Tchakovsky, Schumann and Chopin. Chen said, “He would indicate how many variations and textures there are and how many subdivisions one could find belonging to the different keys. Variations could be grouped into larger sections… And he would ask me to tell him all the forms of the Chopin Preludes, all twenty-four.”

Chen’s earliest composition at the conservatory was a set of piano preludes. She recalled bringing in four different beginnings to each prelude and Wu choosing one for the actual prelude, while explaining his choice. He provided a critique about the sample beginnings such as “this doesn’t have [an] obvious character,” “this is too smooth,” “this is too boring,” or “it isn’t refined enough.” By the spring of 1979, Chen had composed two works: *Fisherman’s Song* for violin and piano, with its ornamented pentatonic expression in imitation of Cantonese folk songs, and *Variations on Awaraguli,* based on a Chinese folk song entitled, “Awaraguli,” the name of a girl from the Uyghur (Turkic ethnic) minority in Xinjiang. The *Fisherman’s Song* was an assigned work that was a complex three-part form and the *Variations on Awaraguli,* a work inspired by Zhou’s *Mongolian Folk-Tune Variations* for piano.[[179]](#footnote-179) Subsequent works during her bachelors program include the String Quartet (1982), a

substantial composition in three movements that she later arranged for orchestra as *Shuo* (1st movement) and *Sprout* (2nd movement).[[180]](#footnote-180) The string quartet is a tonal work with a sonata style first movement, a double canon in the second movement inspired by Lutoslawski, and a rondo-sonata statement for the finale using materials from the first two movements.

Wu stressed the importance of Bartók and his example of Eastern and Western European musical synthesis. Bartók’s three levels of folk music integrations in the context of sophisticated classical structures served as a natural model for her and other “New Wave” modernists. Chen Yi and her “New Wave” colleagues identified with Bartok’s tiered approach to folk music integration through: 1)a literal use of a folk melody with added accompaniment, 2) the stylistic imitation of a folk melody, and finally 3) the ability to compose freely in the folk spirit, having fully absorbed its style. Bartók’s approach to incorporating folk music made logical sense to the Chinese, but there may be other reasons why this generation was so drawn to his synthesis. Perhaps there are rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic relationships between Hungarian and Chinese folk musics that “create natural affinities.”[[181]](#footnote-181)

Further into Chen’s bachelor’s degree program, an openness to modernist expressions took hold at the conservatory. Chen Yi’s soundscape opened up considerably with her exposures to Lutoslawski and Goehr. She heard Lutoslawski’s Cello Concerto through a classmate and was stunned by its expression. She “jumped up suddenly” and said, “This is my voice,” as “the fear and anger”spoke to her. She shared the work immediately with her teacher Wu Zuqiang (b. 1927) who welcomed her new interest. Known for his absorption of Polish folk music as a mother tongue, a personalized use of twelve-tone techniques with an ear toward freedom, and a yearning to connect with the listener, Lutoslawski became the example of the modernist Chen wanted to be. Visits by Alexander Goehr in the spring of 1980 further equipped her to fulfill this aspiration.

These new exposures sparked a desire in Chen to explore richer colors, to broaden her compositional techniques, and most importantly to capture a new dimension to emotional expression. Wu Zuqiang befriended Alexander Goehr, while judging the Menuhin Competition in London, which resulted in Goehr’s repeated visits to China after the Cultural Revolution. Goehr, an avant-garde composer whose mentors included Arnold Schoenberg and Olivier Messiaen, was the first Western composer to visit China once it opened up and had a significant influence on her. In May and June 1980, Alexander Goehr had a three-week residency at the Central Conservatory where he gave ten lectures on 20th-century composers and post-tonal techniques (each lecture covering two to three composers) and worked with Chen Yi and five other students, and held public masterclasses.[[182]](#footnote-182) Professors and students from all over China filled the classroom to watch. Goehr held the masterclasses twice weekly, so the students could present their chamber works and receive comments from him. Chen’s first assignments were to compose a work for three string instruments as well as short songs based on a text by poet Li Po from the Tang Dynasty.

Goehr introduced atonality and covered 20th-century works up to Messiaen, thus affording Chen her first significant exposure to twelve-tone techniques. Though an ardent serialist à la Darmstadt in the 1960’s, Goehr adopted a freer approach to the technique by the 70’s, at times incorporating tonal and modal elements.[[183]](#footnote-183) He encouraged the students to cultivate an original voice, so students turned to Chinese folk songs, and rather than using the pentatonic mode or tonality, incorporated dissonances. Goehr fixed pitches according to atonal techniques and voice leading rules, and explained the conflict of dissonances and possible resolutions. Chen said, “He would talk naturally about your music and not based on a formula.” The final assignment was a flute solo based on a favorite poem. Geohr instructed Chen to recite her Tang Dynasty poem numerous times to absorb the intonation and rhythm of the text before composing. In all of these assignments, Goehr worked consistently to cultivate each composer’s voice and individuality.

Her graduation work, *Xian Shi* (1982), written for viola, piano, and percussion and later arranged for viola and orchestra as a concerto and tone poem (1983), was the first Chinese viola concerto and marked a major advancement in Chen’s personal voice. She incorporated folk music modes and rhythms of “The Lions Play the Ball” from xianshi, a “type of local musical form for instrumental ensemble that was popular in Chaozhou, Guangdong Province.”[[184]](#footnote-184) Chen described the work in the following manner:

You could tell then I was influenced by Lutoswalski. Right? This piece is tonal [significant pentatonic presence], but both the form and the language are no longer pure. They are kind of a hybrid and they cross the border a little bit. It could be considered as a sonata and also not a sonata because there is no strict recap. Instead, you have a big cadenza for the secondary material combined with the first material. This hybrid is influenced by twentieth- century language and music.

Throughout her training, Chen Yi demonstrated a strong humanitarian impulse and desire to connect with people, as modeled by her parents in their medical work. Her compassion for her rural countrymen engendered during her farming assignments as a youth and for her classmates at the conservatory was extraordinary. At the Central Conservatory, competition for piano practice rooms was fierce and the electricity would go out at 11 pm, but the students would use flashlights to work under a blanket. Students with no background in piano or composition had to work extra hard to catch up. At times, they found the workload overwhelming, so Chen Yi assisted by playing their works so they could hear them. Her natural gifting and perfect pitch enabled her to simply lie on her bed and “memorize the folk songs and even the fingerings for individual fugue voices in Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier.” She was in every way a “model student.”

**4.5 Chen Yi’s Masters Degree Studies at the Central Conservatory of Music (1983-86)**

Unlike Zhou Long, who was employed by the China National Broadcasting Corporation, Chen Yi continued her studies at the Central Conservatory as a masters candidate from 1983 to 1986. In the final years of her bachelors degree program and during her masters program, China became more open to modernist works. During these years, Chen began to experiment further. She asked, “what kind of language would fit my generation? Because we are not going to follow the old generation forever, we had to find a new language and new spirit as well.”

More opportunities to learn from Western and Asian composers served this exploration. German composer and pedagogue Dieter Acker visited to give a lecture and masterclass. Chen recalls his chromatic analysis of Alban Berg’s Piano Sonata. Also, Zhong Zilin, her professor in 20th-Century Composition Techniques, introduced the six masters students to the details of modern composition including post-tonal techniques. He also worked in the library and translated articles from English to Chinese, thus exposing the students to new sets of scholarship in musicology and theory, and he introduced the students to the growing LP and score collection of 20th century works including the those of Tōru Takemitsu and Hans Werner Henze.[[185]](#footnote-185) An additional opportunity to attend an Isang Yun festival in Pyongyang, North Korea in 1985 gave Chen even greater exposure to modernist compositions, this time by a Korean composer they respected greatly. [[186]](#footnote-186) For both Zhou and Chen, Isang Yun was an example because his modernism was forged without sacrificing his Korean cultural voice. For her masters thesis, she analyzed Isang Yun’s work, *Muak* (1978) for orchestra .

Chen continued to work with two categories of compositional output, one that incorporated seed materials from Chinese folk sources to create Western-influenced modernist works, the dominant area, and the other to arrange folk songs for a Chinese traditional ensemble. One prominent example from the first category is *Duo Ye* (1984) for piano. Chen had visited the Guanxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of China where she witnessed the *Duo Ye* folk dance of the Dong minority villagers. She employed original musical material– the syllabic rhythm and pitches for the opening “*Ya, Duo Ye*” that the group sings– and through the use of register, off sets these statements antiphonally with the village leader’s improvisational text and short tunes.[[187]](#footnote-187) The work is a non-standard or hybridized adaptation of sonata form that loosely explores twelve-tone procedures in the middle section along with a recitation of a Beijing opera tune and a twelve-note ostinato in the bass.[[188]](#footnote-188) Her form and analysis professor, Yang Ruhai who oversaw their fieldwork in the countryside encouraged the students to be inventive with traditional forms, hence its untraditional final section and coda which bring “together all of the motives explored earlier, presenting them in new guises.”[[189]](#footnote-189) *Duo Ye* was originally titled, Sonata for Piano, however, Wu Zuqiang encouraged her to create a more distinct name, one that could be remembered. Another such work is *Yu Diao* (1985) that she submitted for a competition of pedagogical works for piano.[[190]](#footnote-190) Here she sets a tonal Chinese melody (Henan province) in an ABA structure, but uses a two-part invention texture in the B section as inspired by Hindemith’s use of shifting rhythms and meter. Her piano work, *Small Beijing Gong* (1993), which is grouped with *Yu Diao* (1985) under the title, *Two Bagatelles*, hints of the cross-cultural instrumental treatments Zhou Long explores except without extended techniques. Here, Chen imitates the Beijing Opera instrumental ensemble and singer but adds a Western modernist twist with dissonant intervals, a seven-note ostinato figure and frequent metric changes. (Even though *Small Beijing Gong* was composed nine years after *Yu Diao* during Chen’s years at Columbia, I include it in my discussion here, because it is a teaching work that is more in keeping with this period.)

In her final months at the Central Conservatory, Chen varied her explorations further. She composed *Two Sets of Wind and Percussion Instruments* (1986) which bears Varèse’s influence with its exploration in sound effects. Conductor Shui Lan encouraged her to consider an antiphonal approach to the work with two ensembles responding to each other from opposite locations on the stage. In Symphony No. 1 (1986), her masters graduation composition, atonal dissonances come to the fore, which she attributes to Bartok’s Concerto for Orchestra, a work she analyzed in her orchestration class.[[191]](#footnote-191) The culmination of her masters degree program was a concert of her orchestral works from 1986 including *Two Sets of Wind and Percussion Instruments*, *Duo Ye* (chamber orchestra version), *Xian Shi* (Viola Concerto), *Sprout* (for string orchestra), and Symphony No. 1.

Though Chen’s formal academic exposures to modernism were formative, the more critical discovery was her natural attraction to atonality, which is an outgrowth of the way she hears. During her field trips to gather folk tunes from farmers and villagers, Chen Yi discovered that she hears pitches when people speak. Thus, she could translate poetry recitations or speech into actual pitches, which helped with the transcriptions she created while doing folk song fieldwork. When she transcribed folk songs, she would use arrows to mark the pitch down or up to capture the micro-tonal inflections in their speech. Her unique hearing association of speech to pitch is apparent in *Three Poems from the Song Dynasty* (1985) for mixed chorus with solos for soprano, alto, and tenor. This was Chen’s most ambitious work for voice to date. An original acappella work, all three movements exhibit a lyrical, melodic treatment as opposed to a chorale or syllabic texture. The first movement is a setting of a poem by Li Qingzhao with aleatoric treatment, the second movement is a recitation of text by Xin Qiji with pitches (Chen later uses this “speech song” technique in her pitch writing for instrumental playing), and the third movement is based on text by Su Shi with polyphonic settings and unison singing.[[192]](#footnote-192)

In her Chinese instrumental class, Professor Yuan Jingfang analyzed the music of Chinese traditional instrumental ensembles. Yuan, a scholar in the field of ethnomusicology, published a book dedicated to traditional percussion ensemble music with her own classification system including *yu he ba* (patterns with the sum of 8), something that Chen used in her Viola Concerto. She employs an antiphonal dialogue where individual rhythmic parts contract and expand inversely in response to the other as found in *Shifan luogu*, a type of percussion ensemble music in southeastern China. Chen describes this as: “a telescopic principle… [in which] the combinations and contrasts between high and low parts, the design of the meters, and the numbers of groupings of notes, are all inspired by the original rhythmic organizations called ‘The Sum of Eight’”[[193]](#footnote-193)

Other sources of inspiration include an increasing exposure to new music recordings and recording opportunities. Since Zhou Long was resident composer at the China National Broadcasting Symphony, he had access to the radio library and recording studio. He provided folksong samples to Central Conservatory students so they could compose, arrange, and orchestrate their art songs, and provided opportunities for Chen Yi to explain and have her own works performed. *Xie Zi* (1985) for Chinese traditional instrumental ensemble (liuqin, pipa, sanxian, sheng, bangdi, zhudi, and percussion) was one such work; later performed by Music in China in 1991, once Chen was studying at Columbia.

Through the generosity of Chen Yi’s uncle in Hong Kong, she received a Yamaha DX-7 synthesizer and developed basic fluency with electronic music. Zhou and Chen established the first electronic music group at the conservatory inspired by a visit by French pop and electronic composer, Jean-Michel Jarre. Just prior to Zhou’s departure for America, Chen Yi and Zhou Long created the first concert of electronic music in China (1985) that included their works and those of other master degree students– Tan Dun, Chen Yuen Ling, and Zhu Shirui.[[194]](#footnote-194) As early as 1986, Chen Yi began experimenting with the use of electronic music. In her Symphony No. 1, she incorporated a synthesized sound of a large gong.[[195]](#footnote-195) At Columbia, she continued her studies in electronic music with Mario Davidovsky and with Pril Smily who taught electronic music history and basic techniques.

In 1986, Chen Yi graduated from the Central Conservatory, the first female to earn a master’s degree in composition. Being a top student, Chen Yi was recruited to join the faculty of the Central Conservatory, but she left for America to join Zhou at Columbia. Zhou and Chen fully expected to return to China once their DMA degrees were completed. However, once they left China, they did not return.

**4.6 Chen Yi at Columbia (1986-1993):**

Chen Yi’s studies at Columbia University demonstrate a more sophisticated and varied use of modernist techniques that serve a universalist musical philosophy, one that speaks to everyone. Her foundation in modernism during her bachelors program with the influence of Goehr and Lutoslowski, followed by more systematic studies of 20th-century techniques during her masters degree program culminated in an array of experimentations while at Columbia University.[[196]](#footnote-196) Though officially married on July 20, 1983, Chen Yi and Zhou Long spent one year apart while Chen was completing her last year in the Central Conservatory’s masters program. Once at Columbia, Chen was immersed in the breadth and depth of Western modernism with the Second Viennese School’s influence emerging in a more pronounced way.

Like Zhou and the other Chinese students who entered the DMA around the same time, Chen studied with Chou Wen-chung, who handed down Chinese cultural resources through philosophy and aesthetics, which were largely lost during the Cultural Revolution, while encouraging avant-garde explorations. Chou encouraged Chen and the others to revive the work of the *wenren–* ancient artist-philosophers– by drawing upon the rich repository of Chinese cultural and artistic expressions. In doing so, this new generation of composers could “contribute meaningfully and on equal terms with the West towards a true *confluence* of musical cultures.”[[197]](#footnote-197)

By 1987, Chen also had opportunities to learn from Mario Davidovsky who taught a required electronic music class.[[198]](#footnote-198) Although she had learned about twelve-tone techniques at the Central Conservatory and through her studies with Alexander Goehr, the Woodwind Quintet (1987) exhibits Chen’s most extensive incorporation of serial techniques to date, though she uses them in a free manner.[[199]](#footnote-199) In the opening section, she employs a twelve-tone row with rests between rows (so the players can take a breath) and fragments of the row. Cast in a polyphonic texture, these rests become inaudible as the texture thickens. A polyrhythmic interplay of voices ensues. The middle section, which is not serial, presents a melody with tone clusters, as inspired by a visit to Putuo Mountain in Zhejiang Province where she heard Buddhist nuns chanting at a temple. The singing was not in unison, so Chen cast this sound phenomenon as tone clusters à la Ives.[[200]](#footnote-200) As is typical for Chen, the recapitulation is replaced with a final section that combines materials from the opening and middle sections but presented in different guises.[[201]](#footnote-201)

Chen Yi also arranged *Duo Ye* (1984), originally composed for solo piano and arranged for chamber orchestra in 1985, for full orchestra in 1987. To utilize the sound palette of a triple-wind orchestra with percussion, Chen added an introduction and changed the middle section, for a more idiomatic use of instruments (to substitute for the contrapuntal writing in the piano version). These changes were substantial enough to warrant a new title *Duo Ye No. 2* (1987). A Stravinskiian quality is present in the orchestral version with its use of frequent meter changes, barlines, and poly-tonality.

Other atonal works from this period include *Near Distance* (1988) a sextet for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, and percussion, and *As in a Dream* (1988), two songs for soprano, violin, and cello commissioned by the Inoue Chamber Ensemble. *Near Distance* is a fully atonal but non-serial work that Chen wrote to qualify for the Aspen Festival with Jacob Druckman’s encouragement.[[202]](#footnote-202) Chen incorporates an imitation of white noise as the instrumentalists create a continuous “sss” sound with their mouths at the conclusion of the work. *As in a Dream* is a serial work whereChen adopts a singing techniquereminiscent of *sprechstimme*. Chen learned about *sprechstimme* from Prof. Zhong Zilin’s class on 20th-Century CompositionTechniques and was instantly drawn to it since it “match[ed] her aesthetic” and captured the pitch associations she hears in the spoken Chinese language with its tonal inflections. The work also displays the recitation style of Peking opera along with free atonal techniques. Imitations of Chinese plucked instruments through extended techniques on string instruments also abound to accompany the voice texture. Particularly noteworthy is the highly idiomatic writing in the voice part. Thanks to the guidance of singer Rao Lan, Chen learned how to use the high register effectively even in soft dynamics and to extract the full resonance of the chest voice in the low register. “Singers really enjoy performing this work.”

A commission from the Renee B. Fisher Awards Competition for pianists 14-18 years of age inspired *Guessing* (1989) a solo piano work with a set of variations on an “antiphonal folk song”[[203]](#footnote-203) cast in a free atonal style with a prevalence of quartal and quintal harmonies, Bartókian polymodal counterpoint, and Stravinskiian rhythms. A variety of textures that are polyphonic, lyrical, chordal, and percussive test the pianist’s control of the pedal, voicing, registral disparity, articulations, and dynamic range.

Even as Chen composed for Western instrumentation, she also composed for Chinese traditional instruments, a practice she acquired while at the Central Conservatory of Music which required one work annually. *The Tide* (1988) a septet for xun, yangqin, pipa, zheng, percussion, gaohu, and erhu was a work Chen composed for Music from China. The atonality in this work is free and not motivically bound. The Overture No. 1 (1989) and Overture No. 2 (1990), which Chen composed for the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra are examples of her interest in ancient court music with its layered approach to the instrumental sections and sound texture. She said that the extensive training in both Western and Chinese music at the Central Conservatory of Music made it very easy to cross over from one idiom to the next.In 1991, Chen composed *The Points*for pipa , which became a very popular piece for all international Chinese traditional instrument competitions.[[204]](#footnote-204) Commissioned by the New York New Music Consort for pipa player Wu Man, Chen adapted the first movement of *The Points* and added two more movements that same year to create an ensemble version entitled, the *Suite*, a quintet for pipa, dizi, yangqin, sanxian, and erhu. Chen remarked how writing for Wu Man and knowing the capability of the performer informed the texture of the work with all of its virtuosic possibilities. Once the performer and instrumentation was determined, the imagery followed.[[205]](#footnote-205) In preparation for this work, Chen researched the pipa repertoire, both the lyrical and martial styles, absorbed the fingering techniques, and listened to the styles of pipa playing.[[206]](#footnote-206) For inspiration, Chen used the eight brushstrokes of the *yong* (“eternal”) Chinese character in Zhengkai calligraphy to inform its structure. The title refers to the contact points between brush and paper where a stroke begins and ends as well as the shape, “unique touch,” and character of the eight strokes.[[207]](#footnote-207) Chen Yi also composed *Pipa Rhyme* (1992) for Music from China. The first movement was taken from *The Points* with two additional movements added.

In 1991, Chou Wen-chung retired from Columbia and Davidovsky became her dissertation advisor, and his objective, logic-driven philosophy to structure resonated with Chen. As a capstone summation of her final two years at Columbia, Chen composed several works she refers to as being “academic” for their uses of a twelve-tone row, the Golden Mean, and patterning tools like *Shifan luogu*.[[208]](#footnote-208) These include *Sparkle* (1992) for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, double bass, two percussionists, and piano, the Piano Concerto (1992), Symphony No. 2 (1993) and *Song in Winter* (1993), a trio for dizi, zheng, and harpsichord (also arranged for flute, zheng, piano, and percussion in 1993 and later soprano, zheng, and piano in 2004). In these works, Chen chooses Chinese folk elements that serve explicitly structural purposes, knowing that proportions that occur in nature have resonance with human feeling and thought, an insight she gained while at Columbia.[[209]](#footnote-209) She states:

For example, I found a Chinese folk tune *Ba Ban* (eight beats) that has more than 300 variations in China, according to different regions and dialects, each with different tones, but all of them are based on an original folk tune that has a golden section, and also the grouping method follows the numbers of the Fibonacci series. Some professors analyzed these. Then I could apply the principle based on this folk tune to create my own music in many different combinations of instrumentation. I could see the comparison with modern or Western music. At the time I left China, I didn’t have this concept applied in my composition. If you see the human body, you see a ratio, proportion, .618, the ratio between the upper and lower parts of the body. If you look at flower petals or honeycomb made by bees, you see it’s the same. The numbers are also that of the Fibonacci series. It’s nature! Music is kind of a natural language that expresses human beings’ emotion and thinking. If I create my music in a language that I am most familiar with, meeting some principles that are related to nature logically, then my creation would be very natural in emotion and powerful in spirit. I think it’s ideal.”[[210]](#footnote-210)

*Sparkle* (1992), composed for a Pierrot ensemble with added double bass and two percussionists, incorporates the Golden Mean or Fibonacci Series relationships found in the Chinese folk tune “Baban.” The original Chinese “Baban” tune has eight phrases and each phrase has eight quarter-notes with the exception of the fifth phrase where four quarter-notes are added at the end of the phrase.[[211]](#footnote-211) In this sequence of eight phrases, the Golden Mean occurs precisely after five of the phrases (right before these four added notes) and before the final three phrases. Chen references the presence of the ratio 5:3 in the natural world and the transference of this “natural feeling of balance from the visual arts and natural sciences to the form and rhythm of the music.”[[212]](#footnote-212) The imagery of sparks– “everlasting flashes of wit, so bright, nimble, and passionate” inspires the perpetual motion.[[213]](#footnote-213) Cast in a ternary form, one hears the pentatonic “Baban” tune along with a twelve-tone row that are “integrated with each other horizontally and vertically throughout…”[[214]](#footnote-214) The “Baban” melody, rhythms, and proportions also figure significantly in the Piano Concerto (1982), governing even the lengths of the sections.[[215]](#footnote-215)

*Song in Winter* (1993), an exceptional work in Chen’s oeuvre for its mixed instrumentation, incorporates a twelve-tone row to mark significant structural moments, “Baban” and *Shifan luogu* mathematical patterns (1,2,3,5,3,2,1) also control pitch and rhythmic groupings.[[216]](#footnote-216) In Symphony No. 2 (1993), Chen opens the work with an imitation of a Yao tribal leader’s low-register singing (Guangxi Province), something she encountered on a field trip as a conservatory student, a twelve-tone row that she used in the Piano Concerto, *Sparkle*, and *Song in Winter*, and a special motive (A, B, C, F, A-flat) that she heard when she learned her father suffered a heart attack.[[217]](#footnote-217) This work is a threnody to her father who passed away three years prior. In Chen’s words:

I hear the tragic motif of my symphony again and again, and I can’t stop a tear from running down my cheek. That motif has been haunting me since I first learned my dear father had a heart attack. …He led me into the realm of music when I was only three and helped me understand the sincerity and simplicity of Mozart.[[218]](#footnote-218)

Throughout her career, Chen Yi has been prolific, so when asked about her average annual output of two to three works per year, she shared that her coursework, though rich in learning, occupied much of her attention, thus leaving less time available for her own writing. She not only learned from Chou Wen-chung and Mario Davidovsky, she also studied twentieth-century theory with George Edwards, contemporary music practice with musicians from Speculum Musicae, and took an early music history course taught by Patricia Carpenter.[[219]](#footnote-219) The reading demands in the history course were particularly heavy and required a reading fluency in French and German. Chen recalled staying in the library until 11 pm every day trying to compare texts.[[220]](#footnote-220) Although Chen declared German as her second language and English her first, she had little exposure to French.

As a budding modernist, Chen’s creative impulses reflect a larger philosophy and aspiration that points to a kind of musical universalism– deeply emotional music that is born of highly structured statements that all can understand. In the Symphony No. 2, the twelve-tone row contains the dissonance of tritones and semitones in its expression of grief, and a Buddhist chant at its conclusion with these same intervals that builds to a climax where the brass express Chen’s lament for her father.[[221]](#footnote-221)

Though much attention has been devoted to the elements in her music that are distinctly Chinese and those that are Western or modern, what is more outstanding is Chen’s instinct to identify unifying themes and applications that are universally human. This instinct enables her to reach anyone regardless of their cultural background. Her education at Columbia gave her the insights and tools for this. She states:

These courses gave me the ability to consider music not as a new versus historical, nor as Eastern versus Western, but rather to consider the fact that human thought goes into all of these musics. I began to see similarities in musical styles, aesthetics, customs, feelings, and principles. As I considered composing in my own unique language, in my most natural voice and style, I began to be inspired by what I had learned from various cultural traditions, and even from scientific principles.[[222]](#footnote-222)

Though Symphony No. 2 is an expression of Chen’s grief, it also pays tribute to Chen Ernan, his devotion to the Chinese people, and general humanitarian aspirations. In the final measures, what was “a voice of yearning for civilization” floats away with a “dream forward to the future.”[[223]](#footnote-223)

**5 Synthesis**

The shaping of artistry is a complex topic that involves multiple factors including the individual’s nature and nurture. As is true for any work that studies the actors and not just their works for understanding, there are many factors one can not account for. One is beholden to the information that is available and to what the interviewee shares. There is much that may be left out. In this synthesis, I take a moderate perspective that both nature and nurture are essential parts of formation. As I examine the factors that played a significant role in Chen Yi’s and Zhou Long’s development as modernists, there are unique external contingencies that affected their opportunities and exposures to music and internal ones that shed light on who they are as people and composers. I approach the first three stages of my study (family background, early childhood, and work assignments during the Cultural Revolution) as “externally contingent” stages where they had little agency and the second three stages (Central Conservatory of Music, post-baccelaureate work and learning, and experiences at Columbia University) as “internally contingent” phases, where they could exercise creative license.[[224]](#footnote-224) By examining these externally and internally contingent phases, one is able to establish a framework for understanding Chen and Zhou as highly individual modernists, apart from the events of the Cultural Revolution and their shared learning at the Central Conservatory and Columbia University.

**5.1 Shared and divergent external contingencies: family background, early childhood experiences, work assignments**

Both Zhou Long and Chen Yi came from privileged families that had a profound appreciation for the arts and access to private education. The impact of this factor can not be overstated, as both families played a critical role in facilitating Zhou’s and Chen’s learning before and during the Cultural Revolution through personal contacts and connections. They viewed music education as a means to a future.

Although we in the West see the success of Zhou and Chen as natural outcomes of their interest and talent, the interviews made it clear that it was the Cultural Revolution that directed them into composition.[[225]](#footnote-225) Ironically, the eradication of formal education including schools of medicine and engineering steered Zhou and Chen to disciplines where one-on-one instruction was possible. In Zhou’s words, “You can’t study engineering by yourself, you have to attend university, but there was no choice….” As a result, Zhou studied music, poetry, English, and literature, all auto-didactic pursuits. His was an outcome that could not have been predicted, apart from his mother’s intervention. If it were not for the Cultural Revolution, Zhou would have pursued mechanical engineering. His middle school and life-long friend Gu Lan, a toxicologist at the FDA, attested that both he and Zhou Long had ambitions of becoming engineers. He shared, “to be honest with you, I never through he would become a composer.”[[226]](#footnote-226) Chen Yi’s parents also had hopes that she and her siblings could train to become physicians. With all manner of formal education closed, however, both sets of parents resorted to homeschooling and found colleagues and resources to sustain this private study. These provisions were crucial to their musical success. Chen Yi enjoyed violin and music theory and history training through her teachers, Zheng Rihua and Zheng Zhong for nearly two decades. Zhou Long, too, had music tutors in harmony, theory, orchestration, counterpoint, and songwriting through his mother’s colleagues from the China Conservatory and the Central Philharmonic in Beijing, prior to entering the Central Conservatory. Moreover, both listened to Western classical music through recordings and other sources, a benefit made possible through Chen Ernan’s recording collection and access to live performances and Zhou’s Aunt Zhu Min who worked in Moscow. Lastly, both Zhou and Chen had parents who shaped their musical aspirations. Chen Ernan (Chen’s father) and He Gaoyong (Zhou’s mother) expressed their strong desires for their children to one day become “creators” of music.

Both also benefitted from unforeseen events that led to immersive musical work experiences during the Cultural Revolution. For Zhou Long, a back injury resulted in his transfer to Zhangziakuo. With the intervening help of his family friend, Li Xun, an assignment with the Zhangziakuo Song and Dance Troupe followed that led to his work as an arranger and composer. Similarly, while Chen Yi was laboring in the Shimen district, she was summoned to audition for the concertmaster position at the Guangzhou Beijing Opera Troupe orchestra. This role developed her fluency with Beijing opera and provided opportunities to compose short works (overtures and incidental music) for the troupe. The works Zhou and Chen composed in these settings enabled them to apply to the Central Conservatory of Music and to become part of the select cohort that was admitted.

Though both composers benefitted from these supportive family backgrounds, there are significant differences in their cultural exposures and identity formations. Chen’s family was steeped in Western culture, experiences, and relationships by virtue of her parents’ profession, avocational interest in music, and location on Shamian Island, which was home to diplomats from the U.S., Soviet Union, Poland, France, Germany, and Japan. Her family was fluent in English and engaged cross-culturally with people from very different backgrounds through literature, language (English, German, and Japanese), dance, and current events.[[227]](#footnote-227) Also her music training and listening was completely Eurocentric. Chen states, “my earliest composition professionally trained was to write my own melody… it would sound westernized because my training from three years old was Mozart.” Chen’s exposures to Chinese indigenous music, however, was non-existant until the Cultural Revolution. The “re-education” period on farms and later as a member of the Guangzhou Beijing Opera Troupe fostered a profound respect for the lifestyles, humility, and values of the working poor and anchored her Chinese cultural identity. She states:

Frankly, it was not until then that I found my roots, my motherland, and really appreciated the simple people on the earth and the importance of education and civilization. I learned to overcome hardship, to bear anger, fear and humiliation under the political pressure, to get close to uneducated farmers on a personal and spiritual level, and to share my feelings and thinking with them, to learn to hope, to forgive, to survive, and to live optimistically, strong and independently, and to work hard in order to benefit more human beings in society.[[228]](#footnote-228)

During her time with the Guangzhou Beijing Opera Troupe, Chen became a cultural translator by helping her traditional ensemble colleagues translate Western musical notation into cipher or Arabic number notation. The combination of Western and traditional Chinese ensembles in Beijing opera was literally a lab for her cultural translation work. She learned the intricacies of traditional instrumental performance practice and style by doing. These exposures culminated in field work during her conservatory years that inspired works such as *Duo Ye*, one of her early compositional successes. Chen Yi’s Chinese musical references up to 1993 are almost always from folk music and dance, as inspired by these experiences.

By contrast, Zhou’s artistic and musical exposures at home were bi-cultural and interdisciplinary. His mother was a Western-trained opera professor and his father an set design artist. Together, they immersed Zhou in Western romantic opera arias, Chinese drama, literature, and art while living at the dormitory of The Central Academy of Drama. (He also developed a keen ear for melody, and vocal intonation because of his mother’s voice instruction at home.)Tang Dynasty poetry and indigenous Chinese music were also a part of his sonic experiences. Particularly noteworthy is Zhou’s frequent use of Chinese classical sources, all of which were banned during the Cultural Revolution. In post-revolutionary China, Zhou re-connected with China’s pre-revolutionary past. His Pulitzer Prize winning opera *Madame White Snake*, for example, has Puccini-like arias and children’s choir interludes that employ four Tang poems– remembrances of his childhood. As a result of his upbringing, Zhou’s interest in music has always been interdisciplinary in nature and informed by abstract connections between different forms of expression– Western and Eastern, old and new, written and heard.

In spite of this rich background, Zhou lacked the kinds of exposures to the West that Chen had growing up. When Chen arrived in the United States, she felt completely at home, while Zhou suffered from “culture shock” and “homesickness.” Lacking English fluency was his central challenge. According to Zhou, when he went to get his visa, he couldn’t produce a TOEFL score, nor converse. He tried to read English and it went very badly. Because of this language issue, Prof. Chou had to send a telegram to the embassy and one to Zhou Long at the Conservatory. It said, "US Embassy attention: You must give Zhou Long, our doctoral candidate, a visa as soon as possible. We can solve his English improvement at Columbia.” The impact of this language difficulty was significant and affected his music-making, which I will address in the next section– “internal contingencies.”

Zhou’s and Chen’s divergent experiences during the Cultural Revolution were also due to outstanding differences in their family backgrounds. Though both were subject to hard labor, they wound up in very different geographic contexts, which impacted their musical growth. Zhou was assigned to Heilongjiang in northeast China near the Soviet border because of his paternal grandfather’s landlord (“di”) status, whereas Chen Yi stayed in Guangdong Province, though her parents were considered intellectuals (“you”). Zhou’s music learning and exposure in Heilongjiang for three years was nil given its remote rural location, whereas Chen benefitted from remaining near Guangzhou, a major urban center. Chen’s ability to learn and play the violin during the Cultural Revolution was formative. While serving as concertmaster of the Guangzhou Beijing Opera Troupe, Chen found more time to practice her Western violin repertoire. Ironically, as soon as she was “internal” to the organization, she was protected. Chen states:

In the Beijing Opera, I had more time to practice. Because for professional musicians, you are allowed to study Western repertoire. It's not blocked anymore because it's internal. It's like you are protected because you are one of the members of the orchestra serving in the modern Beijing Opera group, right? And you are allowed to improve your technique… And so every day, you see what I did? I gave half of my practice time to [violin] practice, sometimes six hours a day on my Western repertoire. That's why, I would have this energy and time. I completed all 24 Paganini *Caprices* and all these concertos, like all the way from Mozart, Beethoven, [to] Bloch, and then Sibelius, Prokofiev, and later, Tchaikovsky, and Brahms. And… I studied music theory with my theory teacher.

The singular greatest difference during this early phase of their development was the manner in which Chen and Zhou developed their compositional skills. Chen, a virtuoso and accomplished violinist developed her musical understanding by playing the violin and piano at a very high level. There is a unique musical fluency that is gained when the fingers and ears are highly trained from a young age. Chen also had perfect pitch, an ability that developed through her early musical training and exposure.[[229]](#footnote-229) This aptitude, however, informed many of her successes in school and in conservatory not to mention the way that she hears and processes music. Zhou, on the other hand, did not have a prodigious talent for an instrument at an early age. His musicality, which began with some exposure to the piano, was fed primarily by listening to his mother’s voice lessons and recordings, and playing the accordion. In his teen years, he enjoyed one-on-one instruction in harmony, theory, counterpoint, orchestration, and conducting. From this foundation grew his visionary musical ideas about cross-cultural orchestration.

So, what does this mean for the composer’s expression? Of the many accomplished composers in history, two major camps exist: those who began as instrumental prodigies and those who did not. For those who are prodigies and this includes composers like W.A. Mozart and L.v. Beethoven, the aural and digital mastery (or muscularized understanding) of music leads to formal mastery. In *The Lives of the Great Composers*, Harold Schonberg states:

Child prodigies, instince in music from babyhood, develop a certain kind of aural and digital response, and before they arrive at their teens they already are masters of technique. They have imbibed the literature from the cradle, have physically grappled with it, have become secure craftsmen, can do anything they want to do as easily as breathing. As they mature, they go as far as their imaginations allow, but always they develop into masters of form. They grow up automatically handling with finesse the *materials* of music.[[230]](#footnote-230)

He goes on to state that composers like Wagner, and one might add Berlioz, who did not have prodigious talent at an instrument demonstrate a vision for the music that may be shaped more by “instinct and profound musicality.”[[231]](#footnote-231) This musicality is also one tied to extra-musical associations, often literary or visual. If one adopts Schonberg’s view, Chen’s technical fluency at the violin set her up well, but not exclusively, for mastery of form or absolute music (titles notwithstanding) and Zhou developed the intuition or natural instinct for composition tied to extra-musical imagery.

**5.2 Divergent Internal Contingencies: Central Conservatory, Post-baccalaureate, and Columbia Years**

**Zhou Long:**

Though these two categorizations apply to Zhou and Chen, the most profound differences in their modernisms are rooted in their personalities. Zhou is a quiet introvert, Chen, an energetic extrovert. He writes more slowly, she composes quickly. He is philosophical and she is concrete. He composes through abstract association and she by sketching out form, ideas, and structure. She enjoys academic work and analyzing music, he, less so. Zhou states, “the music is really attached to your personality. You can't change it. You just can't change it. If you really want to change it, it's fake. It's not really organic.” Zhou’s point is an important one– personality, which drives choices, is something one inherits and is the reason for their divergent modernisms. That said, both composers learned the same curriculum at the Central Conservatory and Columbia University and were exposed to the same professors. So, which Western influences prevailed in cultivating their individual modernisms? For Zhou, Chou Wen-chung figured significantly and for Chen, Lutoslawski, Alexander Goehr, and Mario Davidovsky, which speak to their unique aesthetic sensibilities.

Zhou’s epiphanies or moments of enlightenment (frequent use of the phrase “opened up my mind”) reflect a tendency toward philosophical thinking combined with a desire to discover something new. This quality in combination with Su Xia’s systematic teaching prepared Zhou to pursue a pioneering yet authentic modernism. Rather than choosing Western compostional techniques as the primary route, Zhou chose instead to build new “sound fields” that connect East and West, old and new. This was in keeping with Chou Wen-chung’s teachings that Chinese composers familiarize themselves with their cultural (literary, visual, musical and philosophical) past, but a more compelling explanation is Chou Wen-chung’s interdisciplinary way of thinking and composing, which aligned well with Zhou’s.

In *Polycultural Synthesis in the Music of Chou Wen-chung*, Zhou describes the holistic nature of Chou’s creativity: “The way I compose is actually very similar to Prof. Chou’s. Images of poetry and painting provide inspiration for the music itself– not just for the collections of sounds, but also for the concepts.”[[232]](#footnote-232) Rather than describing compositional techniques, he speaks of big picture concepts and the feelings that they evoke. In our conversation about compositional process, Zhou referenced *The Man of Aaron and the Golden Spike,* his oratorio about the Chinese railroad workers who built the Pacific railroad in the West:

I enjoyed working on the story and visiting the site and the museum to collect

materials, and the folk poems from Canton, the workers’ hometown. I also enjoyed the opera [Madame White Snake] for the legend. Of course, I have some instrumental works, but they are always inspired by the poems from the Tang Dynasty. If you want me to write a piece of music without anything that will be harder for me to start… With the exception of *Mongolian Folk Tune Variations*, which is based on a folk tune, almost everything has a title or some story that is from a painting or literature. I think that's what I enjoy to compose the most. It is different from the old fashioned way to have a piece done– like composing a Sonata Opus 1, No. 1.

This philosophical or extra-musical approach informed Zhou’s early innovations of adapting Eastern instrumental performance practices to Western instruments and vice versa, a practice he explored throughout the scope of this study (1953-1993). These explorations were born of a significant knowledge about orchestration through private studies with Luo Zhongrong and his work experiences at Zhangziakuo and at the China Broadcasting Corporation. In fact, his earliest ideas about cross-cultural instrumentation surfaced while at Zhangziakuo (1973-1977), where he worked with both traditional and Western instruments. During his conservatory years, Chou Wen-chung’s cross-cultural instrumental approach in works such as *Yü Ko* nudged Zhou Long’s aesthetic along as seen in *Fisherman’s Song* for orchestra (1981) and later on his *Song of the Ch’in* for string quartet (1982), one of his most recognized works.

Zhou was drawn to the classical guqin tradition for its cultural significance in Chinese history, its literary allusions, and richness, but also for its interpretive freedom and absence of rhythmic notation. He stated, “I’m not good with pitches. Chen Yi is very good with pitches, but I am very interested in rhythms…” The simple meters (2/4 and 4/4) and rhythms of Chinese folks songs didn’t offer the same opportunities. His challenge, thus, was to find a third way between the confines of simple meter in Chinese folk music and the unnotated freedom of the guqin tradition. In *Song of Ch’in* (1982), he translated improvised guqin practice for string quartet by notating every metric and rhythmic detail, an effort that fed his rhythmic imagination. These explorations toward rhythmic freedom reach a high point in his work *Wuji* for piano and mixed media where he used a sequencer to randomize the rhythms. The rhythmic complexity resulting from randomization was aesthetically appealing to Zhou, however, it made the work extremely difficult to perform.

During his conservatory years, Zhou also became “obsessed with percussion.” As a nod to Varèse, Zhou introduced a battery of percussion instruments including Western ones to a Chinese traditional ensemble in *Valley Stream* (1983) and expanded the approach to percussion within the Chinese performance medium in his *Triptych of Bell-Drum Music* for solo percussion (1984). Such a work for solo percussionist was unprecedented in the Chinese musical tradition.

Zhou’s first two years of hardship in America inspired a period of introspection and Buddhist meditation that led to his most experimental works (1987-1995). He said that he wanted to “put down his ambitions.” Though adventurous in their dissonance, disjunct textures, and complex rhythmic treatments, extended techniques that capture the sounds of Chinese instruments remain. Chen Yi recalled that for three years, Zhou took a class on 20th-Century Practice, where he learned about extended techniques on Western instruments. This was critical for him as he adapted the techniques of Chinese traditional instruments to Western ones. His chamber works, *Soul*, *Heng*, *Ding*, and *Dhyana* are among his most well-known from this period. *Ding* is the only work where he explored twelve-tone techniques, a telling indication of Zhou’s compositional convictions, given the dominance of the Second Viennese School at Columbia at that time. He enjoyed composing *Ding.* It gave him the confidence to compose after two years of struggle, but for subsequent works, he sought more freedom. Zhou shared with a smile, “With the magic square, you have to follow the numbers.” His passion for instrumentation, employing Chinese traditional ensemble techniques, textures and sonorities in his Western instrumental works or invoking modernist qualities in his traditional ensemble works, remained a thread throughout these formative years and continues to the present. It has been a defining aspect of Zhou’s cultural synthesis– an authentic contemporary expression of China’s classical past.

**Chen Yi:**

Chen is a rare musician, one who combines academic and performance expertise with leadership and an extraordinary sense of good will. Her parents lived purposeful lives animated by a genuine care for others. Their work included establishing hospitals, practicing medicine, translating medical articles, and engaging Euro-centric music in Guangzhou. Chen followed suit. She aided classmates under academic duress, served as a congresswoman for the Beijing municipal government while at the Central Conservatory, translated documents from Chinese to English for Chou Wen-chung as his assistant at the center for US-China Arts Exchange, taught classes as a teaching assistant at Columbia, and became a musical ambassador through Music in China, once in America. Motivating it all was a love for life and an infectious optimism, a quality that animates her music.

Though primarily versed in tonal music as a violinist and pianist, her understanding of Western modernism and Chinese indigenous music grew in parallel.[[233]](#footnote-233) Like Zhou, she composed for both Western and traditional Chinese ensembles, however, she rarely mixed the two.[[234]](#footnote-234) Drawing from a wide range of Chinese cultural inspirations, Chen incorporated or drew inspiration from folk tunes, ancient poems from the Tang and Song dynasties, Peking opera, theater, Buddhist chants, and calligraphy among others in her works and with a consistent focus upon structural creativity.

Consistent with Harold Schonberg’s observation, Chen valued formal integrity and analyzable details in her works and with rare exception (e.g., *The Points* (1991) composed music with structure rather than imagery in mind. Unlike Zhou, she composed absolute works such as her String Quartet, Woodwind Quintet, Symphony No. 1, Symphony No. 2, and Piano Concerto.[[235]](#footnote-235) Works with extramusical titles like *Awaraguli Variations* for piano, *Xian Shi,* a viola concerto, and *Near Distance*, a sextet, also balance out the list from this period, however, her emphasis on form remained strong throughout. For example, she describes *Xian Shi* in the following manner:

This piece is tonal [significant pentatonic presence], but both the form and the language are no longer pure. They are kind of a hybrid and they cross the border a little bit. It could be considered as a sonata and also not a sonata because there is no strict recap. Instead, you have a big cadenza for the secondary material combined with the first material. This hybrid is influenced by twentieth- century language and music.

Chen’s music wed her Chinese cultural identity, which blossomed after the Cultural Revolution, with her theoretical studies in Western and Eastern music at the Central Conservatory. Always a dedicated student, Chen searched for an authentic way of integrating her Chinese melodies and motifs with Western compositional techniques. This perspective evolved gradually with the influence of notable 20th-century pedagogues. Chou Wen-chung’s philosophical appeals to China’s cultural past, Alexander Goehr’s masterclasses on post-tonal techniques, Wu Zuqiang’s structural analyses, and Lutoslawski’s folk-modernist voice shaped her perspective. But so did the theoretical analyses of Chinese instrumental music taught by Yuan Jingfang, folk music courses with Geng Shenglian and Zhao Songguang, and folk music field work in Guangxi Province and other locations. With a keen sense for structure, style, and technique, Chen Yi absorbed these teachings, and iteratively made adjustments and improvements.

During her master’s program at the conservatory and doctoral program at Columbia, Chen experimented with a succession of Western techniques that expanded her music’s harmonic language, textural variety, and sonic and emotional range. Varèse’s percussion experiments inspired her *Two Sets of Wind and Percussion Instruments* (1986). Bartók’s atonality in Concerto for Orchestra and Lutoslawski’s aleatoric treatments found expression in Symphony No. 1 (1986). In *As in a Dream* (1987)*,* Chen employed “sprechstimme,” a treatment that resonated with her perfect pitch translations of Chinese speech. At the conclusion of Near Distance (1988), she employed a vocable “SSS” in imitation of electronic music. And, from 1991 onward, a period Chen refers to as her most “academic,” she consistently incorporated Goehr’s flexible approach to twelve-tone techniques. Works such as *Sparkle* (1992), Piano Concerto (1992), Symphony No. 2 (1993), and *Song in Winter* (1993) fall in this category. Although Chen’s experiments with twelve-tone methods began as early as *Duo Ye* (1984) and the Woodwind Quintet (1987), she drew upon this technique more frequently toward the end of her Columbia years, but always in service of the expressed emotions.

These works from 1984 on also demonstrate a more synthesized compositional practice in their combined use of twelve-tone techniques and Chinese theoretical discoveries. *Duo Ye*, for example, displays palindromic sequences and mathematical patterns of *Shifan luogu* (1,2,3,5,3,2,1) for rhythmic groupings.[[236]](#footnote-236) With Davidosky’s encouragement to pursue greater logic and objectivity for structure, Chen used the Golden Mean and the Fibonacci Series from the folk tune *Baban* with its eight-beat patterns and three-hundred variations to inform her works: “If I create my music in a language that I am most familiar with, meeting some principles that are related to nature logically, then my creation would be very natural in emotion and powerful in spirit. I think it’s ideal.”[[237]](#footnote-237) Works such as *Sparkle,* Piano Concerto, and *Song in Winter* demonstrate these uses in melody, rhythm, and/or structure. Using such tools as found in nature offered Chen a means for creating a compelling yet universal expression.

**6 Conclusion**

The study of external and internal factors that shape creativity is a complex one and made more complicated by the fluid way that one’s nature and nurture interact. In examining the external factors that shaped Zhou’s and Chen’s modernisms, which include family background, early childhood exposures, and “re-education” period experiences, there are notable similarities and differences. The greatest similarity was the extent of musical exposure and tutelage they had prior to entering conservatory, made possible through their supportive and artistically-minded families. The most outstanding difference, however, was the nature of their early music training. Zhou was not a prodigy at an instrument, but possessed a profoundly musical instinct that was honed through work experiences as a composer with the Zhangziakuo Song and Dance Troupe and the National Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra of China. His composese intuitively as inspired by extramusical sources. Chen, on the other hand, was a violin prodigy and spent much of her pre-conservatory days studying and playing Eurocentric violin works, even as concertmistress of Guangzhou’s Beijing Opera Troupe. She approaches her compositions structurally with an attention to analyzable details.

Once they arrived at the Central Conservatory and later Columbia University, the differences in their aesthetic preferences, what I call “internal contingencies” became more apparent, as they developed modernisms that fully integrated their Chinese cultural identity with the modernist techniques they were learning. Zhou gravitated to Chou Wen-chung’s philosophical influence with his explorations of ancient Chinese art forms. The rhythms, meters, language, and textures of Chou, Stravinsky, Rhesphigi, and Varèse among others made their imprint. His principle area of investigation was cross-cultural instrumentation: 1) Western instruments adopting the style and sounds of guqin, percussion, and other Chinese instruments, 2) works that combined Western and Chinese instruments, or 3) introducing atonality and modernism to Chinese traditional ensembles. In all these approaches, rhythm, meter, and variety of sonic textures and treatments became his primary emphases. For Chen, who grew up with Eurocentric musical training, finding an authentic integration of Chinese folksongs and other indigenous expressions in the context of Western formal structures became her focus. Also, expanding her vocabulary of compositional techniques both Western and Eastern in service of her emotions became her aim. She achieved this through the assimilation of atonality, twelve-tone technique, indeterminacy, or *Baban* proportions and patterns.

Perhaps the best way to capture the divergence of their early modernisms is in how they describe their creative process. Zhou distinguished his from Chen’s in the following manner:

Chen Yi usually starts a composition with a map, a secret map on a very small piece of paper. She puts everything on it and follows the map. This is not my style. I compose with maybe just elements or motifs that come to my mind. I will notate them down. So then I have many ideas and I put it on the paper and put it around me. And I look at all these materials, all these parts, and I assemble everything together. But Chen Yi already has a more logical structure or plan. I still believe in my feeling rather than a plan. Sometimes she plans very logically the material and the structure, but in the end, I always give her some comments about my feelings. I say, this timing is not enough or this portion is not enough.

In relationship to setting poetry or instrumental music inspired by poetry, Chen shared:

Chou Wen-chung wrote some big orchestra works that were conducted by Stokowski. And those were inspired by old Chinese poems. And he also followed the expression of each line to construct his music. Although we may not use the same poem and maybe he took the old poem to write for orchestra, I would take the same poem to write for choral music. And we had the same inspiration… For some [works], I use a mathematical principle to construct the music. And so it doesn't mean that this mathematical plan will match the expression [of the text], but I follow the structural plan. And actually for some of my instrumental music, you can [actually] hear the expression from line to line of the poem. And in Zhou Long’s music, he takes it as a whole. The whole piece is dedicated to these whole images. It’s abstract. It's not in detail. You can see it as a whole picture, but you can't go into the details.

By the time Zhou and Chen graduated from Columbia, a compelling synthesis of Western modernist techniques and Chinese cultural elements was achieved in their works. Though their personal narratives bore profound similarities, their unique natures, and thus their modernisms went separate ways. In Zhou’s words, “the music is really attached to your personality. You can't change it. You just can't change it… I believe it's not really easy to change your personality. That's your music, your language.”

1. These model works, which were mostly modernized Beijing operas, were the only works Mao’s Communist government allowed to be performed. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Liu, A Critical History of New Music in China, p. 516. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. By the 1980’s, musicologists began referring to the younger generation of composers emerging after the end of the Cultural Revolution as the “New Wave” (*xin chao*). Historian Wang An’guo sheds light on this definition: “A ‘wave’ can be explained as a quantified dynamic. A ‘new wave’ can thus be described as a ‘new dynamic.’ In musical works of recent years in China, the exploration by composers of new musical concepts and their interest in modern and contemporary composition techniques since the twentieth century have become increasingly apparent. In likening this creative dynamic to a wave, I am seeking to clarify matters.” Ching-chih Liu, *A Critical History of New Music in China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2010), 510. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Chinese modernism is encouraged by the less obvious compatibility between the sound perspectives of Western modernism and indigenous Chinese music. For example, dissonance from the Western perspective is musical vernacular to the Chinese owing to the cultural importance of Chinese opera and Chinese traditional instruments, which frequently use microtonal inflections. Their training in indigenous Chinese music at the conservatories was rigorous with robust sets of pedagogical practice in place to nurture mastery. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The term “downtown” refers to American experimentalism as identified by Henry Cowell, John Cage, Philip Glass, and others, and “uptown” to the ivory tower perspective of American composers such as Milton Babbitt and Charles Wuorinen. The immigration of European composers such as Arnold Schoenberg, Béla Bartók, Igor Stravinsky, and others to American universities before

   World War II facilitated the “uptown” influence. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao closed down schools and ordered young people to be sent to labor camps so that they could be re-educated by peasants. The “New Wave” composers were assigned to different camps that ranged from rice fields to a dance and theater troupe, but all in service to peasants, farmers, and workers. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Among the original eight *yangbanxi* or “model works” were five modernized Beijing operas, two ballets, and one symphony. By the end of the Revolution in 1976, there were a total of eighteen sanctioned works. Yawen Ludden, “China’s Musical Revolution: From Beijing Opera to Yangbanxi,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 2013), 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. According to Dr. Ludden, this is a very Western perspective and that Jiang had intended for the *yangbanxi* to serve the people. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Yawen Ludden, “China’s Musical Revolution*,*”74. Competing traditions included the *Kun* operas which appealed to the intelligentsia and numerous local and regional operatic styles. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The Qing dynasty fell in 1911, giving rise to the first Republic of China, which struggled due to feuding warlords and foreign occupation. The second Sino-Japanese war (1937—45) and rising tensions between the Kuomintang and

    Communist parties (culminating in civil war) further destabilized the country. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The equality of women was first among these. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Mao’s wife Jiang Qing played a role in raising Mao’s awareness of the role the arts could play in advancing the revolutionary cause. (Ludden, “China’s Musical Revolution,” 112.) Prior to the Cultural Revolution, Mao asserted the importance of and requirements for socialist art during the “Rectification Campaign” (1942) and the “Great Leap Forward” (1958). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Barbara McDougall, *Talks at the Yan’an Conference on Literature and Art: Translation of the 1943*

    *Text with Commentary* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980), 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Other sanctioned works include two ballets– *The White-Haired Girl* and *The Red Detachment of Women*, and a symphonic work based on *Shajiabang*. More works followed such as the *Yellow River Piano Concerto*. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ludden, “China’s Musical Revolution,” 178, 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Composer Xie Tan described Yu Huiyong in the following manner: “There was no one who has meant more and

    achieved more in Chinese music history than Yu Huiyong. No one understood the essence of Chinese folk music,

    theater music, and Western music as much as Yu Yuiyong.” Yawen Ludden’s interview with Xie Tan, San Francisco,

    May 2008. Ludden, “China’s Musical Revolution,” 210. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Yu was preceded by a number of other Beijing opera reformists since the turn of the century who had envisioned the way forward as a synthesis of Western and Eastern musical practices. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Incorporating Western instruments was no small feat for Yu since Chinese and Western instruments are tuned according to different systems. Also, Western notation was unfamiliar to the musicians who played Chinese instruments. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Tibbetts, John, et. al, *Musical Multiplicities in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries, Performing Music History*, 2018, p. 283. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Liu, p. 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Shanghai is located on the Yangzi River delta where it empties into the Pacific Ocean. After the first Opium War, the British named it a treaty port, which opened the city to significant Western presence and influence. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Liu Ching-chih, *A Critical History of New Music in China*, p. 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Ibid., pg. 92. This one exception was a pedagogue in Chinese traditional music. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ibid., pg. 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Yawen Ludden, “China’s Musical Revolution: From Beijing Opera to Yangbanxi” (Ph.D. diss.: University of Kentucky, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Ibid., p. 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid., p. 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Jiti Li, Chinese Musical Strcture: An Outline Analysis. Beijing: Central Conservatory of Music Publishing Company, 2004, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Yawen, Ludden, p. 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Ibid., p. 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Dai Jiafang, “Yu Huiyong’s Study on Chinese Traditional Music Theory,” *Music Art*, Vol. 1, 2008, p. 77-96. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Corinna Da Fonseca-Wollheim, “Calligrapher in Sound,” *New York Times*, Oct. 31, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Guqin is a 3,000 year old Chinese zither associated with the most learned circles of ancient Chinese history including Confucious. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Chou Wen-chung, “Whither Chinese Composers?,” *Contemporary Music Review* 26, nos. 5-6, October/December 2007); 503-504. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Chou, “Open Rather than Bounded,” *Perspectives of New Music*, Autumn-Winter, 1966, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Varèse introduced Charles Ives and Carl Ruggles to European audiences. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. “How Did Confucianism Win Back the Communist Party,” *The Economist*, June 23, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Chou, “East and West, Old and New,” *Asian Music*, Winter, 1968-1969, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter, 1968-1969), University of Texas Press, p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Chou, “East and West, Old and New,” *Asian Music*, Winter, 1968-1969, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter, 1968-1969), University of Texas Press, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Corinna Da Fonseca-Wollheim, “Chou Wen-chung, 96, Leading Chinese Composer And Calligrapher in Sound,” *New York Times*: Oct. 31, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Baban is an ancient folk tune that has theoretical significance in its use of eight beats. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Deng Xiao Ping was among these students who studied abroad. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Zhou was unable to join the Communist party nor the army because of his politically mixed background. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Zhou Zutai was one of twelve children. The government confiscated the Zhou family’s land and house resulting in their impoverishment. The Japanese bombing of the Second Sino-Japanese War resulted in Zhou Zutai’s sister’s chronic mental health challenges. Zutai’s brothers include his oldest who was an engineer, the second oldest, who was a landlord, and the youngest who was a professor in Tianjin University in architecture. Some received a college education and worked in the cities, and the rest of them remained in the countryside. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Chiang Kai-Shek arrived in Chongqing on December 8, 1938 to establish the Guomindang national headquarters. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. The vast majority of singers and musicians who trained outside of China studied in Moscow. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. The China Conservatory is funded by the municipal government whereas the Central Conservatory of Music also in Beijing, is overseen by the Education Ministry of the Central government. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Cai Yuanpei also established the China Academy of Art. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. In Zhou Long’s interview on Sept. 22, 2021, he shared that his use of Tang poems in the children’s choir interludes of his opera “Madame White Snake” was inspired by these childhood memories. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. After primary school, Zhou went to audition at a dance academy. He was the tallest child at 12 years of age because he shot up early. He was summoned by the lady from the Central Ballet Academy who came to his elementary school. They looked at his feet to see if he was a good candidate for the ballet academy. He was almost admitted to the Central Ballet Academy, but fortuitiously didn’t go because of the Cultural Revolution. Since he stopped growing early, they would have had him leave the school in the middle any way. Zhou also remembers learning English with a neighbor who taught at the Community Academy. He said he was a teenager at that time. This was a short period. He learned some poems in English. This learning also ceased once the Cultural Revolution began. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Zhou was very close to his aunt Zhu Min (half-sister of his mother) whose father was very high ranking in the Communist party. She had three sons who came to ZL’s home to eat together because of financial hardship. By the Cultural Revolution, this power didn’t mean anything anymore. These three boys are now generals in China who are about to retire. ZL’s parents were both professors, so they could afford to help these boys. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Miller and Edward, p. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Kathrin Hille, “China’s ‘sent-down’ youth,” *Financial Times*, September 20, 2013. FIND ORIGINAL DECREE FOR CITATION [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Miller and Edward, pg. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. One of the team leaders from Shanghai would listen to Russian broadcasts of Chinese content on a transistor radio at night under his blanket. Russian propaganda in Chinese, Peking opera, and Chinese folk songs were offered by the Russians. According to Zhou, this musical content was not even available in China. The next day, this team leader would miss the work day and experience criticism for listening to enemy content. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. This early systematic education as a composer set him apart from other composers of his generation. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Luo Zhongrong was one of the early twelve-tone composers in China. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Luo Zhongrong and Fan Tzuyin were trained at the Shanghai Conservatory and Yan Liang Kun at the Moscow Conservatory. As for his learning of Western music theory, Zhou recalls reviewing the curriculum several times. The first exposure was through his self-guided studies of Sposobin, the second was in his private lessons with Li Yinghai , the third took place with Luo Zhong Rong, and the fourth as a student at the Central Conservatory. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. In 1937-38, Igor V. Sposobin, et. al. from the Moscow Conservatory wrote the first official harmony textbook approved by the USSR. This textbook was subsequently adopted by Chinese conservatory pedagogues. Luo Zhongrong also taught from Schoenberg’s *Theory of Harmony (Harmonielehre)* which he favored over Sposobin. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Between the ages of 7 and 20, Zhou had no formal musical training. He tells his students, "Anyone here, American or Chinese, you are in a very privileged environment." Maybe they don't like to hear this, but I told them, "At your age, I am working in the field every day. So they look at me as a composer today, but I'm a real farmer and a real factory worker.” [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Zhou shared that the choral conductor of the Song and Dance Troupe was also a songwriter. He would set a new text with a choral version, and Zhou would arrange the music for a single wind orchestra (strings, woodwinds, a a trumpet) combined with Chinese instruments– a Yang chin [CHECK SPELLING] (dulcimer) and bamboo flute. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Because Zhou knew basic tonal harmony from his childhood piano lessons, he was able to share this knowledge with the orchestral players. Even today, he encourages his students to create a piano reduction of their works as a basic blueprint and once it is just right to orchestrate the music from the reduction. Zhou Long interview on Oct. 20, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. These chamber orchestras (under twenty members) consisted mostly of western strings, woodwinds, a trumpet in combination with yangqin (hammered dulcimer) and bamboo flute. Although some Western instruments were destroyed by the Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution, the instruments weren’t banned by the Chinese government. The performance of government sanctioned works by Chinese composers on western instruments was completely acceptable. It was the performance of Western repertoire that was prohibited. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. According to William Saywell in “Education in China Since Mao,” drastic changes to admissions criteria and procedures were enacted to accommodate the differences in academic preparedness. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. William Saywell in “Education in China Since Mao,” *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. X-1, 1980, [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Zhou indicated that the Shanxi accent is strong and likened it to the southern accent in America. Even though Zhangziakuo is in the Hebei province, the presence of the Shanxi accent makes Shanxi opera more popular there than Hebei opera. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Errentai which literally means “two people stage,” was a form of light opera accompanied by percussion or instruments with storytelling and conversation between the two persons. This form of entertainment has receded in popularity only to be eclipsed by Errenzhuan, a similar form of light opera that is extremely popular to this day. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Zhou’s early work, *Taiping Drum* for violin and piano (1983) bears the influence of errentai and errenzhuan. Errenzhuan is also a two person drama that incorporates local folk dance and song from the Northeast region of China. With its use of comedy and dialogue, errenzhuan is currently a very popular entertainment medium. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. At Zhangziakuo, Zhou composed a dance score for dizi (bamboo flute) and full Western orchestra. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Zhou shared that the work was informed by errentai (a kind of Chinese opera with two singers) and errenzuan (a type of local folk dance and song from northern China that often involves a male and female performer). The dance director of the Zhiangziakuo Song and Dance Troupe wrote the libretto and created the choreography. It was his first experience working with a choreographer. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Zhou shared that several hundred musicians were accepted out of an applicant pool of over approximately 17,000. Among them were thirty-two composers. Some of them later became conducting majors. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Ibid. Zhou said that these prized scores and recordings were reference sources only. No one was allowed to check them out. Eventually, as the library grew its collections, he gained access to recordings by composers like Tōru Takemitsu and Isang Yun. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Zhou was likely referring to Debussy’s music which was popular in China. His use of Asian influences like pentatonic scales in a Western medium was championed as the first fusion of Eastern and Western expression. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. The major faculty Zhou Long and Chen Yi studied with were:

    Li Juhong, Piano

    Xiong Keyan, Ear-training

    Fan Zuyin, Harmony

    Yang Ruhuai, Music Analysis

    Yu Suxian, Counterpoint

    Wang Shu, Orchestration

    He Zhenjing and Gu Danru, Song Writing

    Zhong Zilin, Introduction to 20th century composition technique

    Yuan Jingfang, Chinese traditional instrumental music (solo and ensemble)

    Zhang Hongyi, Chinese musical story telling

    Luo Yinghui, Chinese traditional theater

    Geng Shenglian and Zhao Songguang, Chinese folksongs [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Chen Yi had knowledge of Su Xia via Zhou Long. She described Su Xia in the following manner: “Su Xia has a clear goal to reach. For example, he would ask for technical requirements… he would ask for every form all the way from a single period, to groups of periods, to a one-part form, two-part forms, three-part forms [and] inside of these forms you have all different styles and different settings, and different samples. You have to go through all of this, and then you write a variation… and then he would give an exam. You were not allowed to bring a piece of paper or a pencil to the bathroom [during the exam]. You had to take this exam [for] six hours. In that same day, you had to turn in [a completed] piece.” [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Chen Yi recalled that Su Xia would go to the library to secretly find out who checked out books and scores. Then he would publicly criticize the students who had not done so in class. Chen Yi interview on Jan. 13, 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Chen Yi interview on Oct. 22, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Interview by Wei Jiao with Zhou Long, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Wei Jiao, “Chinese and Western Elements in Contemporary Chinese Composer Zhou Long’s Works for Solo Piano Mongolian Folk-Tune Variations, Wu Kui, and PianoGong.” PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2014, p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Ibid., p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Chou Wen-chung visited China after a twenty-six year hiatus in 1972 after Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong signed the Shanghai Communique in Beijing. In 1977, he traveled to China to initiate an arts exchange program between the U.S. and China and in 1978, he established and became the Director for the Center for U.S.-China Arts Exchange. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Chou shared guqin works, an ancient seven-stringed Chinese musical instrument played by the sages in Confucious’ era, a tradition that was banned during the Cultural Revolution. He also introduced works by Elliott Carter and George Crumb. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Chou Wen-chung shared Varèse’s interest in pitchless percussion instruments. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Guqin (Chinese zither) music traces its roots to the Zhou Dynasty (1046 B.C. to 771 B.C.) and is associated with elite Chinese culture. Often associated with Confucius, it is called the “music of the sages.” [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Liu, *A Critical History of New Music in China*, p. 518. Zhou noted that *Guang Ling San Symphony* has hints of a Stravinskiian influence in its metrical changes. Since he didn’t like this imitative aspect, the work remained unpublished. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. The name of the album was taken from Chen Yi’s *Duo Ye* which was also included on the recording. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. The Communists labeled Ai Qing as a “Rightist,” a common label for intellectuals and was sent to Shenziang for punishment. Zhou visited him in Beijing upon his release in 1982. Ai gave Zhou a small book of his poetry. The first poem in the collection is “Words of the Sun.” In 1987 and 1988, Ai Qing was nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature. Zhou Long interview on Jan. 12, 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Su Xia suggested the name “Konggulushe,” which means a stream flowing into a stream. Zhou said this imagery influenced the creation of the work. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Zhou shared that he broke thirty years of tradition for Chinese instrumental

    ensemble writing. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Zhou composed *Wu Kui* for a pedagogical works competition. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Zhou Long, *Wu Kui*, for Piano. 2002, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Wei Jiao, p. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Zhou noted that rhythmic notation is underdeveloped in Chinese music, generally speaking. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Zhou notes that these classes are now an elective rather than a requirement. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. *Duoye*, Zhou Long’s and Chen Yi’s graduation recording in 1983, was produced by the China Record Company, which belongs to the China Broadcasting Corporation. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. *Washington Post* review, Stephen Brookes, “Composer Zhou Long Transcends Cultural Boundaries,” Dec. 9, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Wu Wenguang is the son of Wu Jinglue, also a guqin master and professor at the Central Conservatory of Music. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Persians also introduced the pipa (Chinese lute) to China. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Zhou’s recording entitled, “Valley Stream” on the China Record Company (CRC) label (1984) included *Valley Stream* for dizi (bamboo flute), guan (double-reed wind instrument), zheng (Chinese zither), and percussion, *Green* for bamboo flute and pipa, *Song Beneath the Moon* (1979) for two guanzi and yangqin (Chinese hammered dulcimer), and *Triptych of Bell-Drum Music* for percussion (1984) and was created from the radio broadcasted concert. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Though Zhou wanted to study in the US, he fully intended to return to China upon completing his doctoral degee. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. No conservatories in China offered a doctoral program in composition in the 80’s. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Zhou shared his particular enthusiasm for Isang Yun’s music. He described Yun as a German-trained modernist with strong cultural “bones.” In other words, you can still hear his Korean roots. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Zhou noted that the Susan Chen, the executive director of Music from China applied for a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts and that he received $750 for the work. By today’s standards, this is a modest amount, but at that time it was a considerable amount. Zhou Long interview on Feb. 2, 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Together with Chen Yi, Zhou also established the Music from China International Composition Competition. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Li, Xiaolin, “An Integration of Ancient Chinese Musical Traditions and Western Musical Styles: Secluded Orchid and Spirit of Chimes,” Diss.:Arizona State University, May 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Wild Grass was commissioned to commemorate the poetry of Lu Xun with the same title. Lu Xun was a critic of the Chinese government in the 1920’s and 30’s. It can also be performed as music that accompanies a poetry recitation. Chen Yi recalled that for three years Zhou took a class on 20th-Century Practice where he learned about extended techniques on Western instruments. This was critical for him as he adapted the techniques of Chinese traditional instruments to Western ones. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Zhou recalls how impressed he was by the whole wall of sound equipment in Lewin’s apartment. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Xi Wang, a masters degree candidate at the University of Missouri, Kansas City premiered Wuji for a Music Nova concert at UMKC on **what date?** [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. This work earned first prize from the Ensemblia in Mönchengladbach, Germany in 1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Zhou Long’s program notes. He analyzed *Ding* in its use of serial techniques for the Central Conservatory’s Magazine in 1991. It is dedicated to Mario Davidovsky. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Zhou Long’s program notes. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. He said the modernist explorations of *Wuji* and *Ding* were more exceptional than defining. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Edward Green, “The Impact of Buddhist Thought on the Music of Zhou Long: A Consideration of Dhyana,” *Contemporary Music Review*, Vol. 26, Nos. ⅚ October/December 2007, p. 549. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Ibid, p. 548. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Ibid., p. 550. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Ibid., p. 552. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. The Brooklyn Philharmonic commissioned the work for the Kronos Quartet. It also exists in a version for string quartet, and the third and fourth movements may be performed separately as *Two Poems from Tang*. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Movements: I. “Hut Among the Bamboo” by Wang Wei, II. “Fisherman’s Song” by Lou Zong Yuan, III. “Hearing the Monk Xun Play the Qin” by Li Bai, IV. “Song of Eight Unruly Tipsy Poets” by Du Fu [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. See *Chen Yi*, a biography by Leta E. Miller and J. Michele Edwards for more detailed biographical information. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Chen Yi shared that her mother’s side of the family is extremely musical. These relatives which include her cousins are all advanced avocational musicians. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Miller and Edwards, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. The first American Baptist missionaries arrived in China in the 1830’s. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. One of Chen Ernan’s classmates in Shanghai was Huang Fei Li who studied with Hindemith at Yale University and returned to China to assume the role of Conducting Chair at the Central Conservatory of Music. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Du was the only female in the class of seven students who graduated. She became a pediatrician. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Chen Yi recalls her parents working until midnight after coming home from the hospital to translate and edit English articles from Western medical journals for publication in Chinese. They did this as a team until the Cultural Revolution began in 1966. “Then everything stopped.” [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. “I remember… a lot of patients, friends, their old classmates from middle school, they would come… to ask [about] their sickness or ask for money.” [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Chen Ernan’s turntable came by way of his siblings who had moved to Hong Kong and Australia and his recording collection were discards from the American consulate which closed in 1949 at the start of the Communist revolution. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. The relationship of early musical training with having perfect pitch and strong academic ability is considered correlative, but more research is emerging to suggest it’s causal. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. See *Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise* by Anders Ericsson and Robert Pool. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Zheng Rihua was a student of Wen Zhanmei who was a student of Ma Sicong who studied at the Paris Conservatory and was the father of violin playing in China. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Miller and Edward, p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. The local church was pastored by the father of Zheng Zhong’s girlfriend. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Miller and Edward, p.15. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Miller and Edwards, p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Ibid, p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Ibid, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Ibid., p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Ibid, pg. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. In Chen Yi’s assessment, the termination of formal education was tragic for two reasons: it denied future generations academic learning, and it eliminated a public school system that was providing such a high level of education. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Chen Yi said that six Zimmerman’s, a German piano, existed in all of China. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Miller and Edwards, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Ibid. p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Chen Yi added that after the Cultural Revolution, some of her father’s recording collection was returned, but badly scratched. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Sixteen was considered a legal age to go to remote state run farms where sufficient food and resources are provided. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Chen indicated that the swampy soil of southern China was a contrast to that of the dry soil of the north where Zhou drove a tractor. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Miller and Edwards, pp. 24-25. [CHECK PAGE NUMBERS] [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Miller and Edwards, pg. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Chen Yun played the viola in this orchestra. The traditional Chinese instruments included the jinghu (Beijing opera fiddle) and jingerhu (Beijing opera fiddle– octave lower than jinghu), yueqin (moon lute), erhu (Chinese fiddle), pipa (a pear-shaped lute), sanxian (a long-necked lute), yangqin, and ruan (round-faced guitar). [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Ibid, pg. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Miller and Edwards, p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Miller and Ewards, p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Ibid. This is one of many puzzling ironies during the Cultural Revolution, which was launched in theory to rid Chinese culture of Western influence and capitalism. In truth, Western instruments and repertoire were allowed so long as they served the Communist ideology and education efforts. Chen shared that as long as she was on the “inside” of a government authorized performing organzation, she was protected. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Lin was considered the father of violin education in China. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Miller and Edwards, p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Chen said that the “rice was very tasty.” [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. This melody was later incorporated in the *Fiddle Suite* (erhu concerto), 3rd Movt. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. She recalled one title, “Memory of Premier Zhou,” which was incidental music to a poetry recitation. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Chen found an error in the exam where an incorrect notation was used. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Chen was given a prescribed text and asked to compose a song with accompaniment. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Chen was also well-equipped in literature and writing, giving credit to her excellent primary education. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Chen was 24 when she applied, just one year shy of the cut off. Candidates her age were expected to have won an international competition. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. According to Chen, the sequence of courses needed reform. Analysis and counterpoint, for example, weren’t offered until she was a junior, but would have been helpful for their first-year compositions. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Chen’s learning with Zheng Zhong was not as specialized. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Chen Yi, “Tradition and Creation,” *Current Musicology* 67/68, (Fall 1999): 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Later on, Chen translated many ancient poems from Chinese to English and applied the same rhyme scheme to the English version. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Chen, “Tradition and Creation,” *Current Musicology,* 67/68, p. 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Miller and Edwards, p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Wu Zuqiang was a dedicated teacher who rarely missed a weekly lesson, even as the vice president of the CCOM, an appointment that began in 1978. Chen Yi recalls only one month when he was absent to judge the Menuhin Competition in England. During this time, Li Yinghai substituted for him. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Wu Zuqiang helped compose the music for the *Red Detachment of Women*, a ballet that became a revolutionary model opera. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. During her time at the Central Conservatory, Chen also minored in piano which was a requirement for composers. She performed the first movement of Hindemith’s Piano Sonata No. 3 and Ravel’s Sonatine from memory and accompanied Zhou Long in his performance of Shostakovich’s 2nd Piano Concerto. She also played the violin part for Beethoven’s “Spring” Violin Sonata No. 5, Op. 24 and Zhou Long the piano part. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Secretly, Chen looked at Zhou Long’s lesson notes from Su Xia and notice how strict and demanding Su was with his students. At one point, while composing preludes on the piano, she noticed that Zhou was writing a set of variations. She petitioned Wu Zuqiang for the opportunity to do the same, which resulted in her *Variations on Awaraguli.* [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. It is the first work Chen Yi composed after a two year hiatus of intensive course work. Chen later submitted the string quartet to the string quartet competition at the Central Conservatory. She played first violin for this and the compositions of seven other classmates including Zhou’s *Song of the Ch’in* for the competition. Chen’s string quartet was selected by the jury for a prize. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Frank Kouwenhoven, “Developments in Mainland China’s New Music, Part 1: From China to the United States.” PAGE NUMBER? [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. The others included Ye XiaoGang, Zhou Ching Liu (spelling?), Ge Gan-ru, Wan Chang-yeong, and Lin Dan Ho. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Interview with Griffiths in *New Sounds, New Personalities*, pp. 16-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. “*Xianshi*, The Viola Concerto by Yi Chen: General Analysis and Issues of Performance Interpretation” by Chi-Chuan Teng, Dissertation: The Ohio State University, 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Chou Wen-chung also donated a collection of scores to the library. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Yun gave Chen seven LPs that she deposited in the library. Later on in 1990, at the Pacific Festival in Sapporo, Japan, Isang Yun gave Chen a set of CD’s which she deposited at the Columbia University library. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. See Chen, “Tradition and Creation,” *Current Musicology*, 67/68, p. 61 for a fuller description. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. See Miller and Edwards, pp. 79-81 for a full analysis of this and other works by Chen. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Miller and Edwards, p. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. *Small Opera Gong* for piano (1993) is paired with *Yu Diao* under the title, *Two Bagatelles*. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Isang Yun’s orchestrational use of moving instrumental clusters also appears in this work. Dennis Russell Davies heard this work when the China Youth Symphony was on tour in Europe and commissioned a work from Chen. [FILL IN] [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. The opportunity to compose this work arose through Zhou Long’s family friend Yan Liangkun, the Director of the Central Philharmonic Society, a performing organization that included an orchestra and chorus. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Chen, Tradition and Creation, p. 61-63. The “Sum of Eight” technique groups notes between two instruments or groups according to the following pattern: 7+1, 5+3, 3+5 1+7. Chen also uses the “Golden Olive” pattern where note groups are patterned pallindromically: 1, 3, 5, 7, 5, 3, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Zhou’s work, The Light of the Cosmic for voice and synthesizer was aired in Tiananmen Square for the Oct. 1 National Day celebration. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Dennis RD heard this work in Bonn and learned of Chen Yi through China Youth Symphony’s performance on tour. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. Chen noted the influence later on of Roy Howat’s *Debussy in Proportion* on her thinking. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. Chou, “Whither Chinese Composers?” 501. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Chen Yi continued to perform monthly in the Columbia Composers’ concerts which Mario Davidovsky attended religiously. Although Chen was not a private student of his until later, Davidovsky was quite familiar with her writing and playing as a result. Davidovsky ultimately became her DMA dissertation advisor after Chou Wen-chung retired. George Edwards was Chen’s professor in 20th-Century Analysis but not a private teacher. Chen Yi interview on Feb. 3, 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. As a result of her work in his class, Mario Davidovsky chose Chen to participate in his composer’s conference held at Wellesley College in Wellesley, MA where the finest contemporary musicians came for a summer workshop. Here, Chen’s Woodwind Quintet was performed and recorded. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. This is a technique that Chen adapts in her later orchestral works that employ heterophonic textures. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Miller and Edwards, p. 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Chen was accepted as a fellowship composer at Aspen in 1988. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Miller and Edwards, pg. 231. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. A pipa is a four-stringed Chinese lute that is held vertically and plucked with picks worn on all five fingers of the right hand. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. The pipa has a wide range and has more than seventy technical practices that include “tremolo, vibrato, glissando, pitch inflection, and harmonics.” See Chen, “Tradition and Creation,” p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Chen, “Tradition and Creation,” p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. This list of devices is not exhaustive, but gives one a sense of Chen’s structural mindset. Shifan luogo is a percussion ensemble from the Jiangsu Province on the central coast of China. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Chen read Chinese analyses of *Baban* in 1986 once she arrived at Columbia. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Borger, pp. 278, 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Chen, “Tradition and Creation,” p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Ibid., p. 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Ibid., p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Miller and Edwards, p. 68. Chen Yi submitted the Piano Concerto along with an analysis of it to fulfill her DMA degree requirements. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Ibid., p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. Borger, p.282. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Miller and Edwards, p. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Chen, “Tradition and Creation,” p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Chen taught others as well: five years of music fundamentals and ear training for undergraduates. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. Miller and Edwards, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Chen, “Tradition and Creation,” p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Chen Yi’s program notes for Symphony No. 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Even during these internally contingent phases, there are experiences and exposures that were beyond their control such as the limited score and recording resources initially available once the Central Conservatory reopened in 1977. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Zhou said: I spent three years as a steel worker and then three years as a tractor driver. And I had no middle school certificate and no high school [diploma] and no master’s degree. Then I had five years of undergrad training and worked as a composer in residence with the broadcasting corporation in Beijing. I then pursued the higher degree at Columbia for eight years… And I then spent 13 years as a freelance composer in New York. My students [simply] can’t understand this. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Gu Lan interview, Nov. 22, 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Chen Ernan listened to Voice of America and the BBC radio stations. Though the channels were jammed by the government, information still came through. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Miller and Edwards, p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. Ericsson, Anders and Robert Pool, *Peak,* Mariner Books, p. 120 (electronic version). [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Schonberg, Harold C. *The Lives of the Great Composers*, 3rd ed., W.W. Norton & Co., 1997, p. 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. Ibid., p.269. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Arlin and Radice, *Polycultural Synthesis in the Music of Chou Wen-chung*, Routledge: London and New York, pg. 260. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Chen’s knowledge of Beijing Opera was vast, but that of folk music and other local expressions was limited to her private studies with Zheng Zhong. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. The one exception for the scope of this study is one work from her final year at Columbia: *Song in Winter* (1993) a trio for dizi, zheng, and harpsichord (also arranged for flute, zheng, piano, and percussion in 1993 and later soprano, zheng, and piano in 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. Chen also used absolute and extramusical titles, such as Overture No. 1, Overture No. 2, Suite, and *The Tides*, for works she composed for Chinese traditional instruments. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. *Shifan luogo* is a type of percussion ensemble from the Jiangsu Province on the central coast of China. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Borger, p. 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)