

POLITICS AND THE PIANO DURING THE GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL
REVOLUTION IN CHINA: AN ANALYSIS OF THREE PIANO WORKS,
MUSIC AT SUNSET (1975), *HUNDREDS OF BIRDS PAYING*
HOMAGE TO THE PHOENIX (1973), AND
LIUYANG RIVER (1972)
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As a political disturbance and social movement, the Cultural Revolution hugely impacted the development of Chinese piano art. The piano went through many stages throughout this ten-year period. This dissertation examines the suppression and later expansion of piano music in China during the Cultural Revolution, along with the historical motivations and forces that shaped each stage of its development. The study is supported by historical documents and relevant literature. This dissertation includes an analysis of the roles that piano music played during this era and the piano's relationship with the Cultural Revolution's modernizing goals. The analysis focuses on the musical characteristics of three piano pieces from this period and explores the instrument's historical importance, to better understand how Chinese piano music maintained a careful balance between its value as a tool for socio-political propaganda and its transformation under the burden of political pressure and creative limitations. Additionally, this dissertation examines playing techniques in these works that define a distinctly Chinese piano style that is enormously popular today. To complement the dissertation, these piano pieces were performed during the dissertation recital.

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By

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE PIANO'S HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT IN MODERN CHINA

1.1 The Origin and Evolution of Piano in China before 1949

The introduction of the modern piano in China occurred in the mid-19th century,¹ following the Qing dynasty's signing of the Treaty of Nanking on August 29, 1842 and the subsequent opening of the five treaty ports in southeast China between 1843 and 1844. This allowed Western merchants to export a variety of goods to China, including the modern piano.² The government initiated the Self-Strengthening Movement from around 1861 to 1895 during the late Qing dynasty, which valued Western ingenuity and technology and as an attempt to improve Chinese military, diplomatic, fiscal, and educational policy.³ As part of this movement to learn from the west, the piano was promoted within the palace and mansion houses. Missionaries also brought the piano to China and introduced it to churches and Christian schools. However, due to its high cost, the piano remained popular only among the upper class and became associated with capitalism and nobility.⁴

The composition of piano music, professional performance, and education largely began in the early 20th century after the formation of the Republic of China on January 1, 1912.⁵

During the period of increased foreign presence in China, brought about by the arrival of

¹ Meng Bian, *The Formation and Development of Chinese Piano Culture* (Beijing: Huayue Press, 1996), p.7; Changkui Wang, *China Piano Music Culture* (Beijing: Guangming Daily Press, 2010), p.42; Tingge Wei, *Analogy of Music Lectures* (Beijing: Renmin Music Press, 2007), p.107.

² Wenlan Fan, *The History of Modern China, Part 1, Volume 1* (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1953), p.182.

³ John King Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 11, Part 2* (Cambridge University Press, 1978), p.156-161.

⁴ Bian, *Chinese Piano Culture*, p.7-9.

⁵ Bian, *Chinese Piano Culture*, p.10-13; Wang, *China Piano Music Culture*, p.54-69; Jinan Sun and Zhuquan Zhou, *A Brief History of Chinese Music* (Jinan: Shandong Education Press, 2012), p.254-259.

missionaries, merchants, journalists, and adventurers, intercultural communication between China and the Western world was greatly facilitated. This period also saw the emergence of the first recorded piano pieces and music academies, where Western musicians played a significant role. Shanghai, as one of the main trading ports and a city open to foreign involvement through the policy of extraterritoriality, became a center for piano art in China.

On April 10, 1900, the first piano recital in China was held by Italian pianist Mario Paci in Shanghai.⁶ In November of 1927, the first music institution of higher education in China was founded by Dr. Xiao Youmei (1884-1940) in Shanghai, which grew to be the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.⁷ In 1934, the Russian-born American pianist Alexander Tcherepnin (1899-1977) arrived in China and developed a deep appreciation for Chinese music and culture. During his stay in Shanghai, he helped arrange the first piano composition competition all the while being actively involved in Chinese music education. The piano compositions in the competition were required to incorporate Chinese themes and musical elements.⁸ Additionally, Shanghai's piano heritage also included contributions from a number of other Western pianists, educators, and composers, such as Boris Zakharoff (1887-1943), Leopold Godowsky (1870-1938), and Arthur Rubinstein (1887-1982), who left indelible marks on the development of piano in that city.⁹ It is worth noting that the piano department at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music served as the birthplace for many renowned Chinese pianists. Under the leadership of director Dr. Xiao Youmei, who based his teachings on the Leipzig Conservatory of Music where he

⁶ Bian, *Chinese Piano Culture*, p.10.

⁷ Wang, *China Piano Music Culture*, p.55; Sun and Zhou, *History of Chinese Music*, p.315; Jinan Sun, *The Chronicle of the Modern and Contemporary 1840-2000* (Jinan: Shandong Education Press, 2012), p.81.

⁸ Bian, *Chinese Piano Culture*, p.21; Sun and Zhou, *History of Chinese Music*, p.257; Sun, *History of Music Education in China*, p.103.

⁹ Bian, *Chinese Piano Culture*, p.12; Wang, *China Piano Music Culture*, p.62.

graduated, the department hired Russian pianist Boris Zakharoff as head of the piano department and many other professors from Russia and France.¹⁰ This systematic approach to Western music education greatly improved the piano performance levels of Chinese students at the time, many of whom went on to become pillars of the Chinese piano scene. These students primarily came from wealthy, bourgeois families in China.

The accumulation of pianos remained largely bound to Shanghai up until the establishment of the People's Republic of China in October of 1949. This was due to a combination of factors. On the one hand, China had experienced numerous years of wars, including wars between warlords (from approximately 1916 to 1928), the Second Sino-Japanese War (from July 1937 to August 1945), and the Chinese Civil War (from 1945 to 1949), which severely impacted economic, cultural, and educational development in the country. On the other hand, pianos were considered a luxury item and were financially out of reach for most people, particularly poor civilians, who made up the majority of China's population at the time.

1.2 The Piano's Evolution between 1949 and 1966

The founding of the People's Republic of China was declared by Mao Zedong (1893-1976) on October 1, 1949 after a half century of wars. Once Beijing was designated as the new capital of China, it and Shanghai took on the roles of political center and economic center, respectively. The Chinese Communist Party placed a strong emphasis on infrastructure development and economic growth in these two cities. As a result, the two largest state-owned piano factories were located in these cities and were supported by smaller piano factories in other regions. Similarly, the two premier music academies with piano departments were established in

¹⁰ Xiaoying Li and Qingyun Zhang, "The Influence of Soviet-Russian Music on Chinese Music Culture in the First Half of the 20th Century," *Russian, Central Asian and Eastern European Studies*, No. 5 (2001): p.76-80.

Beijing and Shanghai, with other music academies gradually being established in other parts of China. Although there was still a long way to go for the piano factories and music academies to catch up with the Western countries in terms of the scale and quality, the foundation and framework for piano development and education had begun to take shape in China.

The global political landscape of China underwent a dramatic shift after World War II and the beginning of the Cold War (from 1947 to 1948). China, as part of the Communist Party, aligned itself with the Soviet Union. During and following the Korean War (1950 to 1953), China and the Soviet Union increased their economic and military cooperation. The economic aid that China received from the Soviet Union also extended into its social and cultural systems. This included sending many young pianists to study, perform, and compete in the Soviet Union.¹¹ In the meantime, the Soviet Union sent experts and professors to teach in music conservatories in China.¹² With the help of Soviet experts, Chinese music academies translated and published a large number of music books from Communist countries. They even imitated the syllabus and organizational structure of various music schools in the Soviet Union.¹³ The results of this are the elementary schools and middle schools affiliated with the major music conservatories that were established in 1957.¹⁴ Furthermore, the government made efforts to aggregate the most talented students from top music schools across the country to ensure they had access to the best educational resources. The system of employment for graduates with a piano major also followed the Soviet Union model, where students majoring in piano were assigned to work in affiliated organizations such as orchestras, theaters, and cultural centers after

¹¹ Bian, *Chinese Piano Culture*, p.45-52; Sun and Zhou, *History of Chinese Music*, p.355,358,360,362,366.

¹² Bian, *Chinese Piano Culture*, p.40,44.

¹³ Sun, *History of Music Education in China*, p.170.

¹⁴ Sun and Zhou, *History of Chinese Music*, p.361.

graduation, with a lack of solo performers. Such organizations reflected the unique characteristics of the communist social structure. Another key attribute was a focus on competition with the goal of achieving competitiveness that prevailed in the piano industry of China. The goal for the pianists was to win competitions abroad for the glory of the country.¹⁵ The competitive nature of piano education in China led to a greater specialization in performance and composition, resulting in a shortage of musicians who were proficient in both areas. The influences of the competitive mode of piano education have continued until today. In general, piano education in China, along with other projects that received aid from the Soviet Union experienced enormous improvements over a short amount of time.¹⁶

Under the national structure of the Chinese Communist Party, all the music schools, orchestras, and theaters became state owned. The party's principle of "politics in command" permeated all aspects of work and labor. Politics and government played an essential role in the development of the piano's importance in Chinese music and culture.¹⁷¹⁸ During the 17 years between the founding of the People's Republic of China and the start of the Cultural Revolution, the effects of politics on various industries, including the piano industry, became more pronounced, significant, and long-lasting. The most representative movement during this period was the Anti-Rightist Campaign, which lasted from 1957 to 1959.

1.2.1 The Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957-1959)

In April 1957, after Mao Zedong became aware of the widespread dissatisfaction among intellectuals and members of democratic parties with the ruling Communist Party, he encouraged

¹⁵ Huiqiao Bao, "Variations of Life," *Sunny TV*, No. 121, 2022: 12'30"-12'45."

¹⁶ Shikun Liu, "Rhapsody of Life" (Part 1), *Sunny TV*, No.76, 2022: 8'52"-9'44."

¹⁷ Zedong Mao, "Speech at the Enlarged Central Work Conference," *People's Daily*, July 1, 1978, p.1.

¹⁸ Zedong Mao, "Speech at the Hangzhou Conference," *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought*, 1968, p.2-5.

them to express their opinions freely, and promised that they would not be held accountable. In response, many people, particularly non-partisan intellectuals, voiced their political views through various channels, including calls for economic reform, criticism of government policies, and even demands for a multi-party system to replace the Communist Party's one-party dictatorship. However, two months later, Mao Zedong backpedaled on his promise and launched a purge of dissidents. He defined these people as rightists and initiated the Anti-Rightist Campaign. The Chinese Communist Party defined itself as a proletarian leftist party. In turn, anyone deemed a rightist was seen as not conforming with the views of the Party. The Chinese Communist Party's official definition for rightists were the intellectuals with capitalist ideologies who oppose one-party dictatorship and collectivization, but in reality, the classification was often vague and inconsistent.

One of the opinions that most angered Mao Zedong among rightists came from Chu Anping (1909-1966), a well-known intellectual of the Democratic Party. As a consequence of a speech he gave entitled "Comment made to Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou" on June 1, 1957 and the subsequent publication of his article "The Party Dominates the World," Chu Anping was labeled an "anti-party, anti-people, anti-socialism, bourgeois rightist" in January 1958.¹⁹ Following this, he faced constant public criticism and accusations. His wife was forced to divorce him, and his children were forced to disassociate from him. It is worth mentioning that his third son Chu Wanghua was a famous Chinese pianist and composer, who revealed in an article that after his admittance to the Composition Department of the Central Conservatory of Music in 1958, he was nearly expelled due to his father being deemed a rightist, but ultimately compromised by enrolling in the piano department instead. Despite distancing himself from his

¹⁹ Jing Li, "The Death of My Father, Chu Anping," Sanlian Life Weekly, No. 37(2008).

father at the time, Chu Wanghua faced ongoing repercussions from his father's rightist identity in the following decades. He faced hostility and was referred to as "the time bomb of the Central Conservatory of Music"²⁰ during the Cultural Revolution, and for a long time after, he was not acknowledged for his participation in the adaptation and creation of the famous composition *The Yellow River Piano Concerto*.²¹

Another example of individuals affected by the Anti-Rightist Campaign was the renowned translator and art critic Fu Lei (1908-1966). He was labeled a rightist in 1958, and as a result, his son, the pianist Fu Cong, abandoned his plans to study in Poland, a socialist Eastern European country, instead he chose to settle permanently in London and never returned to China. His father Fu Lei eventually committed suicide during the subsequent Cultural Revolution due to unbearable criticism. Apparently, the major music conservatories also responded to Mao Zedong's call and encouraged everyone to express their opinions freely. Many teachers and students expressed their views in seminars and journals. One of the teachers was composer Wang Lisan (1933-2013) from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, whose focus was primarily on piano music. In April 1957, Wang Lisan and others jointly published the article "On the Evaluation of Some Symphonic Works from Comrade Xinghai" in the *People's Music* magazine. In the article, the authors raised questions and criticisms about symphony works of Xian Xinghai (1905-1945), a deceased composer who was later honored by Mao Zedong as the "People's Musician" for his examination of music as a form of revolution.²² This honor was considered as the highest praise from Mao Zedong and could not be challenged. This article clearly offended

²⁰ Li, "The Death of My Father, Chu Anping."

²¹ Li, "The Death of My Father, Chu Anping."

²² National Archives Administration of China, *Selected Collection of Mao Zedong's Calligraphy and Inscriptions*, (Beijing: The People's Fine Arts Publishing House and Archives Press, 1984), p.86.

Mao and Wang Lisan and three others were criticized as rightists and exiled. They were later attacked during the Cultural Revolution. The Anti-Rightist Campaign had a lasting impact on the creative process of composers, leading them to exercise caution in their words and actions, adhering strictly to the government's guidelines. The effects of the campaign, along with increasing government control and other social movements, persisted until the Cultural Revolution. It can be argued that the Anti-Rightist Campaign served as a precursor to the Cultural Revolution and marked a shift towards greater censorship and political influence in the arts.²³

At the same time, the relationship between China and the Soviet Union began to deteriorate, leading to the recall of Soviet experts who were providing aid in the field of music education in China. Moreover, China reduced the number of international students participating in music exchange activities overseas. As the relations between the two countries continued to decline until the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, cultural relations and exchanges came to a standstill, with China positioning itself in opposition to both the United States and Soviet Union during the Cold War. This international political climate had a detrimental effect on Western culture and art, including piano music, which faced suppression by the highest levels of power in China. Since May 1957, the Ministry of Culture had mandated that music institutions of higher learning decrease enrollment in Western music departments while increasing enrollment in domestic folk music departments,²⁴ with some students in Western music departments being encouraged to switch to studying national folk music.²⁵

²³ Zheng Zhu, "1957: The Disappearance of China's Modern Intellectuals," *Modern China Studies*, No.3 (2007).

²⁴ Sun, *History of Music Education in China*, p.175.

²⁵ Sun, *History of Music Education in China*, p.177.

In addition to the pressure caused by the international political environment, the domestic political environment also greatly affected piano. Not long after the Anti-Rightist Campaign which nearly eliminated all forms of opposition inside and outside the Communist Party, the Communist Party of China initiated the Great Leap Forward movement (1958-1962). The celebration of the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution (1917) in November 1957 was attended by Mao Zedong in Moscow, where Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971) proposed a competition to overtake the United States in fifteen years, particularly in steel production as an indicator of the national industrial development. Mao Zedong, after being deeply inspired, declared during his speech at the conference that “China would surpass the United Kingdom's steel production within fifteen years as well.”²⁶ This was followed by a nationwide drive for massive steel production known as the Great Steelmaking campaign in the autumn of 1958, with the stated goal of surpassing the United Kingdom and catching up with the United States. In response to the Party’s call, major music conservatories also put forward various slogans such as *Chasing Lao Chai* (a Chinese nickname for Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)) and *Chasing Lao Bei* (a Chinese nickname for Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)), in an attempt to align with the rhetoric of the Great Leap Forward movement.²⁷ However, these slogans were often unrealistic and exaggerated, and the focus on steel production led to a disruption of normal school activities, including music teaching and practice, as schools were

²⁶ Zedong Mao, “Speech at the Moscow Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties, on November 18th, 1957,” *Collected Works of Mao Zedong, Volume 7*, (People’s Publishing House, 1993), p.321-335.

²⁷ Sun, *History of Music Education in China*, p.182.

turned into steel-making sites and students and professors were engaged in steel production day and night.²⁸

After the conclusion the Great Leap Forward and Great Steelmaking movements, the political pressure in China remained high. This was compounded by deteriorating relations between China and the Soviet Union, as open debates between the two Communist Parties began to take place. As a result, in 1963, the Chinese Communist Party recalled a group of pianists who were studying in Soviet music conservatories, including the young and accomplished pianist Yin Chengzong. These pianists, as well as other students who had returned from studying abroad in the Soviet Union, were subject to monitoring and censorship by China, due to the defection of pianist Fu Cong to the United Kingdom in 1959.²⁹ On December 31, 1963, Yin Chengzong performed for Mao Zedong as the musician representative. After the performance, Mao Zedong asked Yin Chengzong to create and perform more national musical works.³⁰ On June 27, 1964, Mao Zedong published an article titled “Report of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Rectification of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and its Affiliated Associations,” in which he publicly criticized the pervasive influence of Soviet revisionism in China’s literary and art circles. This report marked a clear shift in direction, towards the de-Sovietization and de-Westernization of literature and art in China, leading to more rectification movements in these circles,³¹ which had a detrimental impact on the piano development in China as it began to be greatly suppressed politically.

²⁸ Central Institute of Educational Sciences, *Chronicle of Educational Events in the People’s Republic of China, 1949-1982*, (Beijing: Educational Science Press, 1983), p.233; Sun, *History of Music Education in China*, p.180.

²⁹ Jiaxun Zhuang, *Mo Shang Hua Lai: Return and Journey* (Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 2014), p.149.

³⁰ Chengzong Yin, “A Piano Dream for 70 Years” interview with Xu Gehui, *Phoenix TV*. October 13, 2013.

³¹ Qihong Ju, *The History of Chinese Music: 1949-2000* (Changsha: Hunan Art Press, 2002), p.72; Sun and Zhou, *History of Chinese Music*, p.368.

Throughout the seventeen years from the founding of the Communist Party of China to the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, music, musicians, and the music industry as a whole became increasingly subject to political influence. However, the event that had the most far-reaching and transformative impact was the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

1.3 The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Mao Zedong, and the Piano as Propaganda

The term revolution in the English language implies a significant transformation or overthrow of the current political system and is often viewed positively. In contrast, in the context of China's Cultural Revolution, the word carries connotations of violence and loss of life in the pursuit of a new cultural system. The English word does not fully convey the brutality and bloodshed of the movement, which lasted for a decade, impacted millions of Chinese citizens, and extended beyond cultural boundaries, touching all aspects of society. The English terms Cultural Revolution and Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution do not fully capture the magnitude and ramifications of this political event.

During the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese Communist Party defined the targets of attack to be all individuals, groups, and objects with the characteristics of feudalism, capitalism, revisionism.³² At the core of the Cultural Revolution was the concept of struggle. As researcher Woei Lien Chong noted, "violent struggle to deal with class enemies and counterrevolutionary forces, both in political rhetoric and actual practice, was a recurring theme during the Maoist period in China, especially the Cultural Revolution."³³ In this context, class enemies were anyone deemed to have bourgeois attributes, with academic authority figures and intellectuals

³² Qing Jiang, *Summary of the Military Arts and Literature Work Conference held by Comrade Lin Biao on behalf of Comrade Jiang Qing* (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1967).

³³ Barend Haar, "China's Inner Demons: The Political Impact of the Demonological Paradigm," in *China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution: Master Narratives and Post-Mao Counternarratives*, ed. Woei Lien Chong (United Kingdom: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), p.27.

being particularly harassed.³⁴ Although the specific targets of struggle and the criteria for judging them varied during the Revolution, academic authority figures and intellectuals were consistently taunted. Prior to the Revolution, the literary, art, and academic circles were already subjected to rectification and suppression by the government. The education system even abolished the use of doctoral and professor titles, which were seen as symbols of capitalism and feudal hierarchy.³⁵ However, this suppression of intellectuals became even more severe during the Cultural Revolution. Anyone with Western influences, those who had studied abroad, and even those who came from families with a bourgeois background, were considered targets. As a result, performers, professors, and composers in Western music, including piano players were among those tormented.

All levels of the party and governmental organizations such as literary and art institutions, music academies and publishing units were all taken over by the Red Guards, revolutionary committees, military representatives, and worker propaganda teams during the Cultural Revolution. The origins and makeup of these paramilitary groups were complex, but they all shared a common allegiance to Mao Zedong. In the first two years from 1966 to 1968, Western classical music was defined as capitalist music, Chinese traditional music and folk music of ethnic minorities were defined as feudal music, and music of the Soviet Union and socialist countries in Eastern Europe was defined as revisionist music. Consequently, nearly all musical works were banned, with the exception of songs that praised Mao Zedong or encouraged revolution and rebellion, such as *The East Is Red*, a song adapted from a folk melody that praised

³⁴ Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, "The Notice," *People's Daily*, May 17, 1967, p.1; Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, "Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," *People's Daily*, August 9, 1966, p.1; Hua Gao, "Examining the Launching of the Cultural Revolution from the Perspective of 'seven Regulations: Thoughts,'" *The Annals of the Yellow Emperor*, 2004, Issue 1.

³⁵ Sun, *History of Music Education in China*, p.179.

Mao Zedong.³⁶ Even the national anthem, *The March of the Volunteers*, was temporarily replaced by *The East Is Red*.³⁷ Xian Xinghai, who was praised by Mao Zedong as a “People’s Musician,” was also banned due to his work *The Yellow River Cantata* being labeled as a black line in literature and art. Piano, as a representative instrument of feudalism (promoted within the palace when it first entered China), capitalism (originated from the Western world), and revisionism (studied from the Soviet Union), was targeted for destruction, along with music scores and records.³⁸ Finding a piano in good condition at the end of the Cultural Revolution was challenging for visiting musicians such as violinist Isaac Stern (1920-2001).³⁹

Shanghai, since the introduction of the piano to China, once again became the front line during the Cultural Revolution, but this time it was a disaster. Students of the Piano Department of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music were forced to stay in school and write big posters to criticize their teachers and Western music. Teachers and professors were imprisoned in practice rooms without pianos and forced to criticize themselves and Western culture and music.⁴⁰ Later, the teachers were beaten by the Red Guards and even forced to beat each other. Those who did not participate in the beatings with enough enthusiasm were punished even more severely by the Red Guards.⁴¹ Under the insults to personality and personal injury, many musicians committed suicide. There were seventeen suicides at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, including the

³⁶ Ju, *History of Chinese Music*, p.98; Pamela Sommers, “The Long March of a Pianist,” *The Washington Post*, November 2, 1989.

³⁷ Weijie Shi, “The national anthem reflects history: Do you know the three versions of ‘The March of the Volunteers’?” *Pengpai News*, December 4, 2014.

³⁸ Sommers, “The Long March of a Pianist.”

³⁹ Madeleine Thien, “After the Cultural Revolution: What Western Classical Music Means in China,” *The Guardian*, August 8, 2016.

⁴⁰ Sommers, “The Long March of a Pianist.”

⁴¹ Liqun Cao and Jiaxun Zhuang, “Gu Shengying: The piano poet forgotten in the dust of history,” *China News Weekly*, October 29, 2010.

director of the piano department, teachers Li Cuizhen (1910-1966), Gu Shengying (1937-1967), and Fan Jisen (1917-1968). Their families either killed themselves together or continued to be persecuted.⁴²

1.3.1 The Discovery of Piano as Propaganda of the Cultural Revolution

A significant shift in the perception and treatment of piano art during the Cultural Revolution occurred in 1967. In May 1967, the 25th anniversary of the “Speech by Mao Zedong at the Literary and Artistic Symposium” was celebrated nationwide, and various organizations and self-started groups were organized to form “Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Teams” to go out into the communities and perform propaganda shows.⁴³ Yin Chengzong, a 26-year-old young pianist, was a member of the Central Orchestra. As one of the few surviving art groups from the Cultural Revolution, the Central Orchestra was incorporated into the military in November 1966 and directly served the Central Cultural Revolution Group, or more precisely, Jiang Qing (1914-1991). Jiang Qing was the wife of Mao Zedong and was appointed deputy director of the Central Cultural Revolution Group. Yin Chengzong attempted to utilize the piano to align with Mao’s slogan of “using foreign things for Chinese purposes” by composing *The Red Guard Symphony*. This was a work in multiple forms, including piano solo, concerto, and recitation. However, this attempt was not successful.⁴⁴

The real turning point was when Yin Chengzong moved a piano to Tiananmen Square in May 1967 and performed pieces that reflected the cultural and political ideals of the Revolution, such as *The East Is Red*, *The Internationale* (1871), and *Songs of Chairman Mao’s Quotations*.

⁴² Wang, *China Piano Music Culture*, p.160.

⁴³ Zhuang, *Mo Shang Hua Lai*, p.151.

⁴⁴ Xiaolong Liu, “The 60-year Development of Chinese Piano (part 6): The Birth of the Piano Concerto ‘Yellow River’,” *Piano Art*, September 2009, p.26.

This move was approved by Jiang Qing.⁴⁵ At the same time, as part of the anniversary activities, the eight model operas led by Jiang Qing were performed in Beijing. The official newspaper *People's Daily* published a related editorial on May 31, 1967, "Excellent Models of Revolutionary Literature and Art." Model operas became popular throughout the country. The eight model operas included five modern Peking operas, two ballet operas, and one symphony. Among them, the symphony was also adapted from one of the modern Peking operas and became an example of "using foreign things for Chinese purposes." Since then, Western music has slowly regained acceptance. Capitalizing on this trend and with the recognition of Jiang Qing, Yin Chengzong composed the piano accompaniment for the model opera *The Legend of the Red Lantern*.⁴⁶ On July 1, 1968, the piano accompaniment of *The Legend of the Red Lantern* was performed and broadcast nationwide at the Commemorative Chinese Communist Party Literature and Art Evening, attended by Mao Zedong and other prominent leaders.⁴⁷

With the support of the ideology of "using foreign things for Chinese purposes," the piano underwent development and evolution during the Cultural Revolution despite the challenges and pressures it faced. In October 1968, Yin Chengzong learned that Jiang Qing had stated before the Revolution that *The Yellow River Cantata* was suitable for adaptation into a piano concerto.⁴⁸ After the success of the piano accompaniment of *The Legend of the Red*

⁴⁵ Bian, *Chinese Piano Culture*, p.68; Wang, *China Piano Music Culture*, p.165; Zhuang, *Mo Shang Hua Lai*, p.150; Chengzong Yin, "Taking Comrade Jiang Qing as a brilliant role model, be a revolutionary artist soldier forever loyal to Chairman Mao," *People's Daily*, July 6, 1968, p.2; Shimin Zhao, "Facing off with Yin Chengzong," *People*, 2000, Issue 1, p.84.

⁴⁶ Qing Jiang, "Comrade Jiang Qing's instructions on the recordings of 'The Legend of the Red Lantern' and 'song of the Plum' selections of Peking opera clear singing with piano accompaniment by Yin Chengzong and Liu Changyu," November 20th, 1967, in *A compilation of Jiang Qing's ten-year speeches, 1966-1976* (Oregon University Libraries, 2005).

⁴⁷ Sun and Zhou, *History of Chinese Music*, p.372; Jiang, "Comrade Jiang Qing's instructions."

⁴⁸ Qing Jiang, "Talk on Music work," November 18, 1964, in *A compilation of Jiang Qing's ten-year speeches, 1966-1976* (Oregon University Libraries, 2005).

Lantern, Yin Chengzong sought approval from Jiang Qing to adapt *The Yellow River Cantata* into a piano concerto called *The Yellow River Piano Concerto*.⁴⁹ On February 4, 1970, following several revisions, *The Yellow River Piano Concerto* premiered in the Small Party Auditorium of the Great Hall of the People. The audience was comprised of prominent officials of the Chinese Communist Party including Zhou Enlai (1898-1976), who gave the concerto high praise after the performance.⁵⁰ Both the piano accompaniment of *The Legend of the Red Lantern* and *The Yellow River Piano Concerto* were later recognized as model operas of the Cultural Revolution. Afterwards, numerous musicians began to adopt the creative principles of these model operas, leading to the creation of many piano works adapted from the model operas, such as Yin Chengzong's adaptation of the ballet music *The White-Haired Girl* into the piano piece *The North Wind Blows* and Du Mingxin's adaptation of the ballet *Red Detachment of Women* into a piano suite of the same name. The adaptation of model operas marked a significant milestone in the resurgence of Western instruments, particularly the piano.

Additionally, the majority of music works during this period, particularly the model operas, were created collectively by multiple writers.⁵¹ This was due to several reasons. Firstly, in the context of the Cultural Revolution, these music works served as political propaganda and were directed by the leaders, making it a political task. Moreover, composers and performers were part of a symphony orchestra or similar organizations, and there were no independent musicians, making it easier for them to work collectively under the leadership's guidance. Secondly, these works were relatively large in scale and diverse in genre, incorporating elements

⁴⁹ Wang, *China Piano Music Culture*, p.166; Wanghua Chu, "The Era of 'Collective Composition'," *Piano Art*, issue 4 (1999), p.12.

⁵⁰ Liu, "The development of Chinese Piano," p.28.

⁵¹ Chu, "The Era of 'Collective Composition'," p.11.

of East and West, ancient and modern, as well as various artistic styles such as Peking opera, ballet, symphony, piano, and Chinese folk music, which required overcoming the problem of tonality and temperament. For example, in the creation of the piano accompaniment of *The Legend of the Red Lantern*, the challenge of matching the Peking Opera vocal style and twelve-tone equal temperament with the piano had to be addressed. Most musicians were only proficient in one particular field before the Revolution and had to collaborate to effectively merge and balance different genres within these large-scale works. Lastly, as previously mentioned, composers and performers only developed expertise in their respective fields for competition under the influence of the focus of competition, which originated from the Soviet Union. It was difficult for an individual to complete such a large-scale and highly demanding political task independently.

While the collective mode of creation produced a number of successful works in a short period, it also had its drawbacks. For instance, creators would take credit for successful works but blame each other for failures. Additionally, due to the unpredictable political climate, some individuals involved in the creation process were unable to receive proper credit. In the case of works like *The Yellow River Piano Concerto*, one of the main creators, Chu Wanghua, was unable to receive credit for his role for a long time due to his father being labeled a rightist.⁵² Similarly, those who were promoted by Jiang Qing faced repercussions after her downfall after the Revolution. Yu Huiyong (1925-1977), who had participated in the creation of *The Yellow River Piano Concerto*, was appointed by Jiang Qing and served as the Minister of Culture during the Revolution. Due to his relationship with Jiang Qing, he was omitted from the list of co-

⁵² Li, "The Death of My Father, Chu Anping."

authors later and was rarely acknowledged in literature as having contributed to the creation of *The Yellow River Piano Concerto*.⁵³

1.3.2 The Five-Seven Directive, Opening up, and the Piano's Return

In January 1970, the establishment of the Central Five-Seven Arts School gave musicians a glimpse of hope. By August 31, 1973, the Five-Seven Arts University was established, with its music school being integrated from the Central Five-Seven Arts School, Central Conservatory of Music and China Conservatory of Music.⁵⁴ The former deputy director of the piano department of Central Conservatory of Music, Zhou Guangren, worked as the head of the piano department of the Five-Seven Arts University. The name of the Central Five-Seven Arts School and the Five-Seven Arts University came from Mao Zedong's comments on the report of military logistics work on May 7, 1968. The comments not only included requirements for military logistics work but also provided guidance for the whole society to follow. The comments were known as the Five-Seven Directive. The Five-Seven Directive required students to participate in labor, learn industrial, agricultural and military skills, and persist in criticizing the bourgeoisie, to educate the revolution, and to shorten the school system.

Based on the Five-Seven Directive, a series of Five-Seven Schools were established during the Cultural Revolution, including the Five-Seven Cadre School and the Five-Seven Arts University. In this context, the curriculum of the Five-Seven Arts University allocated a significant amount of time to industrial and agricultural labor. Most of the piano students came from rural and factory recommendations and lacked proper study conditions and musical foundations. The teaching materials were mainly model operas and adaptations based on these

⁵³ Liu, "The development of Chinese Piano," p.28.

⁵⁴ Sun, *History of Music Education in China*, p.198.

model operas.⁵⁵ Under this education system, it was impossible to cultivate pianists. Even pianists who were trained before the Cultural Revolution could only repeatedly play the model plays, especially *The Yellow River Piano Concerto*.⁵⁶ This system ended in December 1977 with the dissolution of the Five-Seven Arts University after the Revolution. Music schools returned to their pre-revolutionary organizational structures.

In contrast, piano composition gradually became less constrained. Furthermore, a series of friendly diplomatic exchanges with Western capitalist countries, such as President Nixon's visit to China in February 1972, Prime Minister Tanaka's visit to China in September 1972, and President Pompidou's visit to China in September 1973, gradually loosened the policies of the Cultural Revolution. Many pianists and composers gained more personal and creative freedom. For instance, pianist Liu Shikun, who ended his five-year prison sentence in 1972, was able to compose and perform the piano concerto, *Battling the Typhoon* in 1973, which was adapted from a Guzheng piece under the instructions of Jiang Qing, and was even able to perform it with the delegation to Japan.⁵⁷ During this period, alongside the politically motivated compositions, there was a growing number of musical pieces being composed by individual creators as opposed to collectives. Although these pieces were much shorter and simpler than the model operas, they still strictly adhered to the composition requirements of the Cultural Revolution, such as the Three Transformations including nationalization, popularization, and revolutionization. These requirements were not only driven by class struggle and propaganda purposes but were also largely derived from the personal preferences of the leaders.

⁵⁵ Bian, *Chinese Piano Culture*, p.68-69; Wang, *China Piano Music Culture*, p.193-194.

⁵⁶ Sommers, "The Long March of a Pianist."

⁵⁷ Qing Jiang, "Jiang Qing's speech when meeting with Liu Shikun and others," August 5, 1973, in *A compilation of Jiang Qing's ten-year speeches, 1966-1976* (Oregon University Libraries, 2005).

CHAPTER 2

THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL LEADERS ON PIANO DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

2.1 Literature and Art Reimagined as Cultural Weapons in Mao Zedong's China

The Cultural Revolution as a political event took place in a highly centralized social structure, and its dominant force undoubtedly came from the highest level of government power. The will of the highest power could clearly be reflected in the social behavior and artistic works of the time, including the behavior and creations of musicians. During the Revolution, Mao Zedong held the highest level of power and was the central figure of the movement. From its inception to conclusion, everything was influenced by Mao's ideology and leadership. The end of the Cultural Revolution was considered to be dependent on the death of Mao Zedong on September 9, 1976, leading to the saying that "without Mao Zedong, there would be no Cultural Revolution."⁵⁸ Mao Zedong was widely recognized for his political acumen, theoretical insights, military strategic thinking, poetic expressions, and visionary outlook.⁵⁹ Although there is no evidence from historical records to indicate his direct involvement in the field of piano, he had a very clear understanding and purpose for all artistic categories, including music. His views on music and art were clearly divided into two categories: those serving a public, political function, and those reflecting personal preference. These two parts had both mutual influence and contradictions.

⁵⁸ Roderick MacFarquhar, Introduction to *Red Shadows: Memories and Legacies of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, ed. Patricia M. Thornton, Peidong Sun, Chris Berry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p.2.

⁵⁹ Philip Short, *Mao: A Life*, (Owl Books, 2001), p.630.

Struggle was a word that ran through Mao's life and was one of the most important parts of his life. As the leader of the Chinese Communist Party and the founder of the People's Republic of China, he believed that struggle was not only inevitable but also necessary to drive progress and change. He emphasized the need to constantly strive against various forms of oppression and injustice, both within society and within oneself, in order to create a better world. In this sense, struggle was not just a political concept for Mao, but a fundamental aspect of his worldview.⁶⁰ In Mao's early writings, one can find many texts that affirm the importance of upheaval, difference, opposition, and conflict.⁶¹ This ideology of struggle was already evident in his reading notes from 1917, when he was twenty-four years old,⁶² prior to the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party. As time passed, Mao Zedong's targets of struggle changed. In the early years of his political career, he focused on endeavoring against the ruling Nationalist government and foreign imperial powers that sought to exploit and oppress China. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, he continued to advocate for struggle against these external enemies, but also began to focus on internal enemies, such as those who he believed were trying to sabotage the socialist revolution or to restore capitalism in China. Among all the tribulations in his life, the most intense one was the Cultural Revolution, which was a massive political movement that aimed to eliminate counterrevolutionary elements within the Communist Party and society as a whole. During the Revolution, all of the previous targets of his struggles were brought together. In other words, the targets of the Cultural Revolution included

⁶⁰ Zehou Li, *Monographic theory on Chinese Intellectual History*, (Anhui: Literature and Art Publishing House, 1999), p.944-950.

⁶¹ Li, *Monographic theory on Chinese Intellectual History*, p.946.

⁶² Zedong Mao, "Comments on Principia Ethics" *Manuscripts of Mao Zedong's Early Stage* (Hunan People's Publishing House, 2008), p.161, p.162-164.

all the targets of the struggles throughout Mao's life. These perceived enemies were referred to as "cow demons and snake monsters."⁶³

Mao's two weapons of struggle were the armed forces, symbolized by the "gun-barrel," and cultural propaganda, symbolized by the "pen-barrel."⁶⁴ Mao's views on culture and art, including the theory of cultural weapons, were not solely developed for the Cultural Revolution, but can be traced back to his speeches and written records prior to the founding of the People's Republic of China. As early as January 1940 in a speech to the Cultural Association, Mao explicitly emphasized the great political value of literature and art for the Communist Party and the proletarian revolution. He argued that literature and art should be utilized as tools to attack the enemies of the revolution and to propagate socialist values, and called on artists and writers to use their talents to serve the revolution. Mao attached as much importance to cultural weapons as he did to the armed forces. He made the following comments:

The new political force of the proletariat and the Communist Party entered the Chinese political arena, and as a result, the new cultural force, in new uniform and with new weapons, mustering all possible allies and deploying its ranks in battle array, launched heroic attacks on imperialist culture and feudal culture. This new force has made great strides in the domain of the social sciences and of the arts and letters, whether of philosophy, economics, political science, military science, history, literature or art (including the theatre, the cinema, music, sculpture and painting). For the last twenty years, wherever this new cultural force has directed its attack, a great revolution has taken place both in ideological content and in form.⁶⁵

Revolutionary culture is a powerful revolutionary weapon for the broad masses of the people. It prepares the ground ideologically before the revolution comes and is an important, indeed essential, fighting front in the general revolutionary front during the revolution.⁶⁶

⁶³ The Editorial of *People's Daily*, "Sweeping all Cow Demons and Snake Monsters," *People's Daily*, June 1, 1966, p.1.

⁶⁴ Shengwen Jie, "Use the Public Opinion of Revolution to Crush the Public Opinion of Counter-revolution," *People's Daily*, May 27, 1966, p.4.

⁶⁵ Zedong Mao, "On New Democracy," *Selected Works*, Vol. 2 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), p.379.

⁶⁶ Mao, "On New Democracy," p.382.

In addition to his emphasis on literature, art, and his theory of cultural weapons, Mao Zedong's speech at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art in May 1942 more specifically outlined his views on the role of culture and art in politics and society and clarified the definition of the Chinese Communist Party as well as Mao's attitude towards culture and art. This speech, which is widely considered as the foundation for many of the rules and restrictions on artistic works, including the initial banning of piano music in the early phase of the Cultural Revolution and the subsequent limitations on composing piano music during later stages, had a profound impact that continues to be felt decades later, as evidenced by the Chinese Communist Party's ongoing observance of commemorative events for the speech.

In this speech of 1942, Mao once again emphasized the role of literature and art as weapons in the struggle against one's enemies. He also stressed the importance of culture and art in educating and propagating among the people, and he argued that all culture and art have a class standpoint and that one cannot find art that exists purely for its own sake. He stated that art should serve politics. This set the tone for the Cultural Revolution, in which literature and art were expected to serve political goals and to promote the values of the revolution. He stated that:

[Our purpose is] to ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy, and that they help the people fight the enemy with one heart and one mind.⁶⁷

In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes, art that is detached from or independent of politics. Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian revolutionary cause; they are, as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Zedong Mao, "Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art, May 1942" *Selected Works*, Vol. 3 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), p.70.

⁶⁸ Mao, "Talks at the Yanan Forum," p.86.

In literary and art criticism there are two criteria, the political and the artistic.... There is the political criterion and there is the artistic criterion; what is the relationship between the two? Politics cannot be equated with art, nor can a general world outlook be equated with a method of artistic creation and criticism. We deny not only that there is an abstract and absolutely unchangeable political criterion, but also that there is an abstract and absolutely unchangeable artistic criterion; each class in every class society has its own political and artistic criteria. But 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. Works of art, which lack artistic quality, have no force, however progressive they are politically. Therefore, we oppose both works of art with a wrong political viewpoint and the tendency towards the “poster and slogan style” which is correct in political viewpoint but lacking in artistic power. On questions of literature and art we must carry on a struggle on two fronts.⁶⁹

Mao Zedong’s attitudes toward literature and art were his own personal preference, but due to his position within the Communist Party, they became the party’s and the country’s official stance. His speech in 1942 laid the groundwork for the cultural and artistic tragedy that occurred during the Cultural Revolution twenty-four years later. Especially in the early stages of the Revolution, literature and art that were deemed to represent enemy forces or were classified as enemy literature and art were completely banned. Artists associated with these categories were also considered enemies. In addition to the macro-level definition of enemies and allies, this speech also influenced the micro-level genre of works. For example, Mao Zedong believed that art should serve a purpose, particularly political goals, and that there was no such thing as pure art. Therefore, during the Revolution, the creation of pure music and untitled music was banned.

The prohibition of Western music during the Cultural Revolution was not a decision that was made lightly by Mao Zedong, but rather the result of a gradual process that began during the initial entente between China and the Soviet Union. In various conference speeches, Mao

⁶⁹ Mao, “Talks at the Yenan Forum,” p.88-90.

Zedong urged for a comprehensive study of the Soviet Union and praised its leader at the time, Stalin (1878-1953). He indicated that:

We are now learning from the Soviet Union, extensively studying the advanced experience of their various departments, inviting their advisers and sending our students there. What attitude should we adopt? We should adopt a sincere attitude and learn all their strengths, not only the theory of Marxism-Leninism, but also their advanced science and technology. We should learn everything we can use with an open mind.⁷⁰

Comrade Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, the greatest genius of the present age, the great teacher of the world Communist movement, and the comrade-in-arms of the immortal Lenin, has departed from the world.⁷¹

During the period of comprehensive study and emulation of Soviet and Eastern European communist countries, Chinese piano art saw significant advancements in both performance and composition. However, this period of growth came to an abrupt end following the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956, where the then-leader Khrushchev denounced Stalin and his actions, causing dissatisfaction among Chinese leaders, particularly Mao Zedong. As a result, during a meeting with the head of the China Musicians Association on August 24th, 1956, Mao began to advocate for promoting and valuing Chinese traditional music over Western music, marking the beginning of the deterioration of relations between China and the Soviet Union. He made the following statements:

We should be familiar with foreign things and read foreign books. However, it does not mean that the Chinese must act in accordance with foreign methods, and it does not mean that the Chinese write things as if they were translated. The Chinese still have to focus on their own things.

⁷⁰ Zedong Mao, "Speech at the Closing Meeting of the Fourth Session of the First National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference on February 7, 1953," *Mao Zedong's Manuscripts Since the Founding of the Nation*, Vol. 4, edited by Editorial Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (Beijing: Central Documentary Press, 1988), p.45-46.

⁷¹ Zedong Mao, "The Greatest Friendship," *People's Daily*, March 9, 1953, p.1.

Not everything in the West is good, and we have to make good use of it. We should critically absorb useful elements from the West on the basis of China.⁷²

In the following ten years, as relations between China and the Soviet Union continued to deteriorate, Western music was increasingly suppressed in China. Mao Zedong's attitude and requirements toward culture and art also became more extreme and radical. On December 12, 1963 and June 27, 1964, Mao Zedong delivered two fiercely critical speeches to the literary and art circles, expressing his belief that almost all literary and artistic workers had deviated from the political stance he required and aligned themselves with enemy forces, including feudalism, capitalism, and the revisionism led by the Soviet Union. Therefore, Chinese piano art, which had primarily been influenced by the Soviet Union and inherently possessed capitalist elements, was in trouble.

Despite the fact that Mao Zedong never made systematic requirements for piano, each one of his instructions to the literary and art circles had a significant impact on the development of piano in China.

2.2 Jiang Qing, Wife of Mao Zedong: "Using foreign things for Chinese purposes"

Jiang Qing was known as the major political figure during the Cultural Revolution. She was an actress in her early years. She married the chairman of the Chinese Communist Party Mao Zedong in 1938 becoming his fourth wife but did not hold many political roles after they married. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, she became the first lady of the new China. Since 1962, widespread famine and economic difficulties, as well as the deterioration of relations with the Soviet Union, presented Mao Zedong with dual challenges in

⁷² Zedong Mao, "Conversation with Musicians on August 24, 1956," *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought*, 1968, p.107-109.

domestic and foreign affairs. In response, he decided to launch class struggle once again, and Jiang Qing was gradually brought onto the political stage.⁷³

Several officials of the Chinese Communist Party recalled that Mao Zedong praised Jiang Qing's political acumen on multiple occasions.⁷⁴ Jiang Qing proclaimed herself as the spokesperson for Mao Zedong and often began her public speeches with "On behalf of Chairman Mao, I greet everyone." Mao Zedong silently consented to this.⁷⁵ Jiang Qing emphasized repeatedly in her defense during her trial after the Cultural Revolution that she was loyal to Mao Zedong.⁷⁶ The senior general of the Chinese Communist Party Qiu Huizuo (1914-2002) mentioned Jiang Qing in his memoirs of the Cultural Revolution, further confirming the fact that Jiang Qing was the one representing Mao Zedong.⁷⁷ During her trial following the Cultural Revolution, Jiang Qing argued that:

You have accused me of so many crimes, none of which can stand. From May 16, 1966, that is, since the Central Committee of Chinese Communist Party passed an important notice to launch the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, until Chairman Mao's death, until Chairman Mao's death, I had no personal views. Every action I took was to carry out the instructions and policies of the Central Committee with Chairman Mao as its leader, and to implement the proletarian revolution line represented by Chairman Mao. Your arrest and trial of me is a defamation of Chairman Mao. To put me on trial is to defame the hundreds of millions of people, to defame the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution participated in by hundreds of millions of people.

Now that you have arrested and are trying me, it is to defame Chairman Mao... Now you are going after Chairman Mao. There is an old saying in my hometown: 'To beat a dog, one must see the master's face.' That is to say, when beating a dog, one should consider

⁷³ Yun Shi, *Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan's Autobiography: Autobiography, Diary, Testimony* (Hong Kong: Sanlian Book Store [Xianggang] Co., 2012), p.284.

⁷⁴ Shi, *Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan's Autobiography*, p.285.

⁷⁵ Shi, *Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan's Autobiography*, p.284; Chunming Jin, "Mao Zedong and Jiang Qing during the Cultural Revolution," *Yesterday*, May 2014, Issue 34, p.2; Changgui Yan, "Who was Jiang Qing really? - A casual discussion of Jiang Qing from the Lanping incident to the Cultural Revolution," *Memory*, July 2015, Issue 135, p.3.

⁷⁶ Yonglie Ye, *The Life and Times of Jiang Qing* (Jilin: Shidai Wenyi Press, 1993), p.123.

⁷⁷ Huizuo Qiu, *Memoir of Qiu Huizuo*, Vol. 2, (Hongkong: New Century Press, 2011), p.681.

the master's reputation. I am a dog of Chairman Mao. For Chairman Mao, I am not afraid of your beating.⁷⁸

On January 14, 1965, right before the Cultural Revolution, Jiang Qing gave instructions to the field of music.⁷⁹ In these instructions, she emphasized the need for music workers to “use foreign things for Chinese purposes,” retain military music troupes and their Western instruments, among other directives. These directives were largely consistent with Mao Zedong's instructions given during the meeting with the Musicians Association on August 24, 1956. It is worth noting that Jiang Qing's instructions also included severe criticism of the “Three Transformations” of music, that is, nationalization, popularization, and revolutionization. The “Three Transformations” of musical works were proposed by the Premier of the State Council Zhou Enlai in 1963, which was meant to express support and praise for Mao Zedong's instructions on the development of music. However, Jiang Qing, who held no significant political position at the time, openly questioned Zhou Enlai's proposal without hesitation.

In 1963, Jiang Qing became active on the political stage. Based on Mao Zedong's macro requirements for music, she started with the revolution of Peking opera and model operas. She then gradually began to expand her political influence. In 1966, Jiang Qing became the actual leader of the Central Cultural Revolution Group.⁸⁰

During the ten years of the Cultural Revolution, despite the numerous personnel changes among the members of the Central Cultural Revolution Group until the dissolution of the group, Jiang Qing remained the major figure of the Cultural Revolution. As one of the extremely powerful leaders during the Cultural Revolution, Jiang Qing determined the specific

⁷⁸ Ye, *The Life and Times of Jiang Qing*, p.123.

⁷⁹ Qing Jiang, “Instructions on Music Work by Jiang Qing on January 14, 1965” in *Comrade Jiang Qing's essay on art*, edited by Theoretical Group of Workers of the Third Leningrad Printing Factory, 2006.

⁸⁰ Baomei Gu, *Tell the Truth about Red Stage* (Guiyang: Guizhou People's Press, 2011), p.10-14.

implementation and requirements of Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution guidelines. This included determining how specific works would be modified, which instruments would be banned or allowed, and even which musicians were to be criticized or spared.

“The piano has strong expressive power,” Jiang Qing said in a conversation with music workers before the Cultural Revolution on November 18, 1964.⁸¹ This statement became key in saving piano art during the Cultural Revolution. In the same conversation, she also proposed that Xian Xinghai's *The Yellow River Cantata* be adapted into piano music. This request was realized in 1969, the third year of the Cultural Revolution. She said in the conversation that:

The piano has strong expressive power, but there isn't any popular repertoire now. XXX (deleted name in the literature source) plays very well, but if he plays “Liszt,” the working class will not understand it. He should learn some composition. If he can adapt Beijing opera and bangzi music, the masses will understand. The ‘Youth Piano Concerto’ is good, but it uses folk songs. Why not use Xian Xinghai's ‘The Yellow River Cantata’ or ‘singing the Motherland’? In addition, the orchestra is not outstanding, and the sound is not sufficient. I suggest you adapt it.⁸²

Jiang Qing also had great power in personnel appointments. In 1965 prior to the Cultural Revolution, a teacher at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Yu Huiyong, published his personal views on model operas in a newspaper. Impressed by his ideas, Jiang Qing immediately transferred him to Beijing to participate in the reform of Peking opera and the creation of model operas.⁸³ During the Cultural Revolution, Yu Huiyong was expected to be labeled as a “bourgeois academic authority” and criticized. However, due to a phone call from Yao Wenyan (1931-2005), one of Jiang Qing's subordinates, he was saved. As a result of Jiang Qing's protection, Yu Huiyong's experiences in the early stages of the Revolution differed greatly from

⁸¹ Jiang, “Instructions on Music Work.”

⁸² Jiang, “Instructions on Music Work.”

⁸³ Mu Zhang, *The Story of Four Famous Figures in Chinese Literature and Art Circle* (American Academic Press, April 2020), p.117.

those of his colleagues at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. At the end of 1969, the draft of *The Yellow River Piano Concerto* adapted and created by Yin Chengzong, Chu Wanghua and others, was sent to Jiang Qing for review. Jiang Qing was dissatisfied with the work and appointed Yu Huiyong to participate in its creation. He added the melody of *The East Is Red* to the concerto and incorporated piano sounds that imitated Chinese folk music.⁸⁴ *The East Is Red* is a song based on a Shaanxi's folk song that praised Mao Zedong. The song even became a symbol of Mao himself, temporarily replacing *The March of the Volunteers* as the national anthem of China. The song was popular during the Cultural Revolution and could be heard almost everywhere. In 1970, China's first artificial satellite was named after this song and its main function was to play the melody of *The East Is Red* in space. After Yu Huiyong's involvement, *The Yellow River Piano Concerto* was highly praised by Jiang Qing, Zhou Enlai, and other national leaders and became one of the model operas. Afterwards, Jiang Qing promoted Yu Huiyong to the Minister of Culture.

In addition to leading the Central Cultural Revolution Group, Jiang Qing was also a consultant to the Military Cultural Revolution Group. On November 28, 1966, the Beijing Symphony Orchestra and three other artistic groups merged into the military at a literature and art conference. These four artistic groups were organizations that performed model operas before the Cultural Revolution.⁸⁵ After being merged into the military, these groups were still under the command of Jiang Qing. At the same time, as part of the People's Liberation Army, they were also protected by the military. Although the musicians in the orchestra also had to follow Mao

⁸⁴ Wanghua Chu "How 'The Yellow River Piano Concerto' was Born." In *People's Music*, 1995 Issue 5, p.6; Liu, "The development of Chinese Piano," p.28.

⁸⁵ Qing Jiang, "Jiang Qing's Speech at the Literature and Art Conference on November 28, 1966" in *A compilation of Jiang Qing's ten-year speeches, 1966-1976* (Oregon University Libraries, 2005); Ye, *The Life and Times of Jiang Qing*, p.349.

Zedong's "Five-Seven Directive" and engage in industrial and agricultural labor, their experiences were much better than their colleagues working in music academies. Most of the musicians who collaborated with Yin Chengzong to create the piano accompaniment of *The Legend of the Red Lantern* and *The Yellow River Piano Concerto* came from these four artistic groups.

As previously mentioned, Yin Chengzong and others began attempting to adapt the modern Peking opera *The Legend of the Red Lantern* into a piano accompaniment. However, in an era when pianos were banned, this dangerous attempt must have been approved by Jiang Qing. The adaptation based on such model operas was also considered as the political capital of Jiang Qing. Therefore, not only did Jiang Qing allow this "using foreign things for Chinese purposes" adaptation and creation, but she also fully recognized the role of the piano in the creation process. During the piano accompaniment of *The Legend of the Red Lantern*, Jiang Qing personally guided the creation details and required the addition of piano accompaniment to the play. She even proposed that the title of the work should put "the piano accompaniment" before *The Legend of the Red Lantern*.⁸⁶ As a result, the piano was given an opportunity to thrive during the Cultural Revolution. Jiang Qing made the following statements in her speech on the meeting with the performers of *The Legend of the Red Lantern* on June 30, 1968:

Tomorrow is July 1st, the 47th anniversary of the party's birthday. We have decided to broadcast your piano accompaniment of *The Legend of the Red Lantern* as a tribute to the party, starting tomorrow nationwide. We have been considering it for half a day and think it is best to call it a piano accompaniment, which will highlight the piano, break superstition, and put the piano in the forefront, freeing the piano. The piano is a big problem among Western musical instruments. It can be said that this is innovation, and the work is the first step, and performance is recreation. Comrade Yin Chengzong has also done some experiments in revolutionary songs in the past, but he always feels that the piano cannot be fully utilized. In the past, those folk tunes were too narrow. After listening to this, I feel that the piano can be fully played on national opera (referring to

⁸⁶ Jiang, "Comrade Jiang Qing's instructions."

Peking opera). The piano has a wide range of sounds and is expressive. This recording is very good and catchy, and the whole music is broad and majestic, especially the “death row” section, which is much better than before.⁸⁷

Jiang Qing held the right of interpreting Mao Zedong’s thoughts on art, and had discretion in her interpretation. In several speeches on November 18, 1964 and November 28, 1966, among others, she expressed her disgust with the impressionist, abstract, and jazz styles of music, which she deemed “decadent, degenerate, poisoning and paralyzing the people,” and representative of capitalism.⁸⁸ She stated that:

Debussy (1862-1918) is an Impressionist, and his work is very neurotic, but he has a lot of influence in the music world. Many people admire his technique, but we cannot discuss form and technique without considering content, form and technique are both in service of content.⁸⁹

Capitalism has been around for several hundred years, and their so-called “classical” works are not much. Some of them are imitations of the so-called “classics” and have become rigid and unable to attract people, so they have completely declined; others are extensively flooding, poisoning and paralyzing the people with Afro dances, jazz, strip-dances, impressionism, symbolism, abstract expressionism, fauvism, modernism, and so on, with many names. In short: decadent, degenerate, poisoning and paralyzing the people.⁹⁰

On October 29, 1973, Jiang Qing made a speech while attending a concert by the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra. In the speech, she cited Mao Zedong’s instructions to pianist Liu Shikun: “Write something of your own nationality.” Jiang Qing also considered untitled music to be bourgeois art because untitled music only expressed emotions without specific content.⁹¹ The

⁸⁷ Qing Jiang, “Speech on the Meeting with the Performers of ‘The Legend of the Red Lantern’ on June 30, 1968” in *Comrade Jiang Qing’s essay on art*, edited by Theoretical Group of Workers of the Third Leningrad Printing Factory, 2006.

⁸⁸ Jiang, “Speech on the Meeting, June 30, 1968.”

⁸⁹ Jiang, “Talk on Music work.”

⁹⁰ Jiang, “Speech at the Literature and Art Conference, November 28, 1966.”

⁹¹ Jiang, “Speech on the Meeting, June 30, 1968.”

theoretical origin of this opinion could be found in Mao Zedong's speech at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art in May 1942. Jiang Qing declared in her speech that:

Chairman Mao told Liu Shikun: 'Write something of your own nationality.' Foreign things, some of which are blown up, are actually not good in terms of ideology and art. Some people take them as models and consider them unchangeable. The Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra came to China and listened to our music, thinking it was very good, but we did not think so.⁹²

Following President Nixon's visit to China in February 1972, a number of foreign orchestras visited China in the following year, 1973. The London Symphony Orchestra visited China in March 1973 and performed the model opera *Red Detachment of Women*.⁹³ In April 1973, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra's performance was a collaboration with Yin Chengzong to perform *The Yellow River Piano Concerto*.⁹⁴ During the Philadelphia Orchestra's visit in September 1973, Yin Chengzong and the Philadelphia Orchestra again collaborated to perform *The Yellow River Piano Concerto*. The Philadelphia Orchestra also played their adaptation of the northern Chinese folk song *Song of the Workers' and Peasants' Revolution*, which was well-received by Jiang Qing as it embodied Chinese cultural elements and aligned with the aesthetic standards of the music of the Cultural Revolution. Before the performance, Jiang Qing carefully reviewed and removed any pieces she disapproved of from the concert repertoire, as outlined in a report by the conductor of the Central Symphony Orchestra, Li Delun (1917-2001). As she had previously expressed her opposition to Debussy's works in a public speech in 1964, she removed

⁹² Qing Jiang, "Jiang Qing's Speech at the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra Concert on October 29, 1973" in *A compilation of Jiang Qing's ten-year speeches, 1966-1976* (Oregon University Libraries, 2005).

⁹³ Xinhua News Agency, "The London Symphony Orchestra Made Its First Performance in Beijing, with Wu De and Qiao Guanhua in Attendance. The Performance was Warmly Received by the Audience," *People's Daily*, March 20, 1973, p.4; Xing Chen, "Expert Technique and Distinct Style - Welcome the London Symphony Orchestra's Visit to China for Performance," *People's Daily*, March 22, 1973, p.4.

⁹⁴ Xinhua News Agency, "Vienna Symphony Orchestra Continued its Performance in Beijing, with Wu De, Qiao Guanhua, Luo Shuzhang, and Relevant Officials in Attendance at the Concert," *People's Daily*, April 14, 1973, p.3; Ge Chen, "Exquisite Performance and Long Tradition - Welcome the Vienna Symphony Orchestra's Visit to China for Performance," *People's Daily*, April 15, 1973, p.4.

Debussy's *Afternoon of a Faun* from the list.⁹⁵ Afterall, Jiang Qing maintained her strong stance against what she referred to as capitalist music in her speech on October 29, 1973, and classified the foreign orchestras' music as such.

As a result of the visits of leaders and orchestras from Western countries since 1972, the Chinese Communist Party came to recognize the significance of cultural and artistic diplomacy, and the pressure on musicians during the Revolution had also been alleviated. The exchange of culture and art with other nations was primarily led by the model operas led by Jiang Qing. In the model operas, modern Peking opera was less effective as a tool for cultural exchange due to language barriers. Therefore, the focus was on ballet model operas such as *Red Detachment of Women* and *The Yellow River Piano Concerto* when performing for the foreign dignitaries and delegations. However, the US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger described *Red Detachment of Women* as "truly stupefying boredom" in his memoirs.⁹⁶ In contrast to the highly politicized ballet, piano music faced fewer cultural barriers. Therefore, *The Yellow River Piano Concerto* was more easily accepted by the Western world and Yin Chengzong's performance also received positive evaluations from visiting musicians.⁹⁷ The value of piano in diplomacy led the Cultural Revolution art review department, headed by Jiang Qing, to loosen its scrutiny of piano music creation to some degree. This relaxation was also reflected in other areas. Chinese traditional instruments, which were previously criticized as "feudal forces" in the early stages of the Revolution, were gifted to visiting foreign music groups. Simultaneously, China also accepted Western instruments, scores, and recordings, which represented "bourgeois forces," as gifts in

⁹⁵ Sheila Melvin and Jindong Cai, *Rhapsody in Red: How Western Classical Music Became Chinese* (United States: Algora Pub., 2004), p.265-272.

⁹⁶ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), p.779.

⁹⁷ Harold Schonberg, "U.S. group plays for Mao's wife," *The New York Times*, September 1973, p.17.

return.⁹⁸ However, Jiang Qing was never satisfied with the compromise of Cultural Revolution artistic standards for the sake of diplomacy.⁹⁹ Despite the relaxation of music creation requirements in the later stages of the Cultural Revolution, music works still had to adhere to the Cultural Revolution style representing the proletariat. Therefore, piano works adapted from Chinese traditional folk songs became a safer choice.

In September 1973, the Five-Seven Arts University was established with Jiang Qing as the honorary president. The music school of the Five-Seven Arts University, while still prioritizing Jiang Qing's model operas as the primary teaching materials and content, shifted its focus away from training piano students in the competitive style prevalent in the 1950s to early 1960s. The main reason was Jiang Qing's opposition to participating in international piano competitions in a speech to musicians on January 14, 1965.¹⁰⁰ During the 1950s to 1960s, Chinese music students primarily participated in international piano competitions that were held in the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. However, in 1965, as Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated, exchanges in various fields, including piano, between China and the Soviet Union were halted, causing Chinese participation in international piano competitions to gradually cease.

2.3 Premier Zhou Enlai's "Three Transformations" for the Arts, Music Diplomacy, and the Piano's Return

During the Cultural Revolution, it was impossible for anyone to question or challenge Mao Zedong's directives or to compete for Jiang Qing's political role. Under Mao Zedong's overarching guidance on the development of culture and art and Jiang Qing's specific implementation, there was very little room left for alternative perspectives.

⁹⁸ Melvin and Cai, *Rhapsody in Red*, p.269.

⁹⁹ Junjun Luo, *A Biography of Li Delun* (Beijing: Writer Press, 2001), p.405.

¹⁰⁰ Jiang, "Instructions on Music Work."

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Zhou Enlai held the positions as Premier of the State Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1949 to 1958. Although he no longer served as Minister of Foreign Affairs after 1958, his work still covered the diplomatic sector. Therefore, Zhou Enlai had a great impact on both domestic and foreign affairs in China. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong asked Jiang Qing to play the role of a revolutionary pioneer, while in the meantime asked Zhou Enlai to maintain the operation of social life as much as possible.¹⁰¹ Under the premise of supporting Mao Zedong's ideas for the Revolution and supporting Jiang Qing's promotion of the cultural and artistic revolution, Zhou Enlai cautiously corrected the direction of the Revolution. Especially in the later stages of the Revolution, Zhou Enlai worked carefully and diligently to turn around the crisis of the Cultural Revolution.

Zhou Enlai focused mainly on the construction of music schools, music diplomacy, and the planning and implementation of large-scale music works. Of course, all of his work was carried out in accordance with Mao Zedong's instructions and under the influence of Jiang Qing. Despite dutifully executing Mao Zedong's instructions, Zhou Enlai still endured significant pressure from Jiang Qing, particularly in the field of culture and art, during the Cultural Revolution. On August 16, 1963, at a music and dance symposium held by the Ministry of Culture, Zhou Enlai first proposed the development requirements of "Three Transformations" including nationalization, popularization, and revolutionization for music, dance, and other artistic works, and gave instructions on the standards of artistic works. This included an emphasis on national music, a rejection of cultural imperialism, the incorporation of new

¹⁰¹ Wenqian Gao, "Decryption Time: Mao Zedong's Loyal Minister Zhou Enlai," by Su Li, *Voice of America Chinese website*, Oct 31, (2013): 39'55."

concepts, and a preference for contemporary works over traditional ones.¹⁰² Clearly, these statements still conformed to Mao Zedong's orders on culture and art in May 1942 and on August 24, 1956. The "Three Transformations" statement, which was widely discussed due to its promotion in official media, was challenged by Jiang Qing in a public speech on January 24, 1965, in which she argued that the "Three Transformations" concept did not have a clear proletarian character. In other words, Jiang Qing believed that the "Three Transformations" were not extreme enough. On November 28, 1966, Zhou Enlai added "militarization" to the foundation of "nationalization, revolutionization, and popularization" at a conference of literary and art circles. This may have been an attempt to proactively address Jiang Qing's demands. However, it did not fully satisfy Jiang Qing, who continued to insist that all stage works should strictly follow her model operas standards.¹⁰³ In the speech, Zhou Enlai stated that:

Our literary and artistic revolution has achieved great victories. In recent years, the reform of Peking opera, ballet, symphonic music, sculpture, and other areas have all made epoch-making achievements. This is a great leap forward in the revolutionization, popularization, and nationalization of literature and art. These achievements were all achieved through serious class struggles, breaking through the numerous obstacles of the old Central Propaganda Department, the old Ministry of Culture, and the old Beijing Municipal Committee's anti-revolutionary revisionist line. These were all achieved under the guidance of Comrade Mao's policy of serving the workers, peasants, and soldiers, and the principles of valuing contemporary works over classical ones, using the past to serve the present, and using foreign things for Chinese purposes.

The achievements of the literary and artistic revolution mentioned above are inseparable from Comrade Jiang Qing's guidance and the support and cooperation of the revolutionary left wing of the artistic community. This is the result of a determined struggle against the revisionist black line that has run through the artistic community from the 1930s to the 1960s. Comrade Jiang Qing personally participated in the struggle and artistic practice. Although the hard struggle has damaged Comrade Jiang Qing's

¹⁰² Central Documentation Research Office of the Communist Party of China, *Chronicle of Zhou Enlai 1898-1976*, edited by Central Documentation Research Office of the Communist Party of China, (Beijing: Central Literature Publishing House, 2007), p.1010.

¹⁰³ Enlai Zhou, *Historical Manuscript of the Cultural Revolution: Compilation of Historical Materials of the Cultural Revolution (3): The Proletarian Cultural Revolution (Part 2)*, edited by Zhigao Xu, (World Chinese Publishing, 2016), p.130.

physical health, the mental comfort and encouragement will surely compensate for these losses.¹⁰⁴

Compared to Zhou Enlai's praise and support, Jiang Qing's attitude towards Zhou Enlai was more aggressive. Not only was there a lack of respect, but she would even attack him directly with her words. Wu Faxian (1915-2004), a high-ranking military official of the Chinese Communist Party, described in his memoirs that Jiang Qing once publicly threatened Zhou Enlai at a Central Cultural Revolution meeting in front of all the high-ranking officials present, and Zhou Enlai still maintained a humble attitude in response.¹⁰⁵

Under tremendous pressure, Zhou Enlai still played a crucial role in the Chinese Communist Party's foreign affairs work especially in the later stages of the Cultural Revolution. He directly facilitated the visits of Western leaders such as US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, US President Richard Nixon, Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, and French President Georges Pompidou. On this premise, Zhou Enlai advocated for music diplomacy and invited the London Symphony Orchestra, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, and the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra to visit and perform in China. In contrast to his strict adherence to Jiang Qing's directives in domestic affairs, Zhou Enlai exhibited greater discretion and consideration for diplomatic implications in his handling of foreign affairs. For example, during the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra's visit and performance, Zhou Enlai tried to accommodate the views of the foreign side while complying with Jiang Qing in the selection of works and paid

¹⁰⁴ Enlai Zhou, "Zhou Enlai's Speech at the Literature and Art Conference on November 28, 1966" in *A compilation of Jiang Qing's ten-year speeches, 1966-1976* (Oregon University Libraries, 2005).

¹⁰⁵ Faxian Wu, *Memoirs of Wu Faxian* (Hongkong: Beixing Press, 2006), p.383.

more attention to diplomatic etiquette and effectiveness.¹⁰⁶ As a result of Zhou's efforts, foreign music once again appeared on public stages in China.¹⁰⁷

The relaxation of cultural restrictions during the Cultural Revolution led to improved living conditions and artistic freedom for Chinese musicians. The emphasis on "militarized" works also diminished and the "Four Transformations" of music were scaled back to "Three Transformations." The change in the international environment also allowed Chinese piano music and pianists with the characteristics of "Three Transformations" to gain recognition in the Western world. Overall, the development of the piano during the Cultural Revolution was initially suppressed, then aligned with Jiang Qing's model operas, and finally shifted to a slightly more relaxed environment in the later stage, which allowed for the development of "Three Transformations" type of adaptations.

¹⁰⁶ Melvin and Cai, *Rhapsody in Red*, p.267.

¹⁰⁷ Melvin and Cai, *Rhapsody in Red*, p.268.

CHAPTER 3

FEATURES OF PIANO WORKS DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION: THREE EXAMPLES FROM COMPOSERS AND ARRANGERS LI YINGHAI (1927-2007) AND WANG JIANZHONG (1933-2016)

During the Cultural Revolution, the government heavily censored and controlled the arts, including music. Piano, in particular, was banned in the early years and later followed the propagandistic and revolutionary themes of model operas led by one of the main leaders, Jiang Qing. As the Cultural Revolution progressed in the later years, government control over the arts loosened and piano music began to feature adaptations and incorporate elements of “Three Transformations.” The “Three Transformations” were a set of artistic principles that sought to align art with the goals of the revolution by making it practical to serve peasants, workers and soldiers and having it available to the masses. Piano music from this period was characterized by its incorporation of simplified melodies and harmonies, as well as its alignment with revolutionary themes.

Even as the Cultural Revolution progressed and the creative environment became more relaxed, allowing composers more freedom to create works that were not based on model plays, it remained risky to create completely independent compositions based on their own will. The piano, in particular, was considered a representative of the enemy class and backward forces that were targeted during the Revolution, making it safer for composers to adapt music from the proletariat and progressive forces. Even the very few original works composed for piano during the Cultural Revolution were based on traditional Chinese modes and reflected the characteristics of Chinese proletarian music. For instance, Huang Anlun’s *30 Pieces of Northern Ballads*,

created during his time at a farm in the early 1970s, was a particularly risky and difficult to publish creation before the end of the Cultural Revolution.

During the Cultural Revolution, the majority of piano compositions were still adaptations, with a small subset of them being adaptations of foreign works for diplomatic purposes. For example, pianist Li Mingqiang visited North Korea in 1972 and performed the piano piece *Utter Devotion*, which was specifically adapted by Wang Jianzhong from the North Korean revolutionary opera *Blood Sea* for this occasion. In 1974, Wang Jianzhong adapted Japanese folk songs to create piano pieces such as *Wumu Lullaby* and *Sakura* for pianist Yin Chengzong's performance during a visit to Japan. These export-oriented adaptations of piano works were relatively rare and were rarely performed publicly within China.

The majority of the piano works during the Cultural Revolution were adaptations of traditional Chinese folk songs, including folk songs, solo folk music, ensemble folk music, and film music. However, the production of films was limited and highly controlled by the Chinese Communist Party during this period. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Jiang Qing's first government position was the director of the Film Department of the Ministry of Culture. One notable example of film music adapted for piano is Chu Wanghua's adaptation of the song *Red Star Song* from the film "The Flashing Red Star" into the piano piece *The Red Star Shines with Brilliance* in 1974.

Regardless of the type of adaptation, it was necessary to steer clear of music styles deemed undesirable by Jiang Qing, such as jazz, modernist, impressionist, symbolist, abstract, primitivist, and Western dance styles, among others, as they were associated with feudalism, bourgeoisie, and revisionism. Additionally, all works were required to have titles. Therefore, the modes and keys system of late romanticism such as atonality music system, twelve-tone system,

blues scale system, and chromaticism chords sequence were not allowed during the Revolution. In order to avoid Western dance styles, composers during the Revolution subjectively avoided using triple beat rhythmic patterns. Objectively, piano compositions during the Revolution were often adapted from Chinese traditional melodies or styles and featured the distinct *ban-yan* rhythm commonly found in traditional Chinese music. “Ban” represents strong beat, and “yan” represents weak beat. Therefore, traditional *ban-yan* rhythms are more easily transformed into duple or quadruple beat meters. Within the creation boundaries defined by Jiang Qing, composers began to carefully explore the available creation space.

One of the main characteristics of Chinese traditional music is its mode and key system, which is different from that of Western music. Many musicians studied and demonstrated the correspondence between the Chinese pentatonic scale and the heptatonic scale before the Revolution. For example, British missionary William E. Soothill (1861-1935) published an article comparing Chinese traditional music theory with Western music theory in the *Journal of Education* in 1890. The article covered topics such as Chinese traditional notation and the equal temperament system. It introduced and analyzed the correspondence between the pitch of notes in equal temperament and Western notation.¹⁰⁸

合.	Corresponding to our key-note major, say C.
四.	” to our major second D.
乙.	” to our major third E.
上.	” to our major fourth F.
尺.	” to our major fifth G.
工.	” to our major sixth A.
凡.	” to our major seventh B.
六.	” to our major eighth, otherwise octave C.
五.	” to our major ninth, otherwise octave D.

Table 1: *Correspondence between the Pitch of Notes and Western Notation*

¹⁰⁸ William Soothill, Chinese Music and Its Relation to Our Native Services, *Chinese Recorder*, 1890, Issue 21, p.221-228 & p.336-338.

Although there were similar studies on differences in music theory before the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the first systematic theoretical study on the correspondence and conversion between the Chinese pentatonic scale and the Western mode and key system was conducted by composer Li Yinghai. From 1952 to 1964, Li Yinghai served as a teacher at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, where he held positions including the director of the ethnic music research department and the vice director of the composition department. After extensive field research, he published his findings in a book entitled *The Modes of Music of the Han Nationality and their Harmony* in 1959. *The Modes of Music of the Han Nationality and their Harmony* is a systemic theoretical summarization of his prolonged research to explain how to combine harmoniously the principle of traditional harmony in Western, especially Europe, with the melodies of China's national music.¹⁰⁹ This breakthrough laid the foundation for the adaptation of traditional Chinese music melodies into Western musical notation. The preface of the book states that the author was deeply influenced by Mao Zedong's speech at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art in 1942 and the political guidance of the Chinese Communist Party after the founding of the People's Republic of China.¹¹⁰

Although the book was published before the Revolution, its value was fully realized in the process of adapting Chinese music into piano music during the later stage of the Revolution. It was republished several times after the Revolution, and remains a widely used textbook in music colleges in China today. In addition, Li Yinghai's other work, *Pentatonic Scale Piano Fingering Practice*, was published a few months before the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution

¹⁰⁹ Zuyin Fan, *The Theory and Method of Chinese Pentatonic Mode and Sound* (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Press, 2003), p.8.

¹¹⁰ Yinghai Li, Preface to *The Modes of Music of the Han Nationality and their Harmony* (Shanghai: Shanghai Arts and Literature Press, 1959), III-IV.

in 1966. The book presents a series of fingering practice to help practitioners become familiar with the fingerings and transposition of the pentatonic scale, and to train performers in the imitation of traditional Chinese instrument sounds on the piano, including traditional rubato rhythms, ornamentation, plucking, and drumming sounds among others.¹¹¹

3.1 Example 1: *Music at Sunset*

The piano solo *Music at Sunset* was adapted by composer Li Yinghai from the eponymous ancient pipa piece between 1972 and 1975. The pipa piece *Music at Sunset* belonged to the Jiangnan silk and bamboo music genre and had various names and versions. In 1925, the Shanghai Folk Music Club *Da Tong* adapted the pipa solo piece into a Chinese traditional instrument ensemble piece called *Spring River Flowers Moon Night*.¹¹² Li Yinghai merged solo and ensemble editions of multiple versions to adapt them into the piano solo piece *Music at Sunset*.

Music at Sunset, composed during the later part of the Cultural Revolution when the piano had just been re-permitted, is quite conventional in terms of form, harmony, and musical character, closely resembling the original folk music piece. The folk music version of *Spring River Flowers Moon Night* has ten sections, each with a title inspired by Chinese landscape painting. Thus, Li Yinghai designed the piano version of *Music at Sunset* into ten similar sections. This form structure possesses characteristics of a variation form, but unlike a variation form, the form structure of *Music at Sunset* is looser. Each variation begins with a relatively free musical motive but ends with a similar harmonic progression. In addition, the end of one section and the beginning of the next are connected by a common note, which is known as the “fish

¹¹¹ Yinghai Li, Preface to *Pentatonic Scale Piano Fingering Practice* (Shanghai: Shanghai Culture Press, 1966).

¹¹² National Editing Committee of *Collection of Chinese Folk Instrumental Music, Collection of Chinese Folk Instrumental Music*, Volume Shanghai, Part 2 (Beijing: People Music Press, 1993), p.1624.

biting its tail” or “chain buckle” structure in traditional Chinese music (See Example 3.1).¹¹³

However, if one were to solely use Western form-structural division methods while disregarding the folk music version, the form structure of the work may be subject to debate or criticism. For example, there are different ways to divide the form structure of *Music at Sunset* into ten sections, eleven sections, or even twelve sections.¹¹⁴

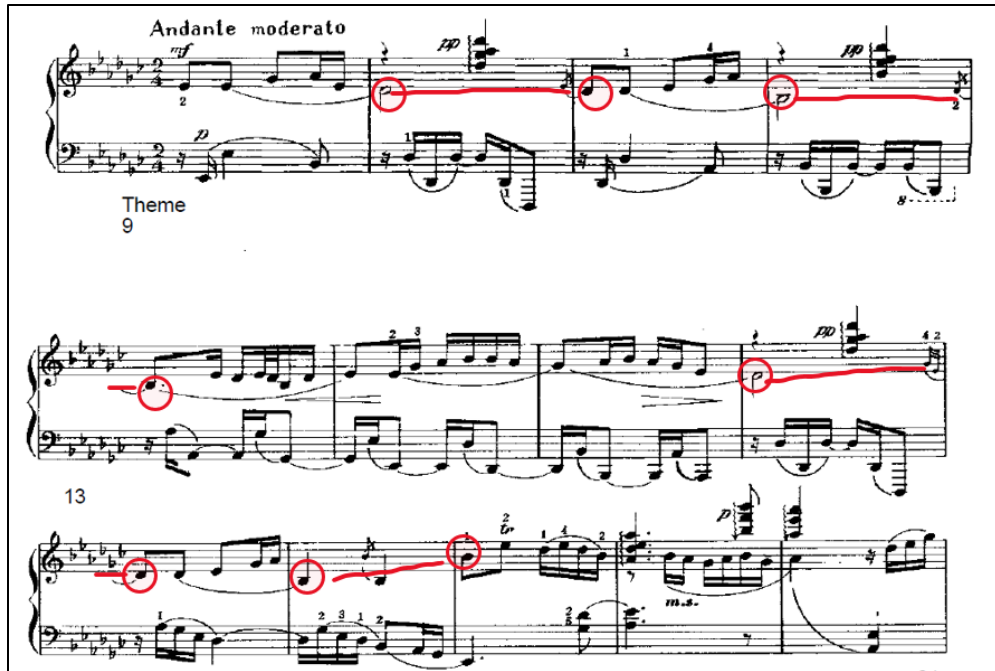


Example 3.1: Music at Sunset, mm.114-117.

Not only are there connecting structures between sections, but there are also connecting structures between phrases and within phrases (See Example 3.2).

¹¹³ Yinghai Li, “Music at Sunset,” in *30 Famous Chinese Piano Compositions*, ed. Tingge Wei (People’s Music Publishing House, 2004), p.129-137.

¹¹⁴ Xian Li, “Analysis on Piano Work ‘Music at Sunset’,” *Chinese Music* issue 1 (1982), p.10; Bian, *Chinese Piano Culture*, p.76; Jiafang Dai, “A Study on the ‘Thrive’ of Piano Music in the Post-Cultural Revolution Period,” *New Sounds of Music Bureau* Issue 2, (2010), p.6.



Example 3.2: *Music at Sunset*, mm.9-21.

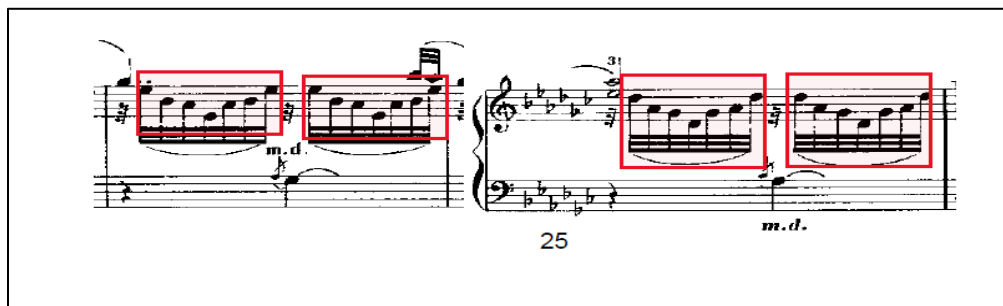
Compared to the form structure of Western music, Chinese works place more emphasis on the development of emotions and atmosphere. The piano version of *Music at Sunset* largely corresponds to the original song's emotional development of scattered-slow-middle-fast-scattered, in accordance with traditional Chinese music's characteristic of introduction, elucidation, transition and conclusion. The key of the entire piece was composed in A-flat in Shang-note, which belongs to the G-flat in Gong-note system. (See Example 3.3).



Example 3.3: Pentatonic Scale of Shang in A-flat.

Aside from adhering to the characteristics of traditional Chinese music in terms of form, mode and key, Li Yinghai also delved into the capabilities of the piano to replicate the sound of the pipa. The four strings of the pipa have a pitch of A-D-E-A, and their interval structure is a

perfect fourth, followed by a major second, followed by a perfect fourth. This interval structure appears throughout the piano work in the form of chords (See Example 3.4).



Example 3.4: *Music at Sunset*, mm.9-12, mm.98-108, mm.23, mm.25.

This chord, A-D-E-A, forms the foundation of a chord that omits the D note, resulting in the chord A-E-A. This is a triad chord without a third note and with a repeated root note. Despite the omission of the third note, this triad chord maintains a strong pipa and Chinese influence, and is prevalent throughout the work (See Example 3.5).

108

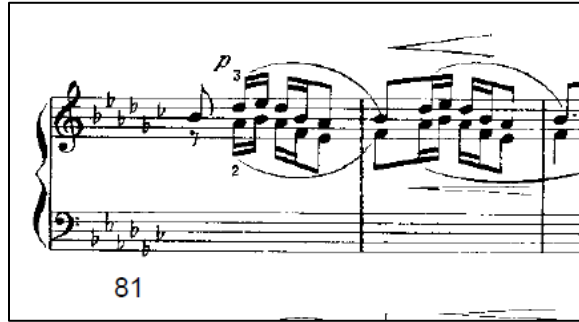
124

196 197

199

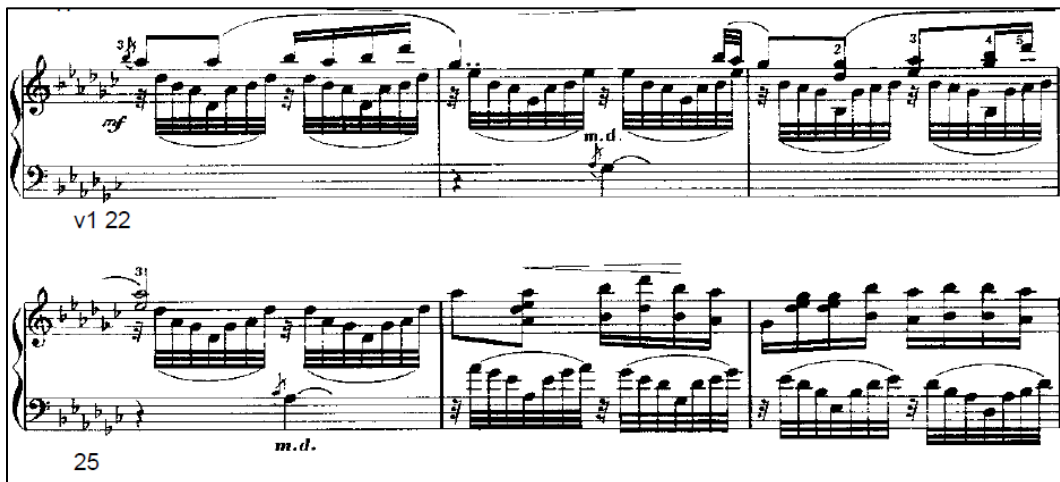
Example 3.5: *Music at Sunset*, mm.108-111, mm.124-127, mm.196-201, mm.209-210.

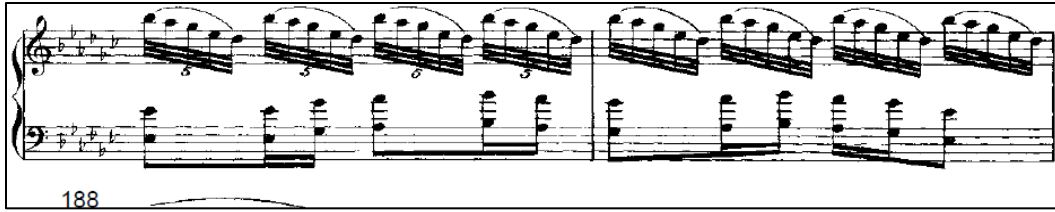
In Chinese traditional music, the use of four- and five-note chords derived from the A-E-A chord is very common. In fact, four- or five-note parallel melodies in Chinese traditional melodies does not sound as harsh as in Western music melodies (See Example 3.6).



Example 3.6: *Music at Sunset*, mm.81-82.

Li Yinghai fully exploited the capability of the piano as a polyphonic instrument by expertly mimicking the sound of ensemble music with various voices and instrumental parts. For example, in mm.22 of section 22, the upper voice maintains the melody while the lower voice accompanies with the sound of a Chinese plucked string instrument. In mm.188-189, the high and low voices switch roles, with the high voice imitating a plucked string instrument and the low voice maintaining the melody (See Example 3.7). There are also numerous similar cadenzas that imitate the sound of Chinese plucked string instruments.





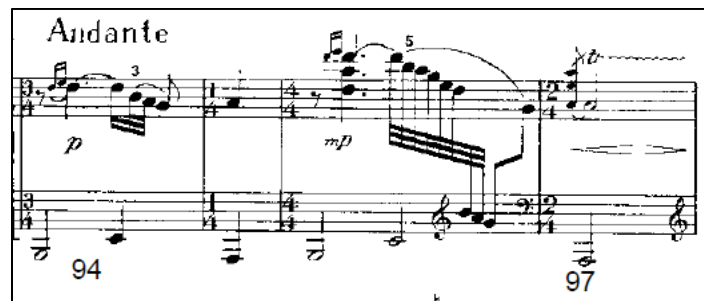
Example 3.7: *Music at Sunset*, mm.22-27, mm.188-189.

In addition to imitating plucked string instruments, Li Yinghai also used ornaments to imitate wind instruments (See Example 3.8).



Example 3.8: *Music at Sunset*, mm.63-67.

The piano version of *Music at Sunset* closely mimics the beat and rhythm of the Chinese folk song version, with the exception of a few scattered sections. The majority of the piece employs a 2-beat meter similar to the *ban-yan* rhythm commonly found in Chinese traditional music. Although a different met was used in mm. 94-97, it could also be merged into 2/4 or a similar 4/4 (See Example 3.9).



Example 3.9: *Music at Sunset*, mm.94-97.

The scattered section is similar to *Senza Misura*. The section titled “River Drum Bell Tower,” located at the beginning of the piece, closely replicates the folk song version. The use of

tremolo, slow-in and slow-out techniques, and gradual thinning and closing in dynamics to imitate the pipa or moon lute creates an impressionistic portrayal of a distant, misty scene with bells and drums that gradually fade in and out. This kind of impressionistic scene depiction could only have survived during the Cultural Revolution in the packaging of Chinese traditional folk music.

In conclusion, the piano version of *Music at Sunset* was a masterful piece of sinicized piano art. It expresses a unique aesthetic perspective of traditional Chinese music using the piano and showcasing the rich cultural heritage of the East.

In the context of the piano having just been allowed in the later period of the Cultural Revolution, Li Yinghai drew upon his years of research of Eastern and Western music to fully emulate the various characteristics of Chinese traditional music on the piano, including form, harmony, rhythm, meter, sound, title, dynamics, and others, utilizing the full capabilities of the instrument. Moreover, Li Yinghai's contributions to the study of the theory of sinicization of the piano and his notable works as a pianist played a significant role in promoting the legalization and advancement of the piano during the Cultural Revolution. This was acknowledged by Jiang Qing, leading to Li Yinghai's appointment as the associate director of the composition department at the Five-Seven Arts University from 1973 to 1979.

3.2 Example 2: *Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix*

The piano composition *Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix* is an adaptation of a suona piece with the same title. The suona version belongs to the Chinese traditional wind percussion ensemble and is popular in the Han ethnic regions along the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River. Unlike Jiangnan silk and bamboo music, Chinese traditional wind percussion music is not written down, but rather transmitted orally through folk

artists and the master-apprenticeship system. During a performance, the performers arrange the basic motifs freely, improvising and playing for as long or as short as they like.¹¹⁵ Folk artist Ren Tongxiang gained widespread acclaim when he performed the suona piece *Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix* at the First National Folk Music and Dance Performance in 1953. Following this success, he toured with official delegations to music festivals in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.¹¹⁶ As the Cultural Revolution progressed, the Central Orchestra was increasingly called upon to participate in cultural diplomatic efforts and finalize the suona piece *Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix*, bringing an end to its improvisational style of oral transmission.¹¹⁷

In 1973, Wang Jianzhong, a composer at the Central Orchestra led by Jiang Qing, arranged *Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix* into a piano version using recordings of suona player Ren Tongxiang's performance as a reference.¹¹⁸ The piano composition *Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix* imitated the structure of the suona version, using a quasi-rondo form with a structure alternating between musical melody sections and bird and insect sound sections.¹¹⁹ The following is a modular division according to the traditional Chinese music structure:

¹¹⁵ National Editing Committee of *Collection of Chinese Folk Instrumental Music, Collection of Chinese Folk Instrumental Music*, Volume Shandong, Part 1 (Beijing: People Music Press, 1994), p.34.

¹¹⁶ National Editing Committee of *Collection of Chinese Folk Instrumental Music, Collection of Chinese Folk Instrumental Music*, Volume Shandong, Part 2 (Beijing: People Music Press, 1994), p.1869.

¹¹⁷ Minxiong Li, *Appreciation and Analysis on The Traditional Ethnic Instrumental Music* (People Music Press, 1983), p.20.

¹¹⁸ Chen Su, "Analysis on The Piano Music 'Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix'," *Chinese Music* issue 1 (2009), p.132.

¹¹⁹ Zhiyu Chao, "Continuously Enriching Oneself - Interview with Professor Wang Jianzhong," *Piano Art* issue 4 (2000), P6; Yu-chien Chen, "A Short History of Chinese Music for Piano," DMA dissertation, Florida State University, 1988, p.32.

Intr.	A	B	A1	C	A3	D	CODA
(mm.1-28)	(mm.29-87)	(mm. 88-133)	(mm.134-173)	(mm.174-186)	(mm. 187-232)	(mm. 233-234)	(mm. 235-294)

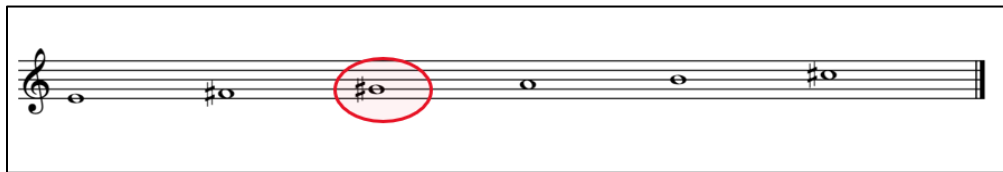
Table 2: *Modular Division of Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix in Traditional Chinese Music Form Structure*

The following is a modular division according to the Western music structure:¹²⁰

Intr.	A	B	A1	B1	A2	B2	Coda
mm. 1-50	mm. 51-74	mm. 74-131	mm. 132-160	mm. 161-186	mm. 187-203	mm. 204-234	mm. 235-294
E-key	A-key				E-key		

Table 3: *Modular Division of Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix in Western Music Form Structure*

The piano version of *Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix* is in the key of Zhi in E with the Bian Gong note (See Example 3.10),¹²¹ which has a sound similar to E major in Western music. Therefore, it is important to consider the Chinese traditional pentatonic key system when analyzing this work and other Chinese piano pieces from the Cultural Revolution period to avoid errors.



Example 3.10: Pentatonic Scale of Zhi in E with Bian Gong Note (G-sharp).

One major challenge of imitating the sound of the suona with a piano is that the piano is a 12-tone equal temperament instrument, while the suona is not. This can cause the intervals and

¹²⁰ Shigu Zhang, "Chinese and Western Influences upon Piano Music in China," DMA dissertation, The University of Arizona, 1993, p.57.

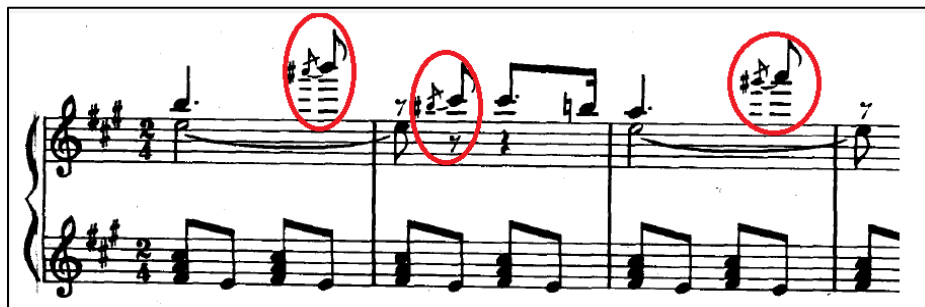
¹²¹ Jianzhong Wang, "Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix," in *30 Famous Chinese Piano Compositions*, ed. Tingge Wei (People's Music Publishing House, 2004), p.82-91.

harmonies of the suona to sound slightly off-pitch. While experienced suona players can adjust for this effect through finger positioning and mouth shape, it is difficult to eliminate this off-pitch sound in ensemble performances and it becomes a defining characteristic of the music. In the piano version of *Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix*, Wang Jianzhong incorporated dissonant second intervals and harmonies with second intervals to mimic the interval differences of the suona and other ensemble instruments (See Example 3.11).



Example 3.11: *Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix*, mm.17-20.

Furthermore, Wang Jianzhong employs various decorative notes to mimic suona performance techniques, particularly through the pervasive use of second suspensions (See Example 3.12).



Example 3.12: *Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix*, mm.51-53.

In addition to second intervals, parallel fourths and fifths are also prevalent. Due to the tonal system and pentatonic scale restrictions of traditional Chinese music, fourths and fifths are the most common intervals in traditional Chinese melodies. In the piano version of *Hundreds of*

Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix, Wang Jianzhong extensively used parallel fourths and fifths, as well as octave combinations formed by layering fourths and fifths.

The suona version of *Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix* is particularly noteworthy for its highly realistic and expressive imitation of bird and insect sounds using the instrument. This level of realism is rarely achieved through abstract expression and is more akin to vocal performance. Imitating these sounds on a piano, a stringed instrument, is challenging and there are few examples of piano works in Western music that have attempted to do so. Wang Jianzhong vividly imitated bird and insect sounds in the pentatonic mode, particularly in mm.186 where the bird sound imitation seamlessly incorporates both Chinese traditional music's broken chords and Western music's elaborate passages, culminating in a high point. The work reaches its climax at the end, where Wang Jianzhong combines all the previously mentioned characteristics of Chinese music in the coda, including second intervals, fourths, fifths, melodic sequences, and decorative notes imitating the suona. The piece ends on the highest front note, which fortuitously aligns with the traditional Chinese rhythmic structure *ban-yan*, similar to the downbeat in a 2/4 meter.

In conclusion, *Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix* for piano is a successful adaptation of a Chinese traditional musical work. Wang Jianzhong broke down the barriers between Chinese and Western music in terms of tonality and other aspects, using a Western keyboard instrument to imitate and even surpass Chinese traditional wind instruments. It is clear that part of the motivation for this attempt to localize piano music in China came from the restrictions and pressures of the Cultural Revolution. Despite the limitations, Wang Jianzhong successfully revealed the charm of the piano.

3.3 Example 3: *Liuyang River* (adapted by Wang Jianzhong)

The song *Liuyang River* was a political propaganda piece that praised Mao Zedong and was composed in 1951 by Tang Biguang. However, due to Tang Biguang (1920-2015) being labeled as a rightist during the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign, the song was later credited as a Hunan folk song and had the author's name removed for several decades.¹²²

During the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, only a few songs were able to avoid censorship, most of which were those that praised Mao Zedong. In 1972, as the Cultural Revolution was coming to a close, the piano was once again permitted. In this environment, adapting songs that praised Mao Zedong into piano works was a relatively safe choice, and this is the context in which Wang Jianzhong's piano version of *Liuyang River* was created.

The song *Liuyang River* consists of four phrases, a, b, c, and d, which are repeated five times. The first repetition includes the four phrases asking four questions. The following four repetitions provide answers to these questions. In the final four repetitions, phrases c and d specifically praise Mao Zedong. As a result, phrases c and d are the main focus of the song (See Example 3.13).

Phrase	d	a b c d	a b c d	a b c d	a b c d	a b c d	d
Bar quantity	5	4 4 4 5	4 4 4 5	4 4 4 5	4 4 4 5	4 4 4 5	5
Lyric content	Intr.	Ask	Answer	Answer	Answer	Answer	Coda

Example 3.13: The form structure of the song Liuyang River.

In adapting *Liuyang River* into a piano version, Wang Jianzhong adopted a ternary form, linking phrases c and d to fully present the song three times. The number of bars in each phrase

¹²² Yonglie Ye, *The Beginning and End of the Anti-Rightist Campaign* (Xinjiang: Xinjiang People Press, 2000), p.540.

was also kept the same as in the original, allowing listeners to sing the original lyrics along with the piano performance (See Example 3.14).

Intr.		A	+	A1	B	A2	Coda
d	cadenza	a b c d d1		a b c d d2	cadenza	a b c d c1 d	d3
4	5	4 4 4 5 5	1	4 4 4 5 3	2	4 4 4 5 4 5	3

Example 3.14: The form structure of the piano work *Liuyang River* adapted by Wang Jianzhong.

In addition to this work, Chu Wanghua also adapted the song *Liuyang River* into a piano version in 1976. Its structure also followed a ternary form, with the song being repeated three times, using the repetition of phrases c and d as connection and coda. Based on this, such piano solo pieces derived from songs during the later stage of the Cultural Revolution can be viewed as piano accompaniments with melodies. The use of piano to guide the audience in singing praises of Mao Zedong through lyrics aligned with the propaganda goals of the Cultural Revolution.

As an accompaniment piece with a melody, Wang Jianzhong adhered closely to the original work. While maintaining a singable melody, he incorporated a large number of perfect fifths and perfect fourths to enhance the traditional Chinese melodies (See Example 3.15).¹²³ In contrast to his piano work *Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix*, Wang Jianzhong exercised caution in using dissonant intervals or chords in *Liuyang River*. During the Cultural Revolution, using harsh sounding melodies to praise Mao Zedong carried significant risk. Any intentional or unintentional defamation of Mao Zedong’s portraits, statues, or quotations, or any disrespectful words towards Mao Zedong would be punishable by law.¹²⁴

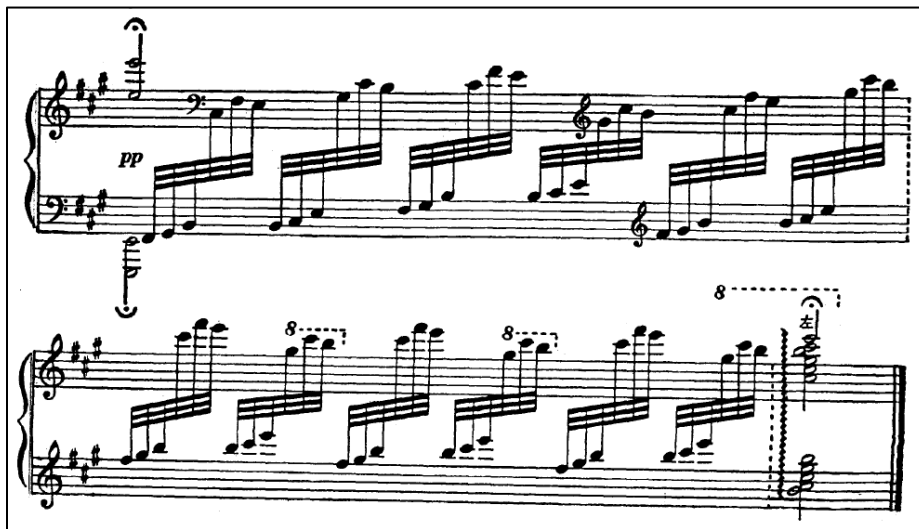
¹²³ Jianzhong Wang, “Liuyang River,” in *30 Famous Chinese Piano Compositions*, ed. Tingge Wei (People’s Music Publishing House, 2004), p.72-76.

¹²⁴ Haiguang Wang, *Manufacturing Counterrevolution: The Case of Liu Xingfu and the Ecosphere of Grassroots Legal during the Cultural Revolution* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Chinese University Press, 2021), p.279-280; The Changchun Municipal Local Chronicles Compilation Committee, *Chronicles of Changchun City - Litigation Chronicles* (Jilin: Jilin Literature and History Publishing House, 1993), p.201.



Example 3.15: Liuyang River, mm.29-32.

In this work, Wang Jianzhong sought to fully utilize the capabilities of the piano. Despite the changing positions of the main melody and accompaniment voices, he consistently placed the song melody in unaccented, one-lined, or two-lined octaves to ensure a singable melody. Meanwhile, the accompaniment voices demonstrated the wide range of piano. The two cadenza sections and coda in the piece also mimicked the sound of traditional Chinese plucked string instruments, and the mordent was employed to imitate the sound of a flowing river (See Example 3.16).



Example 3.16: Liuyang River, Coda.

To conclude, the key aspect of adapting songs from the Cultural Revolution, particularly those that praised Mao Zedong, was to strictly adhere to the original work and prominently

feature the praising phrases through repetition and emphasis. The use of dissonant intervals or chords should be handled carefully. On this foundation, the potential of the piano can be explored, and Chinese traditional musical elements can be incorporated, such as imitating the sound of traditional Chinese instruments and singing styles.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The period following the Cultural Revolution was marked by a surge of creativity in Chinese piano music, despite continued political constraints. Although most compositions were adaptations, the manner in which they were adapted varied based on the form of the original works. As these adaptations sought to adhere to the original compositions, they also had to take into account the influence of political factors in elements such as form, harmony, mode, key, meter, and dynamics.

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, a decade of political and economic upheaval, had a significant impact on the People's Republic of China and the global community. It greatly altered the course of Chinese piano music, affecting pianists, composers, and all aspects related to it. The political climate dictated the survival or demise of music roles, the prestige or lack thereof of instruments, the popularity or obscurity of musical styles, and even the amount of dissonance that could be present in a work.

Even after more than half a century, the piano works from the Cultural Revolution are still being performed on the stages in China. While most listeners appreciate these piano works without considering their political context, the passing of the composers also took with them the unwritten rules for creating Cultural Revolution-era piano music. Nevertheless, each Chinese piano work from the Cultural Revolution carries within it a unique mark in the history of the development of piano music in China.

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