SONG OF PI-PA

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

By

Yu-Chung Tseng, B.A.

Denton, Texas

August, 1994
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*Song of Pi-Pa* is a composition set to a poem to be performed by soprano and mixed instrumental ensemble. The formal plan is through-composed and the organization of each individual piece is largely determined by the structure of the poetic text. The text, drawn from *Song of Pi-Pa* by Po Chu-i, depicts the story of how the poet became overwhelmed by the chance hearing of a virtuosic performance of a woman playing the pi-pa.

The general characteristics of the work reflect the assimilation of certain non-western musical and philosophical influences. Traditional western compositional techniques are also employed in the treatment of thematic materials, musical form, instrumentation, and the developmental process. The total performance time for this composition is approximately twenty-six minutes.
I was seeing a friend off at the river's bend

She tuned and lightly plucked the strings

The fine strings—they sounded like lovers' whispers

Silence reigned. The boats around were quiet

It is a life of merriment and time slipped by

I wept and woke up with reddened eyes

My heart ached to hear her plaintive songs

I must drink alone to ease my pain
My blue gown was drenched with tears

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

Song of Pi-Pa is a musical poem, consisting of three themes distributed among nine pieces. It is scored for Soprano and mixed instrumental ensemble (all pieces engage both voice and instruments). The mixed instrumental ensemble consists of flute, oboe, clarinet, piano, harp, violin, cello, and two percussionists. Some instruments employed in this work are chosen for their particular timbral potential which by inference depict the sounds in Asian music: the flute mimics the Japanese shakuhach, the character of the vibraphone resembles Balinese instruments, and the double bass is a reinterpretation of the Chinese Chiin or Pi-pa. The choice of instruments varying from piece to piece is a direct and intentional reference to Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire, Messiaen's Quartet pour la Fin du Temps, or Boulez's Le Marteau Sans Maitre. The work is approximately twenty-six minutes in duration.

The poem, Song of Pi-pa, describes the similar fates of the poet and a female pi-pa player. Treatment of the text is given careful consideration to ensure that the meaning and
underlying mood of the poem are faithfully conveyed. The instrumental accompaniment of the voice, when present, varies from a single line to a thick chordal texture involving numerous instruments.

Word painting, sprechstimme, speaking and special vocal techniques (including whispering, imitating the wind sound and the so called "dramatic inflected speech"), are used at times to enhance timbral resources for this work. Various stylistic elements such as polyphonic and homophonic textures are employed to intensify and highlight sentiments expressed in the text.

The harmonic language employed is an eclectic mixture derived from both tonal and atonal sonorities. Pitch structure is based on a symmetrical all-interval series drawn from Luigi Nono's Canto Sospeso.

The rhythm throughout most of the work is metrically controlled. Free rhythmic passages do occur, however, in both vocal and instrumental sections.

The overall characteristics of the work reflect the assimilation of certain non-western musical and philosophical influences. These include: the use of a pentatonic scale pattern; the thematic principles of embellishing a single note (particularly manifest in Chinese Chin music and Indian Gamakas music); the application of the concepts of Zen and
Taoism in treating the individual sound as "living matter" with variants in timbre, articulation, vibrato, intensity, and release (particularly manifest in Chinese Chin music, Indian Gamakas music, Japanese Togaku music, Korean Hyang ak music, and Indonesian Gamelan music); and the application of the I-Ching, in dealing with transitory passages over a long sustained note (specially evident in the music of China, India and even France).

Traditional western compositional techniques are also employed in the treatment of thematic materials, form, orchestration, and in the developmental process.

The score of this work is preceded by an analysis which focuses on the salient stylistic features of each of the nine pieces. Numerous musical examples are incorporated in the analysis to illustrate the discussions therein.

The Poem

Song of Pi-Pa, consisting of three main themes of varying length and sentiments, is a rhymed seven-syllable poem by Po Chu-i, a poet (776-846 A.D.) of Tang dynasty in China. The first theme, suddenly a pi-pa sounded in the
shimmering bay, describes the poet bidding farewell to a friend at the river's bend where he saw a female pi-pa player, and was overcome by her performance. The second theme, my songs brought numberless rolls of silk, depicts the woman's success as a popular performer in the capital when she was young and her unfortunate circumstances in later years. The third theme, we both are deserted creatures, expresses that they share the same vain, tragic life since they are both banished from the capital.

The song text is reproduced below.

I. 漁陽江頭夜送客

I was seeing a friend off at the river's bend when reeds and maples rustled in the autumn wind. A farewell feast was laid out in the departing boat - it was a pity to have no music while we drink! Even wine brought no relief—sadly we were going to part.
As the moon through the mist shone darkly on the water. Suddenly a lute sounded in the shimmering bay. And host and guests, enchanted, strained their ears. We tried to trace the source of sound, which was now mute. "Hello, where are you?" We called - but no answer came. We saw her alone in a moon-drenched boat; we drew nearer, had fresh candles brought, replenished the wine, and started feasting anew. "Would you join us, please? We'd love to hear you play. We coaxed and urged, but she was slow to come.

At last she did, her lute half hiding her face.

II. 小弦切切如私語

低眉信手細纖纖
切盡心中無限事
輕撚指抹復挑

初為綠裳後大公
大弦嘈嘈如急雨
小弦切切如私語

嘈嘈切切繚繚然
大珠小珠落玉盤
間關鶯語花裏滑

幽咽泉流下流泉
水泉冷灑弦凝絶
凝絶不通聲渐歇

別有幽愁暗恨生
此時無聲勝有聲
銀瓶乍破水聲迸

鐵騎突出刀槍鳴
曲終收撥當心畫
四弦一絃如裂帛
III. The fine strings—they sounded like lovers' whispers

Then with eyes cast down, she hugged the instrument. Lightly caressing, slowly stroking, she plucked and swept.
First playing the Rainbow Skirt, then the six-measure song.
The bold strings—they pattered like dashing rain. The fine strings—they sounded like lovers' whispers. Chattering and pattering, pattering and chattering—
spears, large and small, on a jade platter fall. Like orioles heard under flowering bushes, or a busy spring bubbling down a pebbled stream.

It froze. The sound ceased. An unspeakable sadness surfaced: now silence was sweeter than sound. Then without warning the music swelled again, gushing forth—like water bursting from a broken vase. Or the armoured knights. With a flourish, all the strings sounded in clashing chord.

IV. Silence reigned. The boats around were quiet

Silence reigned. The boats around were quiet.
The moonlit sky was milky with the autumn mist. With a sigh, she put the plectrum between the strings, adjusted her dress and, having curtsied, stood.

V. 今年戸笑復明年

十三學得蜀語成  名揚數砂第一部  曲麗觀護善才服
妝成每被秋娘妒  五陵年少爭纏縳  一曲紅絨不知數
錦繡銀鵲早節碎  血色羅裙翻酒污  今年歡笑復明年
春風秋月等閒度  弟走從軍阿嬌死  暮去朝來顏色故
門前冷落車馬稀  老大嫁作商人婦  闕人重利別離難
前月浮梁獲茶去  去來江口守空船  觥船明月江水寒
V. It was a life of merriment and time slipped by

She spoke, "I was brought up in the capital. At thirteen, I became an accomplished player. I was endowed with unusual grace and charm. Wealthy young men pressed suit with precious gifts; my songs brought numberless rolls of silk.

Jade combs and hairpins— I broke them beating time; blood-red silk skirts— I spoiled them with wine stains. It was a life of merriment and time slipped by. My brother was posted to the frontier and my mother died. and as I grew older, fewer admirers came. At last, I met a merchant and bore his name. He thought little of leaving home, more of his profits.

He's been gone a month now, buying tea. Leaving me alone with the cold river and the moon.

VI. 我們紅妝裹欲干

深夜忽夢少年事，夢啼紅妝裹欲干

VI. I swept and woke up with reddened eyes

Of my salad days I am wont to dream then weep and wake up with reddened eyes.

VII. 我們離懷已 asynchronously

我離離離已 asynchronously 又聞此離離 asynchronous

同是天涯淪落人 相逢何必會相識

VII. My heart ached to hear her plaintive songs

My heart ached to hear her plaintive songs. I sighed as she slowly unfolded her story. Deserted creatures both, we are two of a kind—friends we are, though newly met—why should we mind?
VIII. I must drink alone to ease my pain

Since I was banished from the capital last year, I have been invalid here in Hsun-yang. I live near a river where it is low and wet. reeds and bamboos grow around my hut: cuckoos cry and gibbons wail by day and night. Even the blossom of the flowers and the brightness of the moon do not suffice and I must drink alone to ease my pain. Is it that no one sings, or plays the flute? No, but there is so little that pleases the ear.

Thus to listen to you play the sweet lute tonight is like hearing angels sing their dulcet songs. So please refuse us not the favour of an encore and I will compose for you a song in return.

IX. My blue gown was drenched with tears.

She stood still, moved by my earnest words. Then started, this time at a faster pace urgent, mournful, not as heretofore.

All who heared her hid their faces and wept. Who amongst those present wept the bitterest? It was
The formal structure of this work is generated by the poetic format; it is a through-composed "form" comprised of three themes distributed among nine pieces of varying length and sentiments. The text used in this work is taken from "Song of Pi-pa", a rhymed seven-syllable poem by Po Chu-i. Each piece involves voice and a mixed instrumental ensemble. The first piece is made up of some of the musical material that reappears in subsequent pieces.

The first theme, *suddenly a pi-pa sounded in the simmering bay*, is presented in nos. 1, 2, and 3. No.1 functions as a prelude to the whole work, and no.2 serves as a prologue to no.3.

The second theme, *my songs brought numberless rolls of silk*, is engaged in nos. 4, 5, and 6, while no.4 and no.6 serve as a prologue and an epilogue respectively to no.5.

The third theme, *we are both deserted creatures*, is found in the last three pieces: nos. 7, 8, and 9. Nos. 7 and 9 serve as a prologue and an epilogue respectively to no. 8. The layout of these pieces, their respective durations, the tempos, and instrumentation are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.
Table 1 Layout of the tempo and duration of each piece of Song of Pi-Pa

Theme I: 忽聞水上琵琶聲
Suddenly a pi-pa sounded in the shimmering bay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Piece no.</th>
<th>Measure no.</th>
<th>Tempo.</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. 海陽江頭夜送客</td>
<td>1 - 4</td>
<td>42 - 46</td>
<td>6 min. 30 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was seeing a friend off at the river's bend</td>
<td>5 - 34</td>
<td>56 - 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35 - 36</td>
<td>42 - 46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37 - 54</td>
<td>64 - 68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55 - 66</td>
<td>72 - 76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67 - 98</td>
<td>56 - 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>99 - 102</td>
<td>42 - 46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. 轉輪撥弦三兩聲</td>
<td>1 - 31</td>
<td>52 - 56</td>
<td>2 min. 30 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She tuned and lightly plucked the strings</td>
<td>12 - 18</td>
<td>42 - 46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. 小弦切切如私語</td>
<td>1 - 11</td>
<td>84 - 86</td>
<td>4 min. 20 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fine strings—they sounded like lovers' whispers</td>
<td>19 - 21</td>
<td>84 - 86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22 - 28</td>
<td>92 - 96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29 - 33</td>
<td>76 - 80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34 - 43</td>
<td>84 - 86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44 - 55</td>
<td>72 - 76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56 - 63</td>
<td>52 - 56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64 - 70</td>
<td>92 - 96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71 - 75</td>
<td>72 - 76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme II: 一曲紅綵不知數
My song brought numberless rolls of silk

IV. 東船西舫悄無言
Silence reigned. The boats around were quiet

| 1 - 15 | 56-60 | 56 sec. |
Table 1 continued

V. It was a life of merriment and time slipped by

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( \text{Time} )</th>
<th>( \text{Frequency} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 37</td>
<td>72 - 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 - 54</td>
<td>82 - 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 - 60</td>
<td>72 - 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 - 75</td>
<td>60 - 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76 - 85</td>
<td>82 - 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86 - 100</td>
<td>72 - 76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VI. I wept and woke up with reddened eyes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( \text{Time} )</th>
<th>( \text{Frequency} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 8</td>
<td>60 - 64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme III: We are both deserted creatures

VII. My heart ached to hear her plaintive songs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( \text{Time} )</th>
<th>( \text{Frequency} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 25</td>
<td>56 - 60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VIII. I must drink alone to ease my pain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( \text{Time} )</th>
<th>( \text{Frequency} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 19</td>
<td>72 - 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 33</td>
<td>82 - 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 - 39</td>
<td>52 - 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 47</td>
<td>72 - 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 - 53</td>
<td>52 - 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 - 57</td>
<td>82 - 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58 - 64</td>
<td>72 - 76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IX. My blue gown was drenched with tears

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( \text{Time} )</th>
<th>( \text{Frequency} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 27</td>
<td>62 - 66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 min. 20 sec.

32 sec.

1 min. 50 sec.

3 min. 10 sec.

1 min. 15 sec.
Table 2  Layout of the instrumentation of each Piece of Song of Pi-Pa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Piece no.</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. 海陽江亭夜送客 I was seeing a friend off at the river's bend</td>
<td>Voice, Flute, Timpani, Gong, 2 Wood Blocks, Double Bass, vibraphone, Suspended Cymbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. 聖軛撥弦三兩聲 She tuned and lightly plucked its strings</td>
<td>Voice, Harp, Piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. 小弦切切如私語 The fine strings—they sounded like lovers' wispers</td>
<td>Voice, Flute, Clarinet, Piano, Vibraphone, 5 Tom-toms, Harp, Snare Drum, Violin, Violoncello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. 東船西舫悄無言 Silence reigned. The boats around were quiet</td>
<td>Voice, Flute, Violin, Violoncello, Triangle, Large Suspended Cymbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. 今年歌笑復明年 I was a life of merriment and time slipped by</td>
<td>Voice, Flute, Oboe, Violin, Violoncello, Tambourine' Piano, 5 Tom-toms, Gong, 5 temple Blocks, Vibraphone, Suspended Cymbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. 夢嘨紅妝淚感千 I wept and woke up with reddened eyes</td>
<td>Voice, Harp, Piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. 我聞路音已歎息 My heart ached to hear her plaintive songs.</td>
<td>Voice, Flute, Tam-tam, Bass Drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. 往往取酒邀諸賢 I must drank alone to ease my pain</td>
<td>Voice, Flute, Harp, Vibraphone, 5 Tom-toms, 3 Timpani, 3 Temple Blocks, Violin, Double Bass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. 江州司馬青杉澗 My blue gown was drenched with tears</td>
<td>Voice, Flute, Vibraphone, 2 Wood Blocks, Timpani, Double Bass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stylistic features

The diversity evident in the textures and tone colors in *Song of Pi-Pa* is reflected in other stylistic elements as well. A wide variety of melodic and harmonic idioms, and rhythmic structures is used to accentuate the text. Despite the diversity of stylistic elements, however, most of these songs conform to one of three basic stylistic categories as dictated by the mood of the text.

Passages of a melancholy, pessimistic mood are set either in monophonic or polyphonic style. Passages of an exuberant and uplifting mood are set to music with an incessant rhythmic drive involving layers of ostinati.

The voice sings syllabically or uses dramatically inflected speech at times. Much of the music that is transitional in nature is characterized by marked timbral diversity and static harmony.

Analysis Format

The remainder of this paper will focus on each of the nine songs and will examine the salient stylistic features in each song. The songs are identified in Table 1 by their titles.
MUSICAL ANALYSIS

I. I was seeing a friend off at the river's bend

The text of this piece can be divided into four sections: the first section expresses a pessimistic mood of farewell, the second section depicts the enchanting pi-pa music, the third section portrays the blithe atmosphere of looking for the player, and the fourth section describes the anxious mood of expectation upon joining the pi-pa player.

The melancholy air of the first section is introduced musically by a timpani with long tremolo and three-measure solo flute gesture entering a bit later. This flute motive also acts as a leitmotiv and reappears in the subsequent pieces. The short, repetitive patterns and the emphasis on timbre, articulation, and dynamics focus the listener's attention on the sound world within the individual tone.

Example 1--Melancholy leitmotiv, flute part, piece I, mm.6-8
This stress on individual sounds rather than the progression of sounds in time finds precedent in the music of Webern, Varese, Messiaen, Nono, and Boulez. It reflects the "living sound" ideal of traditional Asian music, such as the music of China, India, Indonesian, where performance techniques typically require the performer to vary the instrumental timbre through the application of vibrato, tremolo, portamento, or changes in embouchure, air pressure, and fingering.

Furthermore, the changing, transitional passages occurring over a continuous, sustained, unchanging passage throughout the whole piece is an application of the polar concept of the I Ching - the ying and the yang.

The vocal line appears right after the prelude-like passage and is set melismatically. It inflects of the words in order to ensure that the text is clearly comprehensible to the listener. At m.7, the voice enters and the flute carries a dialogue with the voice in an inverted cannonic gesture. Word painting, such as the imitation of wind sound by voice and flute, the suggestion of drunkness by double bass and flute, is employed here (also reappearing in later pieces) to highlight the depressed atmosphere expressed in the text.
Example 2—Voice part, piece I, mm.20-21

Example 3—Double bass part, piece I, m.29

The second section serves as a transition to the third section. It is introduced by a solo double bass with pizzicato or pizzicato-tremolo gestures throughout trying to evoke the feeling of the pi-pa music. A balance of whispering and normal singing is maintained for contrast in the vocal line and contributes to the underlying mood depicting the feeling the poet had the first time he heard the distant sound of the pi-pa at river.
After a short coda-like passage implying some material found in the next section, the buoyant third section begins with an ostinato pattern by the vibraphone, flute, and suspended cymbal, invoking the boat floating over the water. Accompanied by the ostinato passage, the voice sings smoothly and flowingly with a suggestion of the pentatonic scale.

As the music grows gradually louder, climaxing at m.66 with a short pause, the fourth section starts. It synthesizes elements introduced in the three prior sections. Its opening measures recall section one with a return to the original tempo and the dejected leitmotiv carried by the flute. The
appearance of the pi-pa player is anticipated by the wood blocks and suspended cymbal, and it is highlighted by the continuous tremolo timpani and double bass.

Bringing back the idea of the voice and flute in an inverted canonic gesture at m.83, the music shifts to a free, cadenza-like passage carried by the voice and double bass. This two-measure passage presages the ending of the section. The coda (a continuous tremolo timpani along with a reduction in dynamics and rhythmic density) serves to dissipate the energy of the previous sections and gives a stronger sense of closure to this piece.

Example 6--Cadenza-like passage, piece I, mm.85-87
II. She tuned and lightly plucked its strings

This piece, a prologue, serves as a transition to the next piece. The fine strings—they sounded like lovers' whispers. The text depicts the moment that the pi-pa player tunes the strings prior to performing the music for the poet. It is scored for voice, harp, and piano, and the instruments are chosen for their particular timbral potentialities (quality). For instance, some special effects for piano and harp (including muting the sound, plucking the strings on piano, plucking the strings and harmonics on the harp) are utilized to evoke the listener's associations with the pi-pa.

A three-note gesture starts the piece by musically setting the story of the pi-pa player plucking the strings. At m.2 the piano enters with muted and pizzicato effects. These passages appear frequently and consistently provide an ostinato pulsation throughout the whole piece.

Example 7--Piano part, piece II, mm.2 - 3
The pitch material of this piece is rather deliberately limited, often consisting of three, four, or six pitch-class sets. This can be seen in the piano and harp part. At mm.2-7 the m2, M2, and m3 are heard prominently in the piano and expanded into p4 and p5 later at mm.10-19. From m.23 through the end, the intervals shift back to the m2, M2, and m3.

Figure 1--Pitch set, piece II, mm.2-3

\begin{figure}
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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{Pitch set, piece II, mm.2-3}
\end{figure}

Figure 2--Pitch set, piece II, mm.11-12

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure2.png}
\caption{Pitch set, piece II, mm.11-12}
\end{figure}

To portray the tuning of the pi-pa, the voice alternates between quarter tones, also suggesting the feeling of frustration and regret of the player. This microtonal lament motive reappears many times in later pieces.
Example 8--Tuning or lament motive, m.5

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After a short pause at m.27, the piano resumes the *pi-pa* motive. With the addition of the harp, the whole piece dissolves quietly into a "dark motive", combining the low pitch of the piano and harp, with a special "Tam-tam" sound effect.

Example 9--Tam-tam sound effect, harp part, m.31

\[ \text{Example 9--Tam-tam sound effect, harp part, m.31} \]
III. The fine strings—they sounded like lovers' whispers

This piece is the climax of the first poetic theme, *suddenly a pi-pa sounded in the shimmering bay*, and projects a character that contrasts with piece one and piece two by virtue of its faster tempo, rhythmic vitality, percussive nature, and virtuosic performance requirement.

The form and design of the vocal part of this piece is obviously governed by the poetic text. The first section of the text, for example, is of a lyrical disposition, while the second section of the text is of narrative quality. The former leads toward a melismatic character and the latter toward declamatory expression.

Pitch choices of the harp, flute, clarinet, and piano in the piece are based on two different eight-note pitch sets taken from the symmetrical all-interval series. The former eight-note series carried by the piano introduces the entrance of every phrase and the latter eight-note series builds up the "bird" motive on the flute and clarinet parts and reappears later in the piano part, acting as a flowing ostinato pattern to accompany the voice.
This piece is scored for voice and nine instruments which are chosen to imitate the sounds of the pi-pa by employing some special effects. For example, The string parts play with pizzicato effect to generate a shorter plucked sound of the pi-pa. The harp part is played using fingernail near the sounding board to produce a rushing rain effect of the pi-pa.
Section one is introduced by the short tom-tom passage which announced the beginning of the piece. The voice enters immediately at m.2 based on the retrograde form of the pitches found in the piano part at m.1. It is accompanied by pizzicato strings, harp tremolo, and piano arpeggio - the pi-pa effect with the "bird" motive played by the flute and clarinet. At m.12, the music becomes more flowing and smooth than in the previous section. The voice is set melismatically, reflecting the lyrical nature of the text with an ostinato sixteenth-note, flowing piano accompaniment. This piano passage also reappears in section two at m.44-53, but it is carried by the violin. Section two starts as the melodies grow gradually higher in dynamics, tempo, rhythmic and registral intensity.
The second section portrays the virtuosic performance of the pi-pa player. It is expressed by the voice soaring most of time above a thick, vigorous, and passionate ensemble sonority in a manner that is associated with the later German Romantics. At m.22 the piano plays the "rain" motive as a downward arpeggio gesture which is restated in piece V and becomes a "water" motive. One lyrical passage is found through m.28 to m.31 to provide a contrasting gesture to previous passages by reducing the dynamics, tempo, rhythmic, and textural intensity. This thin contrapuntal texture is spun by the voice, harp, flute, clarinet, and violin, carrying a lyrical "lovers' whispers" motive which reappears
at the very end of this piece. At m.34, the power of the text is represented by a special "dramatic inflected speech" a descendant from the Chinese Peking opera which also gives a contrast to the previous section not only in the style, but also in its rhythmic indeterminacy. At m.44, the music dissolves with the tempo slowing, accompanied by a reduction of dynamics and thinning of rhythmic density.

Example 15--Lovers' whispers, piece III, mm28-31

Example 16--Dramatic inflected speech, piece III, mm.34-35

After a long repose, the voice enters hesitantly at m. 56 in a monophonic style. The shift of texture from very thick to a single line gives a strikingly different expression from that of previous sections and creates an unusual climax for the whole piece. The monophonic passage ends at m. 63 with a long pause.

Suddenly, at m.64, the music swells back to a rapid
energetic, and agitated passage, recalling the previous passages at mm.22-32. In this instance the tom-tom is replaced by the penetrating snare drum. This passage ends with the voice soaring again above a wild, rough sonority of expanding tessitura, increasingly dynamic.

Example 17-- Percussion II, piece III, mm.64-66

The coda, mm.71-75, is expressed by the "dramatic inflected speech" again, but is accompanied only by a solo violin playing the "lovers' whispers" motive. At m.74-75, the harp plucks the strings to suggest the pi-pa player has finished her performance. This coda also serves to release the energy and ease the agitated passion established by the previous sections.

Example 18--Harp part, piece III, mm.74-75
IV. Silence reigned, the boats around were quiet

This piece serves as a transition to piece five, *It was a life of merriment and time slipped by*. The text of this piece delineates a silent moment, right after the pi-pa player's virtuosic performance and prior to telling her story.

The opening four notes of the vocal line are drawn from the vibraphone part of piece I found at m.22 and reflect the concept of "boat". The contracting intervallic motive (M7, m7, and d7) of the four notes in piece IV, or the expanding intervallic motive (m2, d3---M2, enharmonically---, and m3) of the four notes in piece I are intentionally used to evoke the "wave" of water.

Example 19--Wave motive, voice part, piece IV, m.2

Example 20--Wave motive, piece I, m.22
This piece is scored for voice, flute, percussion, violin, and cello. The vocal line is characterized by two different techniques, syllabic singing, and sprechstimme. The syllabic setting is accompanied by the flute, violin, cello, and the suspended cymbal. Each of the entrances of the flute, violin, and cello is punctuated by the triangle. The harmonics produced in the trio, reminiscent of the Chinese Gagaku Sho (also reappearing in piece V found at m.91), helps sustain a limpid quartal harmony, suggesting the milky moonlit sky, while the sustained tremolo suspended cymbal evokes the reflection of moonlight on the water. From m.9 to m.12, the voice employs sprechstimme technique to provide a contrast to the previous section, punctuated by the suspended cymbal.

Example 21—Gagaku Sho sonority, piece IV, mm.3-4
At m.12, the transparent quartal harmony is once again evident and the piece eventually dies away with the fading of the dynamic.

V. It was a life of merriment and time slipped by

The fifth piece, consisting of five sections, paints two contrasting descriptions of the story of the life of the pipa player. A slower, lyrical, polyphonic, and dreamlike moment represents the player as she begins to tell her story of success in younger days and of disappointed life in her older days. A faster, homophonic, and dancelike passage reflects her joyous time in the capital. The basic formal structure is shown as following:

Introduction (mm. 1 - 11) - A (mm. 11 - 37)  
- B (mm. 38 - 60) - C (mm. 61 - 75) - B'(mm. 76 - 85)  
- A'(mm. 86 - 100)

The introduction functions as a prelude and prepares the unfolding of the woman's story. It is percussive in nature and also exposes some materials used in later sections: the "dance" motive by the strings with the addition of percussion and the "water" motive by the piano. The latter motive is a restatement of the water motive used earlier in piece III m.48 and reappears in the later sections of this piece found at m.26, m.33, and m.75. As the dynamics grow gradually higher, the solo flute fades in softly to start the A section.
Example 22—Dance motive, piece V, mm.1-4

Example 23—Water motive, piece V, mm.8-9

Section A, depicting the accomplishment of the pi-pa player's salad days, is expressed, as mentioned above, by lyrical, warm, and dreamlike music. The solo flute enters at
m.11 with sparse percussion and string passages, and serves as an introduction to section A. In m.21 the voice, oboe, and strings take over, beginning a slightly denser contrapuntal texture punctuated by the piano and percussion. The vocal line in this section is quite melismatic in nature. The portamento effect carried by oboe, flute, and strings, is heard prominently to paint the gentle gesture of the woman's speech and to imply the emotion of regret for section C.

Example 24--Flute part, piece V, mm.11-14

From mm.28-38, the gestures grow gradually higher in pitch range, stronger in dynamics and builds to a climax at section B marked by the trill ostinati found in the flute, piano, and vibraphone. The strings and the tambourine also start their dance-like pulsation to accompany the voice. The activity is now much denser and, once again the voice has left its melismatic nature for a more syllabic style. The climax of the B section occurs at mm.45-51, the voice soaring while accompanied by oboe and flute. At m.52, the texture returns to a lighter texture and swells to m.56, then eases down to section C (found in m.61).
Example 25 -- Piece V, page 58
in a slower tempo and emphasizes the bending pitches of the voice, flute, and oboe to portray the most woeful life the woman had. At mm.64-75 texture becomes more dense and climaxes into the B' section with its quicker tempo.

Example 26--Oboe part, piece V, mm.61-62

\[ \text{Example 26--Oboe part, piece V, mm.61-62} \]

In the B' section the texture is mostly thick due to the "dance" motive in the strings and percussion, and the "water" motive in the piano. This structurally fits in rather well with the overall design of this piece, by delaying most of the contrapuntal activity until this point in the work. Gradually this activity slows down, the dynamics are reduced, and the A' section is prepared by a two-measure unaccompanied line that is shared by the cello and the violin.

Although the last section starts off busier, it becomes increasingly relaxed, thereby adding to the anti-climax of the story in the text. Nonetheless the material dissipates and is finished off by an oboe solo that directly relates to the opening of section A played by the flute.
VI. I wept and woke up with reddened eyes

This eight-measure-long piece serves as an epilogue to piece V, *it was a life of merriment and time slipped by*. The text for this piece describes the pi-pa player having a dream of her salad days and waking up with reddened eyes.

This piece is scored for voice, piano, and harp. The vocal line is expressed melismatically with portamento effect at times and is accompanied by the "dark" motive throughout the whole piece. This "dark" motive is created by the piano and the tam-tam effect of the harp found in the very end of the second piece and also reappearing in subsequent pieces. An alternating quarter tone is employed at m.7 in the voice part to reflect the gesture of weeping expressed in the text.

Example 27--Dark motive, piece VI, m.1
After a short pause at m.7, the voice follows the last "dark" motive and ends with a subito pianissimo A.

VII. My heart ached to hear her plaintive songs

This piece, a prologue, serves as a transition to the next piece, I must drink to ease my pain. The text describes the poet's grief upon listening to the pi-pa player's unfortunate turn of events in her later years. He is reminded of his own life in that they both had ties in the capitol and were banished in their later years.

The flute starts the piece with a kind of fanfare that is punctuated by the bass drum and tam-tam. The opening phrase by the flute also serves as a leitmotiv recalling the motive of melancholy found in piece I and piece V. Notice again, how emphasis is placed on timbre, articulation, and dynamics to bring about the "living sound". An ideal of Asian music, this "living sound" helps to focus the listener's attention on the sound world that lies within a single tone. The flute part also uses word painting at times through portamento effect to express the sigh as seen in mm.5-7.
At m.5 the voice enters in a staggered manner quoting the first three notes of the flute part in the first piece. The voice is set melismatically and great care is taken to ensure the text's meaning is clearly uttered and that any inflections are presented properly. At m.8 the flute once again repeats the sigh leitmotif and structurally intertwines itself with the vocal line and creates an intermediate climax at m.10 with a gradual expansion of pitch range and dynamics. The portamento effect is heard prominently through m.10 to m.20 and is carried by either the voice or the flute. This time the quarter tone alternation is found in the flute part rather than in the voice part. Again, these effects are used to mirror the gloomy atmosphere expressed in the text.
At m.13, the second section begins with percussion and the flute glissando leading the voice, using materials similar to the first section to accompany the voice later. Another example of word painting is seen in the voice line at mm.14-15, as in m.17-20, where the chromatic descent helps to portray a sigh of grief. The flute and percussion close the second section and also introduce the epilogue.

The epilogue starts at m.21 with a familiar flute passage that once again introduces the voice. This time, however, the vocal part is spoken, helping to bring the piece to a close. This is brought about by the reimplementation of the motives found in the flute and percussion parts throughout the piece.
VIII. I must drink alone to ease my pain

Piece eight not only serves as a climax for the third poetic theme but also acts as the culimination for the whole work emotionally and structurally. The text from this piece represents the poet’s own story, the unfortunate turn of events since being banished from the capitol.

The texture of the opening measures represents the character of the whole piece. Four elements are discernible: The second percussion part along with the strings provides a seven-measure isorhythmic pattern while the first percussion part comprises a nine measure isorhythmic pattern. Together, they serve as a backdrop to the story line, a very popular idiom for Chinese audiences. Against this background, the harp provides a middleground of “pi-pa” motives and also serves to double the strings on C# and G, a diminished fifth. This emphasis on diminished fifth is heard prominently throughout the piece. The foreground consists of two elements: the flute recalling the bird-like leitmotiv and the voice using two different techniques (sprechstimme and whispering) to spin a two-part countrapuntal web.

The formal structure of this piece consists of two contrasting gestures distributed among five sections: an
undulatory, flowing gesture based on the isorhythmic pattern, and a smooth, lyrical gesture during which the isorhythmic pattern is broken down.

In section one, the percussion and strings begin the isorhythmic pattern, providing a steady pulse for the entrance of the flute at beat four of measure one. This prelude-like passage lasts to m.4 at which time it combines with the melancholy leitmotiv carried by the flute. At m.8 the voice appears and immediately creates a two-part counterpoint texture with the flute in an inverted canon found in mm.8-12. The vocal line is expressed by alternating between singing, speaking, and sprechstimme to highlight the meaning of the text. The voice is also set melismatically to reflect properly the inflection of the words. The word painting, found at m.30, is evident in the vocal line (e.g., imitating the cuckoos crying and the gibbon's wailing). An intermediate climax is achieved there by increasing rhythmic density of the foreground and increasing the dynamics of the whole passage.
Right after this climax, at m.34, the music shifts to a soft, lyrical section. The voice whispers the dialogue with the harp adding a somewhat transparent harmony, reminiscent of Gagaku Sho. This is created by the harmonic effect in the strings and the flute with the addition of the vibraphone, helps to create a limpid sound that suggests the image of a bright moon reflecting on the lake. With the transition of this section, the isorhythmic pattern provides the texture for the third section. The vocal line, as in section one, is expressed by singing or speaking. The employment of Chinese
folk melody and the use of word painting is found at mm.38-39 and mm.40-41 respectively, the latter by having the voice sing a tremolo passage in imitation of the flute.

Example 34-- Chinese folk song, piece VIII, mm.38-39

With a sudden reduction in dynamics, the music subsides to the fourth section, another smooth, lyrical section. This section, from mm.47-52, is a restatement of the second section and is similar in harmonic, melodic, and textural materials even though the meaning of the text is different. The stretto-like appearance of the isorythmic pattern starts the fifth section at m.51 and infuses this section with a drive that pushes towards the end. The vocal line is set melismatically, as seen in mm.55-57, and a virtuosic
performance is required. This, in turn, is answered by the flute in an inverted canon again, with an increase of dynamics in the background and middleground. A rising rhythmic density helps to establish another secondary climax at m. 57. After a short pause, the music returns to the slower tempo of the opening and pushes the music to the real climax, at m. 64, with a vigorous tempo and a gradual expansion of pitch range, rhythmic intensity, and dynamics. The voice restates the Chinese folk song a semitone higher than its first appearance and ends with a Bb, the highest soprano note in the whole work.

Example 36--Voice part, piece VIII, mm. 55-57

Example 37--Voice part, piece VIII, mm. 61-64
IX. My gown was drenched with tears

The last encore of the pi-pa player portrays the most depressing sentiment expressed in the text. Functionally, this final piece is two-fold in nature. First, it acts as an epilogue to the previous piece and secondly, it serves as a coda to the whole work.

Although this piece is through-composed, it also presents a compact version of the first piece found in the first section. Similar harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic materials are used. This includes the use of the concept of I-Ching; a pulsing drone on E played by the timpani against the other transitory events. The technique of word painting is evidenced in variety ways: the wind represented by the flute; a sigh of grief or weeping by a portamento effect in the voice, flute, and double bass; the application of the "living tone" by the varying vibrato of the flute; and the use of the leitmotiv by the flute and double bass. Moreover, the glissando effect for the vibraphone is used for the first time in this piece. The use of two-part counterpoint between the flute and the voice, and the imitation of wind by the voice are omitted in this piece.
Example 38--Percussion part, piece IX, m.5

Piece nine begins with a tremolo timpani, a statement introduced at the opening of the first piece. The voice enters hesitantly at m.5, and a complete statement of the leitmotiv from piece one (mm.5-7) follows, again expressing the idea of the "living tone". The formal structure of this piece is reflected in the poetic text initiated by the leitmotiv found at m.9, m.13, and m.18. The portamento effect is heard prominently throughout the piece to represent the depressed air and even the use of quarter tones, found in earlier pieces, is heard at times in the vocal line to depict the gesture of weeping. This can seen at m.12, m.13, and mm.19-21. Moreover, the double bass, again, as in the first piece, plays with pizzicato, or pizzicato-tremolo gestures throughout to evoke the feeling of the pi-pa music.
Example 39 --Double bass part, piece IX, mm.15-18

At the conclusion, the voice is seen in m.21, sighing its last breath, fading away into the accompanying ensemble consisting of flute, percussion, and double bass. The ensemble in turn gives way to the timpani tremolo, which then fades to silence.

Example 40--Voice part, piece IX, mm.19-21
CONCLUSION

The application of Chinese philosophy to music has been an interesting subject ever since I studied the I-Ching and Tao with Mr. Yand-Ming Lu in Taipei in 1988. The blend of eastern and western elements into a personal expression also has been a prevalent theme of my music for many years.

Song of the Pi-pa is a musical poem, for soprano and mixed ensemble, drawn from the poetry of PO, Chi-I. The text has had the most influence in shaping the structure and musical ideas of this piece. Together with the philosophy of the text I have tried to incorporate these elements into somewhat of a western style. In the attempt to achieve this sentiment, I have used pentatonic scales, centric melodies, Asian folk song, the idea of the "living tone", the concept of the ying and the yang, and the practice of Gagaku Sho music. All of this was synthesized with a western compositional techniques that includes the leitmotif, word painting, contrapuntal devices, and limited thematic materials subjected to continuous transformation.

Finally, the formal plan is through-composed and the organization of this work is largely determined by the structure of the text.
INSTRUMENTATION

Soprano

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet (Bb)

Piano

Harp

Percussion (2 players)

Percussion I  5 wood Blocks, Gong, Vibraphone, 5 Temple Blocks, Bass Drum, Tam-tam

Percussion II  4 Timpani (23", 25", 28", 30"), 3 Suspended Cymbals, Triangle, 5 Tom-toms, Snare Drum, Tambourine

Violin

Violoncello

Double Bass
NOTATION

General

A pitch quarter tone lower than written pitch

A pitch quarter tone higher than written pitch

Accelerando note group

Ritardando note group

Strings

Highest possible pitch

Highest possible pitch with double-stop

Flute

Blow across mouthpiece without producing a tone (wind sound)

Go gradually from non vibrato to ordinary vibrato to molto vibrato

Harpe

with fingernail
p.d.l.t. Pluck close to sounding board

Fingernail glissando, or falling-hail; play with back of fingernails

Tam-Tam sounds; strike the string with palm
Suddenly a pi-pa sounded in the shimmering bay

SONG OF PI-PA

I was seeing a friend off at the river's bend
liberamente molto espressivo

Sop.

Fl.

Perc. I

Perc. II

Db.

a tempo

dolce

ban
zhe
mian

Vibe.

Perc. I

Perc. II

Db.
She tuned it, and lightly plucked its strings.
The fine string-they sounded like lovers' whispers.

Soprano

Flute

Clarinet

Piano

Harp

Percussion I

Percussion II

Violin

Violoncello

Tie fine  Btxing-bey sounded like  lown

CDIEFJG IA in b  gliss.  f
medium hard mallets

Perc. I

Perc. II

Vn.

Vc.
medium hard mallets
a tempo

Sop.

Fl.

Cl.

Pno.

Hp.

Perc. I

Perc. II

Vn.

Vc.
Theme II. 一曲红绡不知数
My song brought numberless rolls of silk

IV. 東船西舫悄無言
Silence reigned, the boats around were quiet
It was a life of merriment and time slipped by.
accel. whispered

Sop.  normal

Fl.

gutti.  mp

Hp.  mf  f  E1 F4

Perc. I  medium hard mallets

Perc. II  mp  f  mf

Vn.  accel.  mf

Db.  p  mp  mf
J: ca. 52-56

whispered

Sop.

n.v. sempre

Fl.

normal

Hp.

Vibe. Wire brush

Perc. I

Perc. II

Vn.

Db.

92
19. spoken \( mf \) normal

\( \text{Sop.} \)

\( \text{Fl.} \)

\( \text{Hp.} \)

\( \text{Perc. I} \)

\( \text{Perc. II} \)

\( \text{Vn.} \)

\( \text{Db.} \)

\( \text{d} = \text{ca. 82 - 86} \)

\( \text{p.d.t. sempre} \)

\( \text{pizz.} \)

87
I must drink alone to ease my pain.

VIII. 往往取酒還獨傾
Theme III. 同是天涯沦落人
We are both deserted creatures

VII. 我聞琵琶已嘆息
My heart ached to hear her plaintive songs
I wept and woke up with reddened eyes

Soprano

Piano

Harp

Sop.

Pno.

Hp.
tempo I calmato

Sop.

Fl.

Ob.

Pno.

Perc. I

Perc. II

Vn.

Vc.
Soprano: tempo II leggero

Flute: tempo II leggero

Oboe: tempo II leggero

Piano: Tempo II leggero

Percussion I

Percussion II

Tambourine

Violin: Tempo II leggero

Viola: Tempo II leggero

VIOLINE: Tempo II leggero
J = ca. 60 - 64 lamentoso
一曲红旗不知数，

电头银幕意节碎

Yi qu hong xiao bu zhi Shu
dian tou Yin bi Ji Jie Sui

Sus Cymbals

Tambourine

Vn.

Vc.

Perc. I

Perc. II
Sop.
Fl.
Hp.
Perc. I
Perc. II
Vn.
Db.
My gown was drenched with tears

Soprano

Flute

Percussion I

Timpani mallets

Percussion II

Double Bass

Sop.

Fl.

Perc. I

Vibe medium hard mallets 2 Wood Blocks medium hard mallets

Perc. II

Db.

* Glissando on one plate