

EXPLORING CHINESE CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE *LIANG ZHU* VIOLIN CONCERTO: AN INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE ADAPTATION OF TRADITIONAL ELEMENTS IN WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC LANGUAGE

MARIA-MAGDALENA SUCIU¹, STELA DRĂGULIN²

SUMMARY. This article examines the phenomenon of interculturality through the lens of the *Liang Zhu* Concerto for Violin and Orchestra by He Zhanhao and Chen Gang. Interculturality is no longer merely a means of elevating the axiological value of a given context but has become a necessity for authenticating contemporary discourse. The role of interculturality in shaping the expression of creative intentions is amplified, as it attenuates divergences determined by the incongruity of individuals' backgrounds by comprehensively observing the uniqueness of foreign elements from a familiarity-based perspective. The *Liang Zhu* Violin Concerto exemplifies the adaptation of East Asian culture to the context of the Western language and means of expression while preserving its Chinese cultural identity. This concerto has significant value and desirability for consumption due to the proportion of originality and familiarity which it upholds and determines its overall appeal. Ultimately, this article aims to explore how the *Liang Zhu* Violin Concerto achieves originality at a global level while preserving its Chinese cultural identity.

Keywords: Interculturality, *Liang Zhu*, Identity, Imitation.

¹ Transilvania University of Braşov, Eroilor Bvd. no. 29, Zip code 500036, Braşov, România, Ph.D. student, maria.boros-lazar@unitbv.ro.

² Transilvania University of Braşov, Eroilor Bvd. no. 29, Zip code 500036, Braşov, România, Professor Ph.D.Habil, dragulin@unitbv.ro.



Introduction

Interculturality represents, within the current social context, something more than a mere element with the potential to elevate the axiological value of a given context, becoming a necessity for authenticating a discourse anchored in contemporaneity. Of course, the primary representation of this concept finds its most articulated expression in the political aspect of human interaction, but the effects of its manifestation are felt at a much wider spectrum. This aspect justifies an amplified problematization of the role of interculturality in shaping the expression of creative intentions of any nature.

Essentially, interculturality acts to attenuate the divergences determined by the incongruity of individuals' backgrounds, by comprehensively observing the uniqueness of foreign elements from a more familiar perspective. Here, knowledge and prioritization of similarities play a crucial role, with a dual meaning. On the one hand, knowledge, expressed through active, unbiased study of divergent elements, ultimately leads to observing the similarities between the two perspectives, identifying the common ground that occasioned (apparently) incompatible ramifications. On the other hand, similarities are those that facilitate the process of knowledge, as they ease the perspective's elaboration through the filter of using common ground as a starting point. Ultimately, familiarity holds the potential to create bonds between individuals and perspectives.

With the explosion of artistic creativity in the first half of the previous century, a strong interest in non-European cultures was consolidated among Western composers. This interest was manifested through the incorporation of increasingly elaborate elements from these cultures into creative products, such as melodic-rhythmic structures or instrumentation, as well as adaptations at various levels of literary or philosophical thought. Non-European cultures directly benefited from the interest shown by creators in the first half of the 20th century, resulting in increased visibility and a growing demand among Western art consumers for elaborately created products under the auspices of interculturality. All these ultimately led to mutual enrichment of creative resources at a global level. From the perspective of non-Western composers, a major objective became satisfying the expectations of these consumers and accelerating the process of integration into the Western market.

This integration process operates with two essential coordinates that determine its level of complexity to achieve perfection, namely originality and familiarity. These two coordinates are a direct consequence of the interculturality mechanism mentioned above, which emphasizes knowledge and prioritization of similarity. The proportion of these two coordinates in a creative product determines its value and desirability for consumption – two aspects that are often considered incompatible. Familiarity is important in this equation as it

ensures the potential of an artistic creation for integration into the consumer market. On the one hand, a product that is set too hermetically in the boundaries of a culture will have a hard time appealing to many consumers outside that culture's boundaries. On the other hand, meeting this requirement too consistently directly impacts the originality of the product by sacrificing authenticity. For a work elaborated in the extra-European spirit to become a valuable contemporary composition, it must be updated to the standards of the contemporary artistic language of global classical music - ultimately, a music propagated mainly in terms of the Western tradition.

The composers from outside Europe have thus turned towards this tradition, mostly by incorporating native elements into a Western-influenced framework, and less frequently by presenting Western elements in an intrusive manner within a native creation. The period following the interest in non-European cultures from the beginning of the 20th century has brought about a more ambiguous view on interculturality and, as Finchum-Sung states, identity, authenticity, affiliation, and culture have become more complicated.³

In this article, we aim to approach the phenomenon of interculturality from the perspective of the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra *Liang Zhu*, by He Zhanhao and Chen Gang. We will consider how the East Asian culture, expressed within this work, has been adapted to the context of the Western language and means of expression found throughout the piece, which gives it originality at a global level while preserving its Chinese cultural identity.

1. He Zhanhao and Chen Gang

The names of the composers of this concerto are relatively unknown to the general Western public, which is why we deemed it necessary to provide a brief biographical perspective, as well as some considerations regarding their contribution to the cultural community in China, in relation to the position of this community in the global music scene.

1.1. He Zhanhao

He Zhanhao was born in 1933 near the metropolis of Shanghai and had a close experience with music from a young age thanks to his

³ Finchum-Sung, Hilary Vanessa. "Foreword: Aesthetics of Interculturality in East Asian Contemporary Music." *The World of Music*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2017, pp. 7–20. JSTOR, doi:10.2307/44841967, pg. 8.

grandmother's passion for Yue opera - a traditional Chinese opera genre.⁴ This contact unfolded at multiple levels of musical-artistic expression, covering both vocal and instrumental performance, dance, and acting. During his teenage years, he was already familiar with the violin, yangqin⁵ and various Chinese percussion instruments. His studies at the Shanghai Conservatory allowed him to receive a deep education, culminating in the idea of initiating a "nationalist" violin school with the help of a group that included several other Conservatory students. This group aimed to test the applicability of specific traditional techniques used in Chinese opera and instrumental music to the possibilities of the Western violin. The experiment was one of the factors that contributed to the creation of the *Liang Zhu* concerto. After graduation, Zhanhao pursued a teaching career at the same conservatory, in the field of composition.

Under the auspices of his musical experience in childhood and adolescence, mediated by Yue opera, He Zhanhao's compositional style was shaped in the more prominent coordinates of the criterion of melodiousness of a melodic structure, and through the specificities of the instruments he mastered – namely, the violin (be it Western or Chinese). Thus, he was among the first Chinese composers who undertook projects to arrange traditional music and Yue opera arias for the violin, considering the technical and interpretative possibilities of the instrument.

The repertoire of He Zhanhao's creations primarily consists of programmatic works, drawing inspiration from historical and literary sources, both Chinese and Western. One of his avant-garde works is the *Liang Zhu* String Quartet, which represents the first Chinese composition that adapts the ethos of this tradition to the language of the Western string quartet, foreshadowing the homonymous concerto by treating the musical themes from the Yue opera *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yintai*. The Smetana Quartet was the first European chamber ensemble to perform the work, starting in 1959.

1.2. Chen Gang

Chen Gang was also born in Shanghai in 1935. His father was already a well-known composer in the local intellectual circles. Despite his family background, mainly influenced by his father's work, Chen Gang did not begin his musical education until the age of 10, when he started taking

⁴ Yue opera originated in the province of Zhejiang near Shanghai in the early 20th century. The particularity of this genre of opera is conferred by the almost exclusive presence of women in the operatic roles. (Xu, pg. 105)

⁵ Traditional instrument similar to a hammer dulcimer.
(<https://www.britannica.com/art/yangqin>)

piano lessons. According to autobiography of the composer⁶, his first encounters with art were through literature. In particular, he mentioned several texts by authors who contributed to his early formation, including Maxim Gorky and Ba Jin (an important writer in Chinese social economics in the mid-20th century, who studied in France and engaged in a rich activity of propagating anarchist ideology⁷).

A significant moment in the composer's biography was marked by the year 1957, when his father returned to China after spending 11 years in Hong Kong, where he had been invited to compose music for films. The unexpected consequence of his father's return materialized in the serious accusation of right-wing political tendencies – therefore against the existing political line – launched by the authorities both against the father and the son. Chen Gang was consequently censored and sent to forced labor in a rural area.

As a student at the Shanghai Conservatory, Chen Gang initiated a project aimed at contributing to his own personal rehabilitation. A fellow conservatory student from the orchestration department, He Zhanhao, offered to help him in this endeavor. The project, of a compositional nature, involved creating a work that would highlight the naive and supportive perception of the youth regarding the process of creating the new China. Through this project, one of the most well-known contemporary Chinese works was born - the "Butterfly Lovers" Violin Concerto. Gang made a particularly pertinent summary for the socio-political context of the time regarding the semantic identity of the story that underpins the composition, namely the antagonistic relationship between feudal traditions and individual happiness.⁸

2. Biography of the Concert

The Concert was composed in 1958, which marked the ten-year anniversary of the first presidential elections held under the Constitution of the Republic of China in 1947 (the current Constitution of China). The Shanghai Conservatory of Music took the initiative to offer a tribute in the form of a violin concerto, derived from the experimental violin group founded by He Zhanhao. The Communist Party Council of the Conservatory chose

⁶ https://archive.ph/20121215143408/http://www-rcf.usc.edu/~echew/projects/ChineseMusic/composers/chen_gang.html

⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ba-Jin>

⁸ https://archive.ph/20121215143408/http://www-rcf.usc.edu/~echew/projects/ChineseMusic/composers/chen_gang.html

the tragic story of the two protagonists, Zhu Yingtai and Liang Shanbo⁹, which was considered to have the greatest potential to showcase the timbral profile of the violin, which was perceived in China at that time as the key to refinement and expressive elegance¹⁰. The premiere of the Concert was successfully performed by the violinist Lina Yu¹¹. Valuable recordings of the Concert were later made by violinists Takako Nishizaki and Gil Shaham, with the latter performing it more recently in 2004, accompanied by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra conducted by Shui Lan.

2.1. *Literary origins*

The epic source of the concerto is a popular legend in Chinese society, perceived at a level corresponding to Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* in Western culture. Essentially, it is about the tragic love story between the two main characters: Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai. In recent decades, the story has been adapted in various forms, from plays to film representations¹². In the next paragraph, we will summarize the essential moments of the story, briefly in accordance with the Yueju version of the tale¹³.

The narration takes place during the Jin dynasty¹⁴, a period in Chinese civilization history where the legal and social situation of women in terms of rights and liberties was very precarious. Zhu Yingtai, the female protagonist, initially finds herself in the guise of a teenage boy to be able to attend school in the southeastern city of Hangzhou, where she meets Liang Shanbo. Gradually, the friendship between the two characters takes on romantic dimensions from Zhu Yingtai's perspective, during the three years spent at school – a fact which, however, is not yet a determining factor in

⁹ Jiang, Yuli. "The Chinese violin concerto *The Butterfly Lovers* by He Zhanhao (1933) and Chen Gang (1935) for violin and orchestra." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2004. 3128861. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/c62a3ed076d4fe3b13dc26b0f3a0eb8d/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>, pg. 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 18.

¹¹ Currently, she is one of the most influential violin personalities in China. In addition to premiering the Concerto, Yu Lina is the protagonist of several kinds of premieres, as the leader of the first all-female string quartet in China.

¹² *Liang Zhu* is a legend that dates back to the Tang Dynasty (7th-10th century). Especially in the 20th century, several versions of the legend have developed, depending on the style and interest in different components from each region. We have considered the Yueju version, which appeared in Shanghai after 1917.

¹³ Xu, Lanjun. "The Lure of Sadness: The Fever of 'Yueju' and 'The Butterfly Lovers' in the Early PRC." *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2016, pp. 104–29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24737158>, pg. 113.

¹⁴ In the 3rd-5th centuries AD.

confessing her true identity. After completing her studies, Zhu Yingtai proposes to Shanbo to marry her fictitious younger sister, and the confession takes place when Shanbo's visit to honor this proposal. The revelation of Yingtai's female identity excites him, but her parents, who are against the marriage of the two, force her to marry a wealthy man. As a result, Shanbo loses his life due to profound suffering, and the news of his death determines Yingtai, on the day of her wedding, to abandon everything and hurry at his grave. Her sincere suffering causes the elements of nature to open the tomb, and Yingtai throws herself into the grave to join her beloved. The end of the story brings the two lovers back to life in the form of butterflies, reunited and free.

2.2. Structural markers

The musical adaptation of this story fits the profile of the symphonic poem genre, revealing a programmatic character. Its internal structure closely follows the essential moments in the dynamics of the narrative over the three *attacca* successive sections, which correspond to the architectural elements of the sonata form, exposition, development, and recapitulation. Each element represents a section of the narrative and develops a well-individualized internal profile in relation to the overall structure: "falling in love," "refusing marriage," and "transfiguration"¹⁵. The work is thus monopartite, conceived in the logic of the sonata form, to which an introduction and a codetta are added at the extremities. Since the formal analysis of the work is not the subject of this writing, we will limit ourselves to discussing only subsection A of the main theme in the exposition (or first movement), as this represents the hallmark of the piece in terms of the way by which it is perceived on a mainstream level. The main theme unfolds between mm. 12-49, according to a tripartite internal structure, on the ABA' model. Subsection A of the main theme, of love (E.g. 1), unfolds over 18 measures, between mm. 12-30, and carries an emblematic connotation at the level of the entire work. This subsection reiterates the melodic line of the homonymous Yue opera, which has the pitches B-D-E-G as its melodic foundation. The aesthetics resulting from the elaboration of this sound material, in cohesion with the specific timbre of the violin, reiterates the vocal-operatic stylistic profile of the Yue opera.

¹⁵ Zhang, Ying. "The *Butterfly Lovers'* Violin Concerto (1959)." 2021. UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones, paper 4273. <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations/4273>, pg. 19.

独奏小提琴
Violino solo

V-no solo I

梁山伯与祝英台
小提琴协奏曲
"The Butterfly Lovers" Violin Concerto

何占豪、陈钢
He Zhan-Hao · Chen Gang
(1959)

抒情的慢中板 (Adagio cantabile) $\text{♩} = 50$

rit. **I** A tempo

10

mp

mf

mf

20

25

30

Love theme (mm. 12-30)

3. *Liang Zhu* – exploring cultural identity

Within the concert, there are two determinative aspects that draw from the Chinese musical tradition. Their adaptation and exploitation throughout the work is extensive and can be found at both the level of notation and orchestration, with a cumulative purpose in interpretation. One of these aspects concerns the imitation, within the limits of the solo instrument's possibilities, of the sounds of some traditional Chinese instruments: erhu, guzheng, and pipa. The other aspect involves the adaptation of various techniques specific to the Yue opera, expressed both in the solo instrument and in the orchestral apparatus, which is, of course, a Western one.

3.1. *Imitation of traditional instruments*

In the ergonomics of the work, the violin is attributed the role of impersonating the main female character, Zhu Yingtai. To preserve the originality of the work, the violin had to borrow a series of techniques perpetuated in the Chinese musical tradition for the aforementioned stringed instruments. The erhu is the most frequently used instrument in the huqin family of stringed and bowed instruments, while the guzheng and pipa are plucked string instruments belonging to the zither family. In the following, we will identify the ways in which these techniques of approaching the instrument are explicitly noted in the score and we will detail the execution and intended sound effect.

3.1.1. *Erhu imitation through glissando*

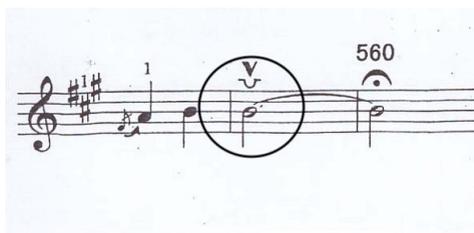
The technical-interpretive elements that imitate the erhu occupy a deep position within the score, as among the three stringed instruments, it has the highest degree of similarity to the violin. The representation of the instrument is expressed through specific techniques of the left and right hand. Perhaps the most evident aspect of the imitative resources is the use of different types of glissando. Each type corresponds to a distinctive notational sign and a semantic extension, thus contributing to the affective representation of the narrative through musical resources.

We have identified three types of glissando, which have been perpetuated in the Chinese tradition under their specific names. Since these are not found in the tradition of Western ornamentation, we have used our own translation of the Chinese names. In the footnotes are mentioned the original name in Chinese, both in Chinese characters and in the official pinyin phonetic writing.

A. „Wipe sound”¹⁶

This is achieved by sliding the finger down one semitone from the main note and immediately returning to it. Therefore, it involves three points of pitch height, which must be attenuated through a swift, rapid movement of the finger. Semantically, this ornamental figure proposes a less expansive affect, of a melancholic nature¹⁷. We can find it in measures 559 (E.g. 2) and 565 (E.g. 2b), in the violin recitative that portrays Yingtai’s conflict with paternal authority.

E.g. 2



m. 559

B. „Slow half-step slide up” (E.g. 3)¹⁸

This is a slower glissando, with two points of pitch height that are one semitone apart from each other. The semantic character evoked is one of mourning or sorrow¹⁹. This type of glissando is notated as an arrow pointing from the first note to the second note, which is one semitone higher. Both notes are written with the desired note values of the composer. According to the composer’s indications, the pressure of the bow on the string should follow the movement of the left hand and adjust accordingly²⁰. We can find the second type of glissando also in the violin recitative, at measure 336.

¹⁶ 抹音, *Mǒ yīn*.

¹⁷ Shan-Ken, Chien. “*The ‘Butterfly Lovers’ Violin Concerto*” by Zhanhao He and Gang Chen.” 2014, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/213407121.pdf>, pg. 12.

¹⁸ 半音上行慢進 滑指, *Bànyīn shàngxíng màn jìn huá zhǐ*.

¹⁹ Shan-Ken, Chien. “*The ‘Butterfly Lovers’ Violin Concerto*” by Zhanhao He and Gang Chen.” 2014, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/213407121.pdf>, pg. 12.

²⁰ Zhang, Ying. “*The ‘Butterfly Lovers’ Violin Concerto (1959)*.” 2021. UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones, paper 4273. <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations/4273>, pg. 38.

E.g. 3



m. 336

C. The third identified glissando resembles the Western style of shifting positions with the same finger and is also the most encountered in Chinese music. This glissando represents rather a category with three subtypes.

a. „Swipe up a minor third” (E.g. 4).²¹ Since the distance between the two pitch points is greater than a semitone, the movement is made with attention to an uninterrupted sound effect, which should not resemble a juxtaposition between two distinct notes, but rather a constant and smooth path towards the main note. The graphic representation of the ornament involves the starting sound in the form of a grace note from which a curved arrow points to the main sound, which is a minor third above. This sound is usually notated. Semantically, the ornament reproduces an affect of melancholy or obscurity, depending on the harmonic and rhythmic context in which it is used²². Its first appearance is at measure 13, after which it is quite frequently encountered throughout the concert, especially since it represents a constituent part of the theme of love.

E.g. 4



m. 13

²¹ 小三度上行慢進滑指, *Xiǎosān dù shàng xíng màn jìn huá zhǐ*.

²² Shan-Ken, Chien. “The ‘Butterfly Lovers’ Violin Concerto’ by Zhanhao He and Gang Chen.” 2014, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/213407121.pdf>, pg. 12.

b. „Swipe down a minor third” (E.g. 5).²³ This subtype is the mirror representation of the previous one. In this case, the sound located at a minor third above precedes the principal note and is notated as an appoggiatura. The ornament musically reiterates the sigh or lament²⁴, just like a musical onomatopoeia. The upper pitch point should be treated with attention and the appropriate importance, so that it is held longer than indicated by the appoggiatura²⁵. In the concert, it is first encountered in measure 454, which belongs to the middle section of the development.

E.g. 5



m. 454

c. „Swipe back and forth a minor third” (E.g. 6).²⁶ This final subtype has a higher degree of complexity, as it incorporates both of the previously mentioned subtypes successively, covering a longer pitch sequence. The main pitch represents both the starting pitch of the shift and the one on which the melodic figure ends, so it is initially noted by an appoggiatura directed by an arrow towards the third above. The latter is usually noted and is further added with an arrow pointing towards the main pitch, noted again, but this time as a regular note. As the two notes are not tied, the change in the direction of the bow requires finesse to allow it to pass almost unnoticed. The role of this glissando is to bring the melodic line closer to the specificity of folk singing²⁷. An example can be found in measure 448.

²³ 小三度下行慢進滑指, *Xiǎosān dù xiàxíng màn jìn huá zhǐ*.

²⁴ Shan-Ken, Chien. “The ‘Butterfly Lovers’ Violin Concerto’ by Zhanhao He and Gang Chen.” 2014, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/213407121.pdf>, pg. 13.

²⁵ Zhang, Ying. “The ‘Butterfly Lovers’ Violin Concerto (1959).” 2021. UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones, paper 4273. <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations/4273>, pg. 39.

²⁶ 小三度來回慢進滑指, *Xiǎosān dù lái huí màn jìn huá zhǐ*.

²⁷ Zhang, Ying. “The ‘Butterfly Lovers’ Violin Concerto (1959).” 2021. UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones, paper 4273. <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations/4273>, pg. 40.

d.

E.g. 6



m. 448

3.1.2. Guzheng and pipa

As mentioned earlier, the second instrument imitated by the violin is the guzheng, from the zither family or plucked string instruments. This time, the imitative manner does not have a specific notation in the score, but rather arises from the melodic profile itself. Guzheng is an instrument predisposed, by its construction (up to 23 strings), to fast executions meant to demonstrate the virtuosity of the performer. The imitative effect can be found in the second theme of the exposition of the work (E.g. 7).

E.g. 7



Guzheng imitation (m. 130 – 134)

The violin also imitates the pipa, a lute-like instrument with four strings. A specific technique of this instrument is applied to the violin in the development section. The traditional name for this technique is “sao”²⁸ and involves plucking the strings firmly and quickly with all four fingers at once. The graphic representation of this technique is translated into a series of chords ranging from three to four notes, in quarter-note syncopation. This moment is found in the development section (E.g. 8).

²⁸ 掃 – sweep.



Pipa imitation (m. 346 – 349)

3.2. Opera Yue

The concert borrows some features from Yue opera, which are represented in the score more or less directly. Those represented directly refer to elements of melody, rhythm, and agogic.

The melodic elements are found in the quote or paraphrase level, mainly through the theme of love from the exposition or initial part of the work, which we mentioned above (E.g. 1). The love theme, as mentioned before, comes from the Yue opera of the same name. The four notes used as a structural foundation (B-D-E-G) make up a substantial part of the melodic material used in the work, subsequently developed thematically and motivically, both from the perspective of the solo violin and the orchestral apparatus.

3.2.1. Sao-ban and kuai-ban

In the section dedicated to the development of the sonata form (or the second movement of the concert), between mm. 479-488, we encounter a construction specific to Yue opera, whose structural profile is similar to some elements of Western traditional opera. This construction is manifested by alternating tempos or agogic characters that emerge from the writing. The moment consists of two consecutive sections, called *sao-ban* and *kuai-ban* (E.g. 9). *Sao-ban* closely corresponds to the *recitativo secco* section in European opera and requires the performer, whether vocal or instrumental, to sing in a style similar to speech, freely and with unspecified pitch height. In the *sao-ban* moment, the soloist is most often accompanied by the *ban-gu* percussion instrument²⁹, which maintains an ostinato. This is followed by the *kuai-ban* moment, structured in the logic of an orchestral melodic *perpetuum*, whose melodic line is outlined by rhythmic rigor.

²⁹ Essential percussion instrument in Yue opera, as well as in the overall genre of Chinese opera.

E.g. 9

Sao-ban and kuai-ban (mm. 479-483)

3.2.2. Kūqiāng

The genre of Yue opera is distinguished, of course, by a series of interpretive techniques that are meant to tie its identity to the specificities of Chinese musical tradition. One such technique is *kūqiāng* (E.g. 10)³⁰, which is achieved through a style of singing that imitates crying. It is mainly used in moments that involve suffering, with the aim of emphasizing a mournful effect. The manner of execution involves a quick glissando, usually covering a wider interval. The technique is always accompanied by vibrato, expressed by a wavy line that connects the notes located at the extremes of the melodic figure. It can be found in the recitative section.

E.g. 10

Kūqiāng (m. 481)

³⁰ 哭腔.

Conclusion

The concerto composed in 1959 by He Zhanhao and Chen Gang for violin and orchestra, entitled *Liang Zhu*, continues to be one of the most representative products of Western classical orientation in the Far Eastern cultural space. The symphonic poem with violin solo presents a tripartite internal formal structure. Each of the three component sections corresponds to the moments of the sonata form, to which a short introduction and a codetta are juxtaposed. Despite the Western cultural imprint, which finds its most evident expression at the level of instrumentation, notation, and, to a large extent, language, the work successfully incorporates elements of the Chinese musical tradition – those elements that have managed to authentically enhance the timbral and technical profile of the violin. Given the programmatic, narrative character of the concerto, the role of the violin corresponds to the one of the main female characters in the Chinese legend that serves as the literary foundation of the concerto (*Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai*). The deepening of belonging to the indigenous cultural paradigm was achieved primarily from the perspective of the violin. By exploiting the technical-interpretative resources of several string and bow or plucked string instruments, the violin immerses itself in the traditional colors, textures, and timbral quality, supported by the orchestral apparatus – which is also not without the intervention of several traditional Chinese stylistic adaptations. The technical-interpretative resources in question, analyzed in detail in the previous paragraphs, consisted of a series of specific glissandi, elements of operatic vocality, and borrowings from folklore.

We can appreciate that the characteristics of the concerto, both as a whole and in detail, contribute to shaping the work as a valuable example of achieving intercultural aspects, which ultimately represents the framework of the present discussion. The profile of the concerto highlights, at multiple levels, the correlation between the two cultures and traditions, which, in fact, relate to each other as extremes. At first glance, these extremes entail all sorts of socio-determining causes, be they historical, legal, theological, philosophical, or artistic. However, *Liang Zhu* represents a unified cultural-artistic product that has managed to overcome historical (and implicitly, social) conditioning and to maintain a somewhat independent status of timeless musical creation. Even though identity, belonging, and authenticity will always maintain a stage of ambiguity in the treatment of intercultural material, the present work contains the necessary arguments to confirm the weight of the elements specific to the Far Eastern tradition, intended to bring the concerto closer to both discussed objectives, namely originality and consumption.

On the one hand, it is the result of a joint effort by the two composers, He Zhanhao and Chen Gang, to integrate elements of European musical tradition into Chinese cultural history. It is precisely this integration that confers its status as belonging to the international repertoire, in the guise of a true musical ambassador of Chinese culture. On the other hand, treating the *Liang Zhu* Concerto independently of the cultural component is also justified, as we consider intrinsic to the work both its originality and, at the same time, placing it in an axiological position as favorable as possible.

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