

die Kunst kontrolliert, begrenzt und gearbeitet ist, um so freier ist sie.«⁵ Darüber wird man sich kaum wundern, wenn man an andere vergleichbare Fälle in Stravinskij's kompositorischem Schaffen denkt. (Diese Einstellung ist eher im letzten amerikanischen Schaffen auffällig. In den präkompositorischen Phasen ist eine strenge serielle Richtlinie zu erkennen, die erst später vom ›Handwerker‹ frei behandelt wird durch Entscheidungen, die sich vor allem nach dem Hören richten.)

Die Idee, nach bestimmten auf Metronombasis errechneten Zeitverhältnissen zu komponieren, die damit in Minuten und Sekunden übertragbar sind, ist ein Verfahren, das unsere Ohren zunächst kaum wahrnehmen: Im Schaffen aus der Zeit des *Concerto* weisen lediglich die *Symphonies* eine vergleichbare Genauigkeit auf. Mit der Zeit wird aber das Interesse des Komponisten für das Timing immer intensiver und die Abweichungen von einer genauen Berechnung seltener, so dass der Komponist mit immer komplexeren Proportionen arbeitet. Die formale Zeitgliederung in den oben erläuterten Beispielen bleibt zwar ein paradigmatischer Fall für die Ordnung, die Stravinskij im Kompositionsprozess anstrebt. Analog zu dem prominenteren Fall der *Symphonies* belegt das Vorhandensein dieser Rechnungen eine generelle Tendenz von Stravinskij's musikalischen Untersuchungen der 1920er Jahre. Diese und noch andere Faktoren erlauben uns, ein altes, aber immer noch anzutreffendes Vorurteil zu überwinden, und zwar die Vorstellung, Stravinskij's Musik der Zeit sei lediglich ein bloßer Rückgriff auf alte Modelle, formal diskontinuierlich und aus verschiedenen einfach nebeneinander gestellten Materialien gebildet. Man kann sich die legitime Frage stellen, was nun von diesem ordnenden Willen übrig bleibt, wenn man die Resultate der Kalkulation nicht einhält: vielleicht der Versuch, ein menschliches Werk und dessen Genuss auf ein Zeitmaß abzustimmen – eine allzu menschliche Konvention, wonach eine Sachlichkeitsästhetik strebte.

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The Politics of Music and Identity

Liszt's Legacy and Chinese Symphonic Poems*

When Liszt coined the term ›symphonic poem‹ to identify his *Tasso* in 1854, as Carl Dahlhaus pointed out,¹ he not only legitimated his formally relaxed overtures, but also found an expressive outlet for his literary aspiration and his rhapsodic and experimental musical language. With the conception of this new genre, Liszt presented to the world an alternative to the symphony, a genre thought to be shackled by the symphonic tradition. Though the

5 Stravinskij, *Musikalische Poetik*, S. 41.

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genre came to a quick decline after 1920, it survived outside Europe and has continued to thrive in one of the most unexpected places – the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The purpose of this paper is to examine Liszt’s legacy in Chinese symphonic music, focusing on one work in particular, Xin Huguang’s symphonic poem *Gedameilin* (1956),² using it as a case study to examine issues pertinent to music and identity.

Historical Overview

The development of Chinese symphonic music can be divided into three stylistic periods: first, the pre-PRC, prior 1949 period, second, the socialist period between 1949 and 1976, and third, the post-Cultural Revolution period from 1977 to the present.³ As a genre, the symphonic poem has been taken to heart by Chinese composers and audiences for two main reasons: first, its implicit programmatic and single-movement approach is in tune with the conception and aesthetics of traditional Chinese music, single-movement, programmatic, and with suggestive titles that allude to certain emotional, poetic, or descriptive topics; second, programmatic music befitted the PRC’s socialist ideology to mobilize art for propaganda and to build the masses’ socialist worldview.

Thus, it is no surprise that Chinese symphonic poems abound. Early examples included the German-trained Xiao Youmei’s orchestral suite *New Raiment of Rainbow and Feather Dance* (1923) and the American-trained Huang Zi’s overture *Nostalgia* (1929). The first symphonic poem proper – a work bearing the genre nomenclature – was Xian Xinghai’s *Amangaida* (1941), inspired by the life of the Kazakh hero Amangaida.⁴ There was a flood of symphonic poems after the founding of the PRC in 1949 as a result of governmental encouragement. For instance, Jiang Wenye’s *The Sinking Stream of the River Bo Lou* (1953) was inspired by the 2230th death anniversary of the patriotic poet Qu Yuan, and Wang Xiping’s *Pixiu Dance* (1954) was a symphonic sketch drawing on the dance features of the rural festival of the Southern region, Pixiu being a legendary mascot. Revolutionary Romanticism, the Chinese form of Socialist Realism launched in 1958, prompted a new trend of symphonic poems with revolutionary subjects.⁵ Qu Wei’s *The Monument for the People’s Hero*

1 Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, transl. by J. Bradford Robinson, Berkeley 1989, p. 238–239.

2 Xin Huguang, *Guanxianyue zhongpu: Gedameilin jiaoxiangshi* (Orchestral Score: Gedameilin Symphonic Poem), Beijing 1979.

3 Similar divisions of compositional trends can be found in Liang Mao Chun’s monograph *Zhongguo dangdai yinyue: 1949–1989* (Chinese Contemporary Music: 1949–1989), Shanghai 2004.

4 At the time of the composition, the composer was trapped in Moscow. Before then, he had stayed in Kazakhstan for a short period of time and had become familiar with its folk hero there. Presumably, Xian Xinghai must have come across a handful of symphonic poems when he studied in Paris from 1930 to 1935, first with Vincent D’Indy and then Paul Dukas. For more information on Xian Xinghai, see the present author’s writing, »The Making of a National Musical Icon: Xian Xinghai and His *Yellow River Cantata*«, in: *Music, Power, and Politics*, ed. by Annie Randall, New York 2005, p. 87–111.

5 For additional writings on »Revolutionary Romanticism« or Chinese »Socialist Realism,« see the present author’s article, »Socialist Realism and Chinese Music«, in: *Socialist Realism and Music: Musicological Colloquium at the Brno International Music Festival*, 36, ed. by Mikuláš Bek e.a., Prague 2004, p. 135–144.

(1959) and collectively composed works such as *August 1* (1960) and *Defend Yan'an* (1960) were a few of the examples. Curiously, symphonic poem continued to attract Chinese composers' interests even after the Cultural Revolution. While Li Zhongrong's *Sketching in the Cloudy Mountains* (1980), Zhang Chienyi's *Northern Forest* (1981), and Zhu Jian'er's *A Wonderful Naxi* (1984) were examples from the early 1980s, Zhu Jian'er's *Hundred Years' Vicissitudes* (1996), composed for the commemoration of Hong Kong's reunification with the PRC, as well as Liu Huan's *The Echoes of Haka's Earth Buildings* (2000), which was inspired by the unique architectural features of the Haka people to celebrate the 16th World Conference of the Haka People, are two better-known recent examples.

Xin Huguang and *Gedameilin*

Xin Huguang (b. 1934), a graduate of the Central Conservatory of Music in 1956, was the first generation of PRC composers, the so-called spirit of the new regime. Her symphonic poem *Gedameilin* (1956) was inspired by the Mongolia hero Geda, a Meilin (high-rank official) at the Mongolia court, who led the Mongolian people into an uprising in the 1920s and whose brave deeds portrayed in a Mongolia epic which became widely known in the PRC after 1949. Though only a student work, *Gedameilin* has attained almost a classic status in Chinese symphonic music. In an article she wrote in 1981, Xin revealed the compositional process of the work:

The life of the Mongolian hero Geda Meilin was very dramatic, thus very suitable for symphonic treatment. Besides, since Geda Meilin's revolutionary act was motivated by the welfare of the Mongolian people, his uprising and failure were no longer just his own experience, but that of the whole Mongolian society [...]. In Mongolia, the epic was widely popular and this grand epic had struck me so deeply that I would like to capture it in music [...].

I did wonder as to the most appropriate form for a topic like this. 19th-century symphonic music gave me some ideas as well as models. Due to the character of the epic, the formal structure of the music does not only have to be something dramatic in nature like the sonata form but also relaxed enough to allow freedom in expression. Therefore, I chose the format of the single-movement symphonic poem, which entails features of the sonata form and at the same time allows freedom in my treatment.⁶

Cast in a relaxed sonata form, the themes of which are almost all derived from the *Gedameilin* folk song, Xin's piece draws heavily on European compositional techniques in its formal treatment and thematic transformation. The adagio introduction (mm. 3–12, see example 1) in G minor introduces the folk song in augmentation on the violin, the theme supported by murmuring strings.

6 Xin Huguang, »Tantan jiaoxiangshi »Gedameilin« de chuangzhuo tihui« (Talks about my composing of the symphonic poem *Gedameilin*), in: *Yinyue luncong* 4 (1981), p. 1–12, here: p. 1–2.



Example 1: *Gedameilin*, adagio introduction, mm. 3–12, vl I.

The exposition (mm. 13–151) entails two themes, establishing the tonal areas of G minor and C minor, respectively. The first theme (mm. 13–49) in G minor consists of the theme proper which is derived from the folk tune, especially the very last part (see example 2), and the impression of spaciousness resulting from the use of large intervals in the melodic contour makes reference to the folk song as well.⁷



Example 2: *Gedameilin*, first theme, mm. 13–20, ob.

The second theme (mm. 124–151) begins with a theme in C natural minor (as the leading tone is never raised), which is derived from the opening ascending fifth of the original folk song (see example 3).⁸



Example 3: *Gedameilin*, second theme, mm. 124–130, tpt.

The closing area of the exposition, which restates the second theme material, leads into the development (mm. 137–151) in which a prevailing dotted rhythm figuration represents the trotting horses in thousands, and above which the original folk song is transformed into a rhythmic theme marked by this ›long-short-short‹ pattern in A minor (see example 4).⁹ At m. 190 and onward, the prevailing dotted rhythm passage is augmented by the head motive of the second theme on the brass which lasts until the recapitulation at m. 225.

The recapitulation (mm. 225–294) starts with a non-literal restatement of the first theme – it is transposed an octave higher with a different orchestral accompaniment. The head motive of the second theme reappears in G minor at m. 266, though in a developmental manner, each time more dissonant than the previous statement.¹⁰ The recapitulation

7 According to the composer, this theme is »beautiful, profound, as well as tragic«, and »expresses Geda Meilin's feelings toward his people and his homeland«. Ibid.

8 As the composer reveals, this theme is to depict the heroic and tragic character of Geda Meilin, which not only conveys the hero's war image but also foretells his tragic ending. Ibid.

9 The composer intended this figuration to represent the people's uprising. Ibid.

10 According to the composer, this depicts Geda Meilin's being surrounded and attacked by his enemies, while the accompanying chromatic descending string tremolo is »about the smoking battlefield, the clattering of the weapons, and the roaring horses and shrieking men«. Ibid.

closes quite unexpectedly amid the climax of the second theme. At m. 289, the orchestral register makes a huge drop, announcing the head motive of the second theme in *ff*, the note lasts for six measures, ending in *pppp*, and signifying the death of the hero. The coda (mm. 295–415) is rather long, restating the folk song in its entirety as well as its transformed forms followed by the first theme and part of the second theme.



Example 4: *Gedameilin*, mm. 155–156, cl.

The Politics of Music and Identity

Despite the indebtedness to Western compositional techniques and influences,¹¹ *Gedameilin* is hailed a quintessential Chinese symphonic work presumably with a clear and strong Chinese identity in the PRC. What is ›Chinese‹ about a symphonic poem in sonata form that uses Liszt's thematic transformation in its treatment of musical materials? What is ›Chinese‹ in a work with a Mongolian hero as its subject and Mongolian folk song as its main musical materials? What is ›Chinese‹ in a work written in a Western musical format?

To understand the identity of a work like *Gedameilin*, I propose, it is necessary to place it in the proper historical context – the westernization and nationalization processes that changed many facets of China's development in the 20th century. Back in the 1920s and 1930s, at a time the country was troubled by both external and internal problems, Chinese intelligentsias as a whole believed that the only way to save the nation was to thoroughly ›modernize‹ it based on Western models. Music, too, was under the process of modernization with harbingers such as Xiao Youmei, Huang Zi, and Xian Xinghai, who also believed that a new type of Chinese music based on Western models was the future of Chinese music. Many of the traditional Chinese musical practices, for instance the oral tradition in musical transmission, the imprecise notation, the low status of folk musicians, the lack of systematic record and study of music, etc. were all seen as backward and not measurable to Western standard. Though Westernization and nationalization might appear as contradictory, the emergency and development of Western music in Chinese soil, just as reforms in literature, political system, national defense, etc. was on nationalistic grounds, a measure to modernize and rescue the country from the encroachment of foreign powers. It was assumed by many that turning to Western means would not change the essence of the object which will remain Chinese. For example, the *erhu* player Liu Tianhua wrote in 1927, »[we] keep our traditional essence, and on the other side, we embrace currents from outside; through synthesizing that of the East and West, [we] will build a new road«¹². Huang Zi, a professor of composition at the National Music Institute, too, pointed out in 1934 that

11 Interview notes with the composer dated 13 August 2001.

12 Liu Tianhua, »Guoyue gajinshe yuanqi« (The Origin of the Society for the Improvement of Chinese Music), in: *Xinyuechao* 1 (1927), quoted in Wang Yuhe's *Zhongguo jinxiandai yinyueshi: Jindai bufen* (History of Modern Chinese Music), Beijing 2005, p. 96–97, here: p. 96.

the new Chinese music would not be merely a reproduction of Western works, but works by Chinese composers, which, though Western in compositional technique, was Chinese in ›blood‹ and ›soul‹.¹³ Xian Xinghai, who later joined the Luyi Arts Academy in Yan'an, the communist base camp, was the first to point out in 1939 the possibility of nationalizing Western music through synthesizing materials from folk songs and operas, an approach that marked the future direction of Chinese music for more than half a century.¹⁴

As Barbara Mittler has observed during her study of Chinese musical compositions from the late 1980s and early 1990s, Chinese composers adopted various strategies to write music which was Chinese in style. These strategies included making references to Chinese myth, history, philosophy and literature in the titles or contents of the works, turning to pentatonic romanticism in the musical language by adapting materials from folk songs and operas to suit the Western performing mediums, as well as the more radical approach by capturing idiosyncratic elements of Chinese melody or Chinese instrumental techniques in a work for Western idiom.¹⁵

One would like to add yet another strategy to Mittler's list – the composer's intention and commitment. What makes *Gedameilin* Chinese, I propose, is not just its programmatic reference or its use of Mongolian folk song, not even its pentatonic musical language, but the composer Xin Huguang's attempt to make Western music her own, which continued the ›modernization‹ efforts that her predecessors had started. More so, it was also a genuine response to the call of making Western music serve Chinese people – a cultural policy and ideological dogma internalized and accepted by a majority of Chinese musicians in the Mainland in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁶ As Xin Huguang stated in her own analysis of the work, ›Symphonic music is an imported art form. How to make it serve Chinese people? This is a question that any music worker has to grapple [...]. It was a big challenge to represent Mongolian music characteristics in symphonic format.«¹⁷

At the time *Gedameilin* was composed, that is in 1956, the Chinese music circle was engaging in a heated debate on the need to develop national music in response to concerns about some composers' overtly westernized musical output. *Gedameilin* received the stamp of approval in the debate as a successful work of socialism and nationalism, being written in an easily accessible language with an explicit program about people's struggle

13 Huang Zi, ›Zenyang caike chansheng woguo minzu yinyue‹ (How could we produce national music of our country), in: *Chenbao*, 25.10.1934, reprinted in: *Zhongguo jinxindai yinyue wenlun xuanbian* (A Selection of Articles on Modern Chinese Music), ed. by Zhang Jingwei, Shanghai 2004, p. 172–173.

14 Xian Xinghai, ›Lun zhongguo yinyue de minzu xingshi‹ (Discussion on the national forms of Chinese music), in: *Wenyi Zhanxian* 5 (1939), reprinted in: *Xian Xinghai Quanji* (The Collected Works of Xian Xinghai), vol. 1, ed. by the Xian Xinghai Collected Works Editorial Board, Guangzhou 1989–1990, p. 48–51, here: p. 48.

15 Barbara Mittler, ›Against National Style – Individualism and Internationalism in New Chinese Music (revisiting Lam Bun-Ching and others)‹, in: *Proceedings of the Symposium at the 2003 Chinese Composers' Festival: From 26th to 29th November 2003*, ed. by Daniel Law and Chan Ming Chi, Hong Kong 2004, p. 2–26, here: p. 7.

16 Such a policy had its roots in Mao Zedong's own views on art, which could be found in his *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Art and Literature*, Beijing 1956.

17 Xin, ›Talks about my composing‹, p. 12.

against oppression. The composer's use of the Mongolian folk song and Liszt's thematic transformation technique on it so as to portray various details in the Mongolian epic was then deemed an ingenious solution to render Western music Chinese in essence, though the composer noted 25 years later that her limited experience with Mongolia folk music and music aesthetics had prevented her from more adventurous musical attempts.¹⁸ Last but not least, to showcase Mongolia in a musical composition was at the time a validation of the party's ethnic policy – to create a pan-Chinese identity for all the Chinese ethnic tribes.

But it would be wrong to consider *Gedameilin* solely propaganda. After all, the composer was a child of the socialist era, a devotee of party ideology as many others of her generation were, her interest in Mongolian music being genuine and personal. Moreover, she fell in love with a Mongolian classmate whom she later married and with whom she moved to live in Mongolia for more than 10 years.¹⁹ Though *Gedameilin* (or other Chinese works of similar nature) might not sound Chinese to Western ears, it would be quite unimaginable for it to have been composed by someone without the experience of Xin Huguang. But unfortunately, a work like *Gedameilin* is quite often perceived by Western critics as an example of Chinese composers' practicing with »Western musical garbage, [letting] old and traditional melodies revamped for Western tradition«²⁰. The contradictory receptions of such a work within the PRC and abroad, as Mittler proposed, is a result of the different aesthetic stance between the emic and the etic, the insider and the outsider, the latter unconsciously applying the aesthetic judgment of his/her own culture to a product of a different culture.²¹ Part of such, I suggest, is a result of some of the critics' failing to historicize the subject concerned, which may or may not be related to one's insider or outsider stance. Perhaps it is worthwhile to consider the nature of identification, which is a process of demarcation and rejection to separate us from them, we and the others.²² For the Chinese to identify a work like *Gedameilin* as Chinese is a way to separate it from works of the West despite its Western idiom, but for Westerners to emphasize its lack of Chinese identity is a way to exclude it from the arena of Western music. We and they, us and them, inevitably the identity politics are at play, which, as Frederick Lau has pointed out, is what some Chinese composers capitalize on in recent years, exploiting »Chineseness« as a marketing strategy to feed the West's imagination of what »oriental« should be.²³

18 Interview notes with the composer dated 13 August 2001.

19 Ibid.

20 Such a view is quite common with Western writers who have written on this repertoire. The one represented here is Andrew Jones' view which can be found in his book *Like a Knife: Ideology and Genre in Contemporary Chinese Popular Music*, Ithaca 1992, p. 17.

21 Barbara Mittler, *Dangerous Tunes: The Politics of Chinese Music in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China since 1949*, Wiesbaden 1997, p. 393.

22 Stuart Hall, »Introduction: Who Needs »Identity««, in: *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, London 1996, p. 1–17, here: p. 4–5.

23 Frederick Lau, »New Orientalism and Musical Fantasy in Multi-culturalism«, in: *Proceedings of the Symposium at the 2003 Chinese Composers' Festival*, p. 27–36.

Finally, I come back to the question of music and its cultural identity, which, as cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall or scholars of popular music such as Keith Negus have pointed out, is fluid and changes over time. It is so because, to borrow from Agawu's words, musical works are a form of text, of which the meaning is construed by performer-composers who conceive and produce the music, by listener-viewers who consume it, and by critics who constitute it as text for the purposes of analysis and interpretation.²⁴ If we accept this view, there is perhaps no such thing as the cultural identity of music, as after all identity is a constructed perception, a mirror of the identity of those who created it, performed it, as well as those who reviewed it and analyzed it.

Ralph Philipp Ziegler (Weimar)

»dem heutigen Orchester [...] ein gutes Stück voraus«

Ernst Karl Rößlers (1909–1980) Entwurf einer universalen Orgel

Das Instrument ist die Welt im musikalischen Abbild, ein klingendes Schatzkästchen im Sinne der Wunderkammern des Spätmittelalters ebenso wie ein in sich geschlossener Organismus, der über die Einschränkungen von Stilen und Epochen hinausreicht:¹ Da gibt es »lichte und dunkle, geradezu opalisierende, edelsteinartige Klänge, denen zuzuhören man nicht müde wird. Ganz neuartige Register wie Septade, Rohrkrummhorn, überblasender Dulzian mit fremdartigem Oberton- und Beitonbereich, Klänge, die in ihrer raumhaften Tiefe und Erregtheit der Musik der Gotik ebenso dienen wie der modernen introvertierten Orgelmusik.«² Die Intention des Orgeltheoretikers und Theologen Ernst Karl Rößler (1909–1980) zielt dabei, wie Rudolf Eller in der ersten Ausgabe der *MGG* zutreffend bemerkt, »auf das Gewinnen absoluter Werte.«³ Die von Ernst Karl Rößler disponierte und mensurierte Orgel ist also weder ein experimenteller Klangapparat wie Peter Bares avantgardistisches Instrument in der St. Peterskirche in Sinzig⁴ noch interkulturelle Syn-

24 Kofi Agawu, »African Music as Text«, in: *Representing African Music*, London 2003, p. 97–116, here: p. 97.

1 Das Motto des vorliegenden Beitrags ist ein Zitat von Ernst Karl Rößler, *Orgelweihe in der Salvatorkirche Duisburg*, Duisburg 1964, S. 4.

2 Ebd.

3 Rudolf Eller, Art. »Rößler, Ernst Karl«, in: *MGG*, Bd. 11, Kassel u. a. 1963, Sp. 625–626.

4 Erbaut 1972 von E. F. Walcker mit 46 Registern auf drei Manualen und Pedal. Im Folgenden sind die technischen Daten zu Instrumenten dargestellt unter Erbauer und Jahr, Manuale (römische Zahl)/Register (arabische Zahl) – also: Walcker 1972, III/46.