

# **PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO**

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# PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO

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This DMA portfolio includes the inspirations and ideas that can be track back to twenty years ago when I was studying in Beijing, and then, go abroad. There have been some key figures that have helped lead and influence my performance career. My piano teacher, Jingzhuang YAO and Pingguo ZHAO (Attached Middle School to Central Conservatory of Music 1996-2002), Tema Blackstone and Hung-Kuan CHEN (Mount Royal University 2003-2006), Peter Bithell (Guildhall School of Music and Drama 2007-2008) all mentored me to achieve the ambitious goals. I have been very fortunate to study with them.

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Quan Zhou  
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## **Abstract**

This DMA portfolio contains materials and a written critical commentary relating to the work I have completed towards a Doctor of Musical Arts in Performance degree at the University of Salford. My doctoral programme consists of four performance-based projects and some public performances:

1. CD recording: Chinese traditional piano music (recorded in Salford)
2. Public piano recital in Peel Hall, University of Salford
3. Lecture at the University of Salford
4. Cross-disciplinary concert performance and recording (Wuhan)
5. Public concert performances
6. Supporting material

The portfolio itself contains the following:

- A written commentary explaining the history and significance of Chinese traditional piano music, and the background about the projects that I undertook for the doctoral programme.

- Video and Audio recordings of public performances and concerts, early recordings
- Concert and recital programmes of public performances
- News and interviews of the public performances
- The published Articles and reviews published in newspapers, journals and online
- Magazines and news of interviews, documentary
- Awards
- Supporting material showing my professional standing and significant past and current activity as an internationally recognised concert pianist and educator with a specialist interest in bridging Eastern and Western cultures.

The portfolio illustrates various roles in which I have been an ambassador for Chinese traditional piano music, which I explore and develop in the context of western society. I have been involved on a number of levels, from soloist performer, recording artist and collaborator with other artists in different fields, researcher and author, through to devising and writing concert programme notes and producing recital and concerts. It is in these ways that the work captured in this portfolio represents a significant addition to existing knowledge, commensurate with the Doctor of Musical Arts awards.

# 1. The Historical Development of Chinese Piano Music

One hundred and sixty-six years ago, a small Chinese instrumental orchestra went abroad to perform in New York, and then, in Boston and London. Although the orchestra was a sensation at first, its influence was short-lived, however, as the first Chinese ensemble to venture into the West, their work was significant.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1950s, the piano was still a very rare and precious instrument in China. People could barely get to see this expensive instrument. On the other hand, learning piano was an even harder thing. There were only a few western pianists that were involved in the orchestras of Beijing and Shanghai that were able to teach the instrument. In these circumstances, the Chinese government sent a small number of pianists to the Soviet Union to study there. These included Ts'ong Fou, and Cheng Zong Ying.

Ts'ong Fou is now one of the greatest pianists in the world. He was born in Shanghai in 1934. His father was the famous Chinese scholar and translator Lei Fu who killed both himself and his wife during the Cultural Revolution. In 1953, Fou won the 3<sup>rd</sup> prize at the Bucharest Piano Competition. Right after the competition he followed this with the *Art Mission* tour to Poland, East Germany and the Soviet Union and visited to other countries. In the same year, he began studies at the Warsaw Conservatory. In 1955, he gained 3<sup>rd</sup> prize at the 5<sup>th</sup> Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw. He was the first Chinese pianist to be a prize-

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<sup>1</sup> Xu, J.N. (2016) The Earliest Chinese Orchestra Performance in England and North America. Retrieved 2 October, 2016, from <http://dajia.qq.com/original/kaojupai/xjn161002.html>



winner at this prestigious competition (the 1<sup>st</sup> prize went to the Polish pianist Adam Harasiewicz and the 2<sup>nd</sup> to Vladimir Ashkenazy). He was also awarded the Polish Radio Prize there for the best performance of the Frédéric Chopin *Mazurkas*. In 1958, Fou moved to England and settled permanently in London. Afterwards, he built a very successful career as a concert pianist, and befriended many celebrated musicians including Jacqueline Du Pré, Martha Argerich and Daniel Barenboim.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, artists and musicians were severely persecuted and the Chinese music industry was almost destroyed. At that time, there was a unique cultural phenomenon called the 'Model Opera'. It took the elements of outstanding works of Peking opera. They were *The Red Lantern*, *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, *Sha Jia Creek*, *The Harbour*, *Raid the White-Tiger Regiment*, *Song of the Dragon River*, *Azalea Mountain*, *The Red Detachment of Women*, *The White-Haired Girl*, totaling eight 'Model Operas'. The pianist Cheng Zong Ying (born 1941) combined 'Model Opera' with piano performance and played with two Peking Opera singers in the Great Hall of the People of Beijing in the 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1968. This crossover performance gained a high degree of appreciation from the leaders of China and Ying's work contributed to the end of the prohibition of piano music in the country and Cheng Zong Ying consequently became a well-known figure within the Chinese music scene.<sup>3</sup>

From that historical moment, some composers began to explore elements of Chinese music and to incorporate these into their work. A large amount of adaptations and arrangements of Chinese music were

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<sup>2</sup>FouTs'ong (Piano). Retrieved 6 October, 2016, from [www.bach-catatas.com/Bio/Tsong-Fou.htm](http://www.bach-catatas.com/Bio/Tsong-Fou.htm)

<sup>3</sup>XU, Y.Q.(2007). The artistic characteristics of Chinese piano adapted music during the Cultural Revolution. *Literature Education*, 7, 134-137

written for piano. The composers took their influence from the piano music vocabulary and harmony that was already well established in the west and combined these with elements of the Chinese musical language. For example, composers incorporated aspects of the kinds of melodic and modal characteristics of Chinese music into the emerging piano repertoire. Following its appearance during the Cultural Revolution, Chinese-influenced piano music developed up to the point of being a beautiful art form in its own right and its appearance became more widespread across China.

### **Introducing Chinese Music into my recitals**

The first time that I ever attempted to put Chinese elements of music in my concert was at China Central Normal University in Wuhan on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2014. As the concert was a courageous experiment, I spent a lot of time thinking how to add Chinese music to a concert that was almost entirely made up of western music; I carefully needed to consider what kind of programme I should seek to create. After a few months of research into the wider Chinese piano repertoire, I decided to choose a work by one of the most famous contemporary composers in China, Zhao Zhang (born ). The piece that I chose is one of his magnum opuses and is called *Pi Huang*.

*Pi Huang* is one of the most representative and characteristic Chinese contemporary piano works in the existing repertoire. The composer wrote this work in 2005. Two years later, it won the first prize of the Palatino Composition Competition in China. Zhao Zhang amended and finalised this piece after winning the prize. *Pi Huang* draws its influence from the Peking Opera and, in particular, the localised singing styles of 'Xi Pi' and 'Er Huang'. The composer took the stylistic elements from characteristic

elements of the Peking Opera, such as motive, rhythm, and mode, unscrambling the work both in terms of its referential and connotative meaning.

The recital programme consisted of works for solo piano, piano four hands and piano with singer and the concert was divided to two parts with the vocal works appearing in the second half. The programme started with Scarlatti *Sonata No 184*, then, Prokofiev *Sonata No 3* in its entirety and I put *Pi Huang* right after the Prokofiev sonata. It was the last piano solo piece of the whole concert. For the programme of piano four hands, I chose the works from Rachmaninoff and Ligeti. I was thinking *Pi Huang* is a Chinese scenic music work. As it is a contemporary work, and the style and harmony has many features that are characteristic of the Chinese musical language, this contrasted quite dramatically with the rest of the recital programme which was entirely western in its origin. I did not want the audience to feel uncomfortable by suddenly changing to the Chinese piano piece in the middle of the recital. That was why I put the *Pi Huang* as the last item on the solo programme, and between the piano solo and piano four hands.

Apart from the Chinese piano music *Pi Huang*, the first part of the concert was more focused on Late-Romantic, Neo-Classical and Modern music. The partner, who was playing piano four hands with me, was Chinese pianist, and Masters graduate of Newcastle University, Ning Zhang.

The second part of the concert was *Gypsy Songs*, an eight-part song cycle by Brahms. My aim was to create a complete contrast with the music of the first part of the concert, which was quite challenging to the listener. To do this I deliberately featured music of the Romantic era as its musical language would be easier to accept for the audience. The mezzo-

soprano was Bao Yi Bi. She is one of the most famous Asian mezzo-soprano on the international operatic stage. She has studied and worked in Russian and Germany since 1980s until she came back to China in 2013. She was Professor of Voice within the faculty of the School of Music and Director of the Opera Centre, Central China Normal University. Now she is Dean of the Arts Centre of Southern University of Science and Technology.

This is the first time I had ever performed with her. When I mentioned to her that I want to try to put some Chinese piano works in a concert in order to introduce Chinese music to the audience, she immediately showed the willingness to sing at the concert. She is a sophisticated skilled singer and she has a big amount of repertoire at her disposal. Given the special sound of the Chinese work, she suggested that she could sing more melodic, Western pieces as this would help to create the levels of contrast that we agreed was required. We decided to choose Romantic or 20<sup>th</sup> Century works. At first, she wanted to sing some works by Mahler, Debussy, and Schubert. After several discussions, we finally decided to perform the *Gypsy Songs* by Brahms as this song cycle is lyrical and delightful with each song having its own particular character.

This project represents an addition to existing knowledge since I am one of the only Chinese pianists working on the international stage to combine western and Chinese music in the context of a formal piano recital. Evidence of my status as an influential solo artist is provided by the fact that world-renowned opera specialist Bao Yi Bi accepted my invitation to contribute to the concert.

## **2. Chinese Piano Music and the Adoption of Chinese Musical Styles**

The piano has over one hundred years of history in China. As a typical Western musical instrument, the development of piano music in China only began in the 20th century. In the middle of 20th century, the circumstances were turbulent in China. However, piano scholars, pianists and composers did not stop their career exploring Chinese piano music, and, in time, a culture of Chinese piano music emerged. The period from 1966 to 1976 was important due to the creative contribution of Cheng Zong Ying as his work adapting music of the Peking Opera for piano marked out the instrument as one of the only Western instruments that was used to perform Chinese music at the time. No such repertoire was available for other instruments coming out of the Western orchestral tradition (e.g. cello, oboe, clarinet etc.) hence the piano was given something of a privileged standing.

Chinese piano music has its variety of styles. It consists of five major categories which are:

- (i) adaptations of musical works taken from Chinese Dance Drama and opera;
- (ii) arrangements of Chinese songs;
- (iii) transcriptions of pieces from local theatre and folk tunes;
- (iv) rearrangements of Chinese national instrumental music;
- (v) original compositions for piano.

As part of my aim to become an ambassador for Chinese music in the West, I decided to record a CD of Chinese piano music that would include repertoire drawn from each of these five categories. To my knowledge

this is the first time that a high-profile pianist has recorded an entire album consisting solely of Chinese piano music. Indeed, in China, pianists don't often perform many Chinese works. This underlines the originality of the project and its contribution to new knowledge.

Researching the repertoire for this CD was amongst the first projects I undertook on commencing my DMA studies. Firstly, I chose *the North Wind is Blowing* from one of the eight 'Model Operas', *The White-Haired Girl*, and two short pieces, which are *The Coral Dance* and *The Waterweed Dance* – two of the most famous melodic pieces found in the dance-drama *The Beautiful Mermaid*. *The North Wind is Blowing* describes the cypress trees which grow in the further northern area where it suffers extreme weather. Nevertheless, it still a great survivor with indomitable spirit, which indicates the leading character, whose name is 'Xi'er' in the 'Model Opera'.<sup>4</sup>

There is a large amount of piano music that has been created through the rearrangement of songs. China is a multi-national country. Different areas have their own style of songs. When selecting material for this CD, I focused on repertoire that was well-known in terms of the melodic content and popular (i.e. music that is often performed). In light of this, I chose *The Liu Yang River* from Hu Nan Province, *Tea-Picking Girls Catching Butterflies* from An Hui Province, and an arrangement of four folk songs taken from the north of Shan Xi Province, which are *Blue Orchid*, *Red Flowers Blooming All Over The Mountain*, *Embroidering a Golden Plaque* and *Day in Liberated Area*. There are many arrangements of folk songs and melodies in Chinese piano works and their quality is

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<sup>4</sup>FENG, J.H. (2010). Music performance and analysis of the mermaid of piano suite of dance drama. Retrieved 16 October 2015, from <http://www.docin.com/p-1014755727.html>

often excellent. The flavours of Northern Shan Xi folk songs are popular and well-known across the country. Almost everyone can sing a few words.

In addition to material taken from the 'Model Opera' and the folk song, I chose to include some other pieces that derive from provincial or regional theatre and instrumental folk tunes. Cantonese opera, for example, is popular in Guang Dong province, Hong Kong and Macau. *Autumn Moon on Peaceful Lake* is the transcription from the music of Cantonese opera. *Thunder in the Dry Season* and *Selling Fresh Provision* are from Cantonese local tunes. *Thunder in the Dry Season* is derived from a piece of Chinese instrumental music that is originally played on the Pi Pa.<sup>5</sup> An example of the work performed on solo pi pa can be found <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkxOAmYM2Q> (accessed 18/7/17)

The work has now also been performed by instrumental small ensembles (see <http://www.365yg.com/group/6432630784431948034/> - accessed 18/7/17).

In 1959, Cantonese composer Pei Xun Chen (1922-2006) adapted this popular piece to for the piano. He kept the unique style, specific rhythm and the freedom of tempo found in the original, combining and adapting these to the wide-range of the piano keyboard. Following its composition, *Thunder in the Dry Season* quickly became a prevalent and popular piece within the Chinese piano repertoire. An extract from the piano score of Chen's adaptation of *Thunder in the Dry Season* is shown in Figure 1, below.

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<sup>5</sup>A Chinese traditional instrument.

# 旱天雷\*

Allegro ma non troppo

陈培勋(1959)

*mf leggiero* *mp*

*dolce* *leggiero* *mf*

*f* *mp* *f marcato* *mp*

*string e cresc.* *agitatissimo*

*tr* *rit.* *mp* *p dolce* *a tempo* *p*

\* 根据同名粤曲改编。

Figure 1

Another style of Chinese piano music is classically influenced and *Flute and Drum at Dusk* is a very good example of this type of work and was arranged and adapted by Ying Hai Li (1927-2007). Like *Thunder in the*



*Dry Season*, the work is commonly associated with the Pi Pa but has been arranged for larger ensemble. A typical performance can be found via the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yGdVUH9ZOQ> (accessed 18/7/17)

From the name of the piece, it is obvious that the music is characteristically about the music that is associated with the bamboo flute and the Chinese drum. The piano offers an advantage as it is possible to create the illusion of two different instruments being combined while maintaining the specific features of each. For example, the percussive quality of the drum is reflected in the left hand of the piano during the opening of the work (figure 2) while the singing melodic character for the flute is woven into the later parts of the composition (figure 3).

## 夕 阳 箫 鼓\*

Tempo a piacere

黎英海(1975)

*poco meno mosso accel. poco a poco*

*mp p pp mp*

Figure 2



before moving back to the folk tune again. The whole piece is short and brilliant. It has the strong local characteristics of Cantonese music's unique minor tone, combined with a style of counterpoint that is particularly pianistic. It is a fine example of a composition that draws from and reflects local musical language and traditions.

## 卖 杂 货

Allegretto (♩=100-104) 陈培勋(1952)

The musical score is written for piano and consists of five systems. The first system begins with a *mf* dynamic. The second system includes a *mp* dynamic. The third system features a *f* dynamic. The fourth system starts with a *mp* dynamic. The fifth system is marked *agitato* and *ff*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and fingerings.

根据同名粤曲及民间小调《梳妆台》改编。

Con moto (♩=120-126)

Moderato Andantino (♩=76-80)

*mp cantabile*

*f* *cresc.* *ff* *p*

*p*

*f* *rall.*

Figure 4

The original piano composition *The Grain Flying in the Air* by Yi Qiang Sun (born 1942) also has a strong Chinese style. The melody is exquisite and the music is vivid (see figure 4). The middle section is lyrical and expressive and features rich piano textures. The opening and closing



sections of the piece have a celebratory tone and the whole piece succeeds in showing a picture of the farmers' harvest and happiness.

Besides the pieces of programme music, a lot of national dance music was composed as well. *The Style Dance of Xing Jiang*, composed by Zhi Hong Guo (born 1932) and *Spring Dance* by Yi Qiang Sun (born 1942) were written in 1958 and 1980. These two pieces are all about the character of Xi Jiang dance. However, the compositional styles and techniques of the works are totally different and they reflect changes in approaches to composition for the piano between 1958 and 1980. The development of composing is not only about the character and the rhythmic pattern, but also the approach to counterpoint, harmony and structure.

Whilst there have been a number of recordings made of Chinese piano music, the majority of these arise out of the work of pianists aligned to the Chinese Society in Canada and the USA. Recording this CD in Salford provided me with a unique opportunity, not only to be the first internationally recognised pianist to record a CD within Peel Hall, but also the first to record an album entirely comprised of music represents the entire range of the existing Chinese piano repertoire.

Once published this CD the aim is to arrange for this to be accompanied with sheet music so that it can be disseminated as a way of spreading knowledge of Chinese piano music, and especially to encourage younger musicians to gain experience and appreciation of this repertoire.

Please note that the audio files presented in this folio is still in the process of being edited; the final, mastered version will subsequently appear on a double CD release once the editing process has been completed.

### 3. The Performance Environment

With the development of human science and technology, we can easily hear classical music through a wide variety of channels, media, and electronic devices. However, live performance is still the most attractive way to connect music and audience, even though the sound recording normally is flawless.

In the recording studio, musicians can play through a piece of music as many times as they like. The sound engineer is seamlessly able to fit all the music passages together and the modern techniques of recording engineering make the performance sound clean and perfect. For live performance, however, the musician has only one chance to play whilst on stage. It brings more pressure and yet, possibly, more atmosphere to the performance. On the other hand, the musician has to put more energy and concentration into the live performance. In this certain situation, some of the live performances are played in a rather mechanical, uncommunicative way. Nevertheless, it is possible that the most distinctive and outstanding sounding performances are those that occur in a live setting. The famous American piano master Murray Perahia said, "Only a live concert can reveal the true nature of the work."<sup>6</sup>

Two months after finishing the recording, in the spirit of presenting the authentic Chinese piano music in the context of my solo recitals, I returned to Salford to perform a recital in Peel Hall on 28 January 2016 (see figure 5). I split the concert into two halves. Most of the works in the programme also appear on my CD recording. In the first half, I played

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<sup>6</sup>KOU, Y. (2011). Pianist Perahia, Live concert to show the charm. Retrieved 1 November, 2011, from [yule.sohu.com/20111101/n324107957.shtml](http://yule.sohu.com/20111101/n324107957.shtml)

*Autumn Moon on Peaceful Lake, Red Flowers Blooming all over the Mountain, Flute and Drum at Dusk, Spring Dance.* After 10 minutes intermission, I played *Embroidering a Golden Plaque, Tea-picking Girls Catching Butterflies, Hundreds Birds Worship the Phoenix*, three selected pieces from *The Beautiful Mermaid* (i.e. *Coral Dance, Waterweed Dance and Dance of the Wedding Scene*).



The poster features a traditional Chinese ink wash painting of a plum blossom branch in the upper left. Below it is a large, intricate red paper-cut illustration of a woman's profile wearing an elaborate, multi-tiered headdress adorned with flowers and feathers. To the right of the painting, the text reads: "China Tradition" in bold red, "Piano Recital" in a black serif font, "QUAN ZHOU" in a bold black sans-serif font, and "1PM 28 Jan 2016 PEEL HALL" in a smaller black sans-serif font.

Figure 5

For me, musical performance requires a good deal of skill in terms of artistic interpretation. The musician appearing on the stage must attempt to express the composer's intension. Through my experience of live performance, different environments seem to have a tangible effect on the musician resulting in unique music expressions as they move from concert hall to concert hall. No two performances are identical when performing live. With different concert halls, different acoustics, different audiences, and so on, all these elements combine to inspire the performer in different ways throughout the recital. Presenting new repertoire is exciting although it is always difficult to predict how the audience will respond. However great the risk, to play a whole recital with Chinese traditional piano music programme is certainly innovative, especially when performing in a western country such as the UK. I found the experience of performing in Peel Hall to be interesting as the acoustics are very good although the setting is still fairly intimate. I got a real sense of the building's history as a Gothic concert hall while I was performing there.

For the opening of the recital, I started with *Autumn Moon on the Peaceful Lake*. It is a lyrical piece depicting the flowing water. The nice view of Peel Park and River Irwell beside Peel Hall, gave me a special way of interpreting the music. Despite the fact that I have played *Autumn Moon on the Peaceful Lake* since I was in high school, I have never performed it as I did during my recital in Peel Hall. The environment inspired me to give the music a tint of impressionism, even it is a traditional Chinese style composition. When I played *Flute and Drum at Dusk*, the special acoustic of Peel Hall gave the music a unique sound, bringing out the percussive nature and lyricism of the composition. Peel Hall is located in the ground floor of Peel Building, which is a red Victorian building in the main campus of university of Salford. People walk through a piece of



grass to the building. With the sun shining, it is a beautiful scene; my experience is completely different if I play *Flute and Drum at Dusk* in the mountain when the weather is cloudy.

For the layout of the programme, I thought for a long time before finally deciding to start with a slow and lyrical adaptation piece with a folk tune. I wanted to give the audience a strong idea of what Chinese traditional music sounds like right from the very beginning of the recital. And then, I chose an arrangement of a well-known Chinese song, which is an exciting piece. During the wartime in 1940s, almost everybody sang this song. In order to create contrast, I played another pair of slow and fast pieces, *Flute and Drum at Dusk* and *Spring Dance* to finish the first half.

The programme of second half was more vivid. I played two arrangements of folk songs, *Embroidering a Golden Plaque* and *Tea-picking Girls Catching Butterflies* as the opening. These two pieces are bright and lively, but they are stylistically very different from one another. After that, I played a programmatic composition, *Hundreds of Birds Worship the Phoenix*. The music imitates a variety of birds, and uses special effects to mimic the sound of quarter tones. *Hundreds of Birds Worship the Phoenix* is one of the most representative Chinese traditional piano works. Then, I chose to play three small contrasting dance scenery pieces *Coral Dance*, *Waterweed Dance*, and *Dance of Wedding Scene* from *The Beautiful Mermaid* ballet drama to end the recital (see figure 6).



**Programme**

平湖秋月  
Autumn Moon on Peaceful Lake  
Composed by Pei Xun CHEN

山丹丹开花红艳艳  
Red Flowers Blooming All Over The Mountain  
Arranged by Jian Zhong WANG

夕阳箫鼓  
Flute and Drum at Dusk  
Composed by Ying Hai LI

春舞  
Spring Dance  
Composed by Yi Xiang SUN

**Intermission**

绣金匾  
Embroidering A Golden Plaque  
Arranged by Jian Zhong WANG

采茶扑蝶  
Tea-picking Girls Catching Butterflies  
Composed by Fu An LIU

百鸟朝凤  
Hundreds Birds Worship The Phoenix  
Composed by Jian Zhong WANG

舞剧《鱼美人》三首  
From Dance Drama "The Mermaid"  
Composed by Ming Xin DU, Zu Qiang WU

珊瑚舞 The Coral Dance  
水草舞 The Waterweed Dance  
婚礼场面群舞 The Dance of Wedding scene

Born in Wuhan, Hubei, Quan Zhou entered attached school to Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing at age 12, where she made her professional debut during the years of studying, and has since toured widely to positive reviews. In 2002, Zhou came to Australia to continue her music studies. In 2003, she moved to Canada to study with Hung Kuan Chen and Tema Blackstone. Zhou earned a Master degree in music performance with merit in London in 2009, meanwhile, she received an offer to teach in Singapore. In 2012, she started working in School of Music, Central China Normal University, which is one of top 30 university in China.

Zhou has won a number of prizes over the world, including "Xin Hai Cup" piano competition in China, kiwanis music festival in Canada, first prize in Rome music festival in 2013. Zhou has captivated audiences in Asia, Australia, Europe and North America with a unique combination of deep musical sensitivity, fearless imagination, and spectacular virtuosity.

Figure 6

The entire recital was about 75 minutes. The programme was devised to include adaptations of dance music and drama, an arrangement of a traditional folk song, a transcription of piece of music from local theatre, a rearrangement of Chinese traditional instrumental music, and original piano composition all five major categories. I set the programme in slow-fast-slow order so as to create contrast throughout the recital. I really enjoyed playing in the Peel Hall. The hall was close and tight, which made it easy for me to communicate with the audience through the music. The recital was meaningful to me. It was the first time I have ever played Chinese compositions for an entire concert programme anywhere in the world and, to my knowledge, the first time this has happened in the UK. I am planning to explore the possibility of performing more Chinese piano music to western audiences in the future, having opened up this potential through my work in Salford.

## 4. Chinese Piano Music, its Composition and Musical Characteristics

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2016, I gave a public lecture on the topic of Chinese tradition piano music in the Adelphi Building of University of Salford. I introduced both the major compositional forms and characteristics of Chinese piano music. I introduced the lecture recital by talking about the composing history of Chinese piano music and the fact that it is only about a hundred years old. Chinese composers pushed the creation of Chinese piano music actively and strongly. The development of Chinese piano music arose through generations of hard working, although it had been interrupted during the certain historical time. The first published piano composition in Chinese music history is *Peace March* which was written by Yuan Ren ZHAO in 1914.<sup>7</sup> The piece was simple and short (see figure 7). Evoking the sound of traditional Chinese instruments, the composer took the western tonality as the reference combining this with the Chinese pentatonic mode within the work. The finished work is tonal in its composition. Yuan Ren ZHAO wrote in his autobiography that “it was totally western style.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>GU, X.Y.(2003). A brief description of the creation of Chinese piano works. *Journals of Shangqiu Teachers College*, 19(6), 146-147

<sup>8</sup>LUO, A.Q.(2014). From ‘the peace march’ to see the development of the early piano music in China. *Yellow Bell Big Lv*, 3, 74-7



Figure 7.

Compared with the western Polonaise and Mazurka, China has its own traditional dance music. Most of the piano works that have dance influences were inspired by dance elements taken from the minority nations. For both original composition and music that has been rearranged for piano, the minority nations' styles of dance music tend to be fast, using specific syncopated rhythmic patterns and melodic themes, which are signs that would be recognizable to a Chinese audience. In some of the festive music composed for the piano, composers have also introduced dance elements into the works. *Spring Dance* was considered as an original piano composition. It was written by Yi Qiang SUN in 1980. The composer wrote a lyrical introduction before transitioning to the characteristic theme of Xin Jiang dance (see figure 8).

# 春 舞

孙以强 (1980)

The musical score for 'Spring Dance' (春舞) by Sun Yiqiang (1980) is presented in five systems of piano notation. The piece is in 2/4 time and begins with a 'Moderato' tempo. The first system includes dynamics 'dolce', 'p', and 'pp'. The second system features triplets and sixteenth-note patterns. The third system continues with similar rhythmic motifs. The fourth system is marked 'p' and 'leggiero', showing a shift to a more rhythmic, dance-like feel. The fifth system continues the 'leggiero' section with intricate sixteenth-note passages. Fingerings and articulation marks are provided throughout the score.

Figure 8

The middle section turns suddenly into a speedy and celebratory scene. After a passage of recitative, the music moves back to the dance theme. This composition was very popular in China. The composer combined pentatonic and tonal harmony, sections of rubato playing and dance

rhythms, combining elements from the Chinese musical language with those deriving from the western Romantic period. It has significant meaning in the history of Chinese traditional piano music.

The pentatonic mode is perhaps the particular characteristic that is most often associated with traditional Chinese music. It has been used for composing Chinese instrumental music for at least two thousand years. Some piano works were adapted and rearranged from their traditional instrumental setting, incorporating the pentatonic mode. *Hundreds of Birds Worship the Phoenix* was originally performed on the Suo Na.<sup>9</sup> This piece was written using the pentatonic mode by Jian Zhong Wang (see figure 9).

百 鸟 朝 凤<sup>\*</sup>

王建中 (1973)

Moderato

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Hundred Birds Worship the Phoenix' (百鸟朝凤) by Jian Zhong Wang (1973). The score is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time, marked 'Moderato'. It consists of two systems of piano notation. The first system has four measures, and the second system has five measures. The music features various ornaments, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs, and includes fingerings (1-5) and dynamics like 'f' and 'p2'. The title '百鸟朝凤\*' is centered at the top, and the composer's name '王建中 (1973)' is to the right. The tempo 'Moderato' is written above the first measure.

Figure 9

This piece was special and unique in its use of passages that seek to imitate the sounds of various birds. Eventually, the Suo Na performers played quarter-tones for imitating the birds. Clearly it is impossible to play

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<sup>9</sup>A traditional Chinese wind instrument.



quarter-tones on the piano, but, to overcome this. Jian Zhong WANG exquisitely doubled minor second and minor third intervals to make the performance sounded like shifting quarter-tones (see figure 10).



Figure 10

In terms of musical creation, there has been a large amount of original Chinese music written for the piano. Composers wrote piano music for describing a visual scene, displaying the imagination, expressing personal emotions and so on, and there have been specific styles associated with different historical periods. At first, most of the Chinese piano works were small and short. Composers were just starting to apply themselves to learning to write a new kind of instrumental music. After that, they composed using combinations of traditional western tonality and material devised from pentatonic scales and harmony. They adapted folk tunes, rearranged traditional instrumental music, and expanded the range of composing techniques that they applied. During the wars, dissonant intervals and chords, harsh textures, and more complicated forms of counterpoint started to appear in the piano compositions. Nowadays, atonal, serial, and other modernist musical composing devices are spreading in Chinese piano music.

In Chinese traditional piano works, there are a lot of ornaments, trills, grace-notes, tremolandos and glissandos. These were drawn from their use in traditional Chinese instrumental music with composers using these symbolic elements in their piano works. *Red Flowers Blooming All over the Mountain* was arranged by a well-known folk song of northern Shan Xi province. In this work, the arranger employed a variety of ornaments throughout the whole piece, and also devised different ways of performing the ornaments as part of the arrangement (see figure 11).



Figure 11

*Flute and Drum at Dusk* is a transcription of a piece that is traditionally performed as a duet between the bamboo flute and drum. It consists of ten sections, including an introduction, theme and coda, all of which contain a great deal of ornaments. Each section has been set specific tempo. However, it is not necessary to adhere precisely to every tempo mark and hence there is a degree of liberty in the performance. With the variety of ornaments, this recreates the local flavor of traditional Chinese



instrumental music.

The audiences in the lecture consisted of staff and students of the University of Salford along with invited members of the public. At the end of the lecture I played *Red Flowers Blooming All Over The Mountain*, *Spring Dance*, *Hundreds of Birds Worship the Phoenix*, *Autumn Moon on the Peaceful Lake* for them. In the future, I want to integrate the spoken and performed elements to develop the lecture of Chinese traditional piano music to a lecture recital, and expand the compositions to some modern Chinese piano work as well.

## 5. Collaborative Performance Project for Solo Piano and Visual Artist

Music has an intimate link to fine art. French composer Debussy's composition was influenced by impressionistic painting, which inspired him to create his characteristic impressionism music. Russian composer Mussorgsky was inspired by ten great paintings in his magnificent piano suite *Pictures At An Exhibition*. However, the painter, as a creator, also can be stimulated by music. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, 2016, I made a crossover concert exhibition with Chinese famous ink painter Yi Yuan LIU in Garden Art Pavilion, Wuhan Garden Expo in China (see Figure 12).



Figure 12

Yi Yuan LIU, one of the most distinctive ink painters in China. He was born in 1942. At the age of 17, he started his art career as a painter to reproduce the ancient Chinese paintings. In 1979, after earned the master degree in Chinese Painting from Hubei Institute of Fine Arts, he

stayed in the institute to teach traditional bird-flower and landscape painting. Meanwhile, he kept on making innovative modernistic ink paintings. His works were listed in the major art collections, such as “The Complete Works of Modern Chinese Fine Arts”, “The Contemporary Chinese Fine Arts”, “Today's Chinese Fine Arts”, “China, 20 years of Experimental Ink”, “Chronicles of Chinese Fine Arts”, “An Art History of 20th Century China”. Yi Yuan LIU’s works has exhibited in Hong Kong, South Korea, France, and Switzerland. His collections are labeled as “Landscape of the Mind”<sup>10</sup>.

Wuhan Garden Expo celebrates the highest level of China’s landscaping industry. It is the largest international annual event in Hubei province. The Garden Art Pavilion is the main building of the core area in the Garden Expo. The concert I presented was designated as *A Symphony of Spots and Lines*. It was a combined piano concert and art exhibition. Yi Yuan LIU painted while I was playing the programme of piano music and he finished his painting at the same moment that I completed my performance. To my knowledge, this was the first time that the classical piano and fine art were integrated as a concert exhibition in China.

Before the concert started, LIU’s art collections were hanging on the wall. The piano was on the stage left. Yi Yuan LIU was standing on the stage right with the frame and painting materials. We found that this was an ideal position as we could easily see each other during the concert. As it was still a performing show, we decided to start together and end as well. Therefore, we need to contact each other during both of us performing.

The piano concert programme was contrast of Eastern and Western

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<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.artlinkart.com/en/artist/overview/202avwqi>

music. It consists of the *Piano Sonata* by Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera with three dance scenery pieces *The Coral Dance*, *The Waterweed Dance*, and *The Dance of Wedding Scene* from *The Beautiful Mermaid* ballet drama. *The Beautiful Mermaid* was the first attempt from the structure of classical ballet performance which was based on the traditional Chinese fairy story. It took the material of Chinese folk dance to innovate in the performance method and characters. It was a significant contribution to the development of Chinese ballet. The ballet music was broadcasted as a well-known scenic music.

Ink painting is strongly representative of the Chinese fine arts. However, Yi Yuan Liu's style combines eastern approaches to texture with western-influenced methods when blending layers and colours. It is the mixture of ancient/eastern and modern/western approaches that inspired me for the designing of the music programme. For the order of the programme, I chose to alternate between western and Chinese piano music. I played the first movement of Ginastera's *Sonata* at the beginning of the concert. In spite of its medium tempo, it features a violent and fierce style of music with the South American sharp rhythmic pattern throughout the whole movement. Then, I started play the Chinese small, uplifting piece *The Coral Dance*. After that, I went back to play the second movement of the *Sonata*. It was a twelve-tone music with a big development to the vanished ending. Modernist music may be quite challenging to Chinese audiences. With this in mind, I played the flowing piece *The Waterweed Dance* next to the second movement. And then, I played the rest of the *Sonata*, the slow third movement and finally the powerful last movement. This shows an example of the ways in which I am experimenting within the programme design of my recitals when bring Chinese and western pieces together.

When I finished the *Sonata*, we gave the question time to the audience to ask about either the pieces I play or the work that he just finished. At the end, I played *The Dance of Wedding Scene* from *The Beautiful Mermaid* ballet drama to finish this event (see figure 13).



Figure 13

## **6. Conclusion and areas for future research**

The piano is a relatively young instrument as it is only about three hundred years since it was invented. From the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the piano started developing in China. It spread widely and rapidly and, over the last seventy years, a large amount of Chinese piano music has been created. Professional pianists have appeared in the international stage although the vast majority tend only perform repertoire taken from the canon of western European art music. Chinese piano music, drawing directly from the western harmony and counterpoint, has developed to incorporate a variety of musical styles including those that feature the unique characteristics of Chinese traditional music. For the past half century, Chinese traditional music has experienced generations of change.

Through my work over the course of the DMA I have discovered a large amount of repertoire for the piano that has been inspired in various ways by Chinese music and I have begun a process of performing and recording this material internationally.

During my period of practice-based research on the DMA programme I have added to new knowledge in a variety of ways. In November 2015 I finished a CD recording which was the first one to be made in Peel Hall, Salford and, importantly, the first CD of entirely Chinese piano repertoire to be made. It is an example of original curation as I was responsible for the selection of the pieces for the CD. In my second project I performed a recital in Peel Hall at the University of Salford in the 28<sup>th</sup> of January, 2016. This represents originality in that it was the first entire recital of Chinese piano music in the world. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2016, I made a public lecture on the topic of Chinese piano music

in the Adelphi Building of University of Salford. At the lecture, I presented new knowledge concerning the development of Chinese piano music. There are currently no academic publications that focus on Chinese piano music. As part of my ongoing work raising the profile of Chinese piano music, I made a crossover concert exhibition with Chinese famous ink painter Yi Yuan LIU on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, 2016 in Garden Art Pavilion, Wuhan Garden Expo in China. This was the first time that a pianist and artist have presented in the context of a recital in China. I created a unique form of programme, which mixed Chinese and western works in a novel way.

### **Future developments**

In China, there is a system of piano grading tests similar to the ABRSM in UK, however the majority of the repertoire selected for inclusion in the piano syllabuses derives from the West. As there is a minimal amount of Chinese repertoire in the grade system, I will try to address this by lobbying to make more Chinese music appear in the grading tests. I am actively seeking to raise the profile of Chinese piano music by featuring this in my high-profile recitals in China. At the same time I am working to raise awareness of Chinese piano music in the West and hope to introduce more Chinese piano music into the exam syllabuses for ABRSM.

There are only a small handful of Chinese piano pieces that are widely available in the west. Although some of the Chinese piano music score can be purchased on Chinese websites, this is difficult as the whole websites are presented in Chinese. As part of my efforts to respond to this shortage I am planning to publish sheet music to go along with the release of my Peel Hall CD, specifically to make this available to the western market. I am in the process of making contact with publishers in

Europe including WoodBrass (Switzerland) and Astute Music (UK). In China there are many competitions that encourage composers to write new music and also journals such as 'Ren Min Yin Yue' ('People's Music') that feature new compositions including new music for piano. As a recipient of this core music journal I intend to select and publish new contemporary or other examples of Chinese piano repertoire and to make this available the West.

I intend to use my profile as a concert pianist to introduce more Chinese traditional instrumental music to western audiences. I am currently planning a recital tour in Europe. This is intended to include recitals in Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt Weimar in Germany, Konzerthaus Vienna in Austria, and the Konzert Theater Bern in Switzerland. In each of these recitals I will be devising programmes that enable me to present a combination of Western and Chinese piano music. Meanwhile, I will continue to explore new ways of presenting Chinese piano music, including crossover work, work with singers or other minority national instrument players, and aim to work in conjunction with Chinese cultural centres in Europe and the US to find new platforms for my recitals.

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