

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSICAL IDENTITIES OF EAST
ASIAN COMPOSERS: ANALYSIS ON PIANO WORKS OF CHEN YI, UNSUK CHIN, AND
WENDY LEE

by

Hiu Ying Prudence Poon

Submitted to the faculty of the
Jacobs School of Music in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree,
Doctor of Music
Indiana University
May 2024

Accepted by the faculty of the
Indiana University Jacobs School of Music,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Music

Doctoral Committee

David Cartledge, Research Director

Norman Krieger

Spencer Myer

Copyright © 2024
Hiu Ying Prudence Poon

*To my loving and supporting parents,
for devoting your life to me to have the best of everything*

*To my research director Dr. David Cartledge,
for guiding me through the process from the first day*

*To my dear teacher Prof. Roberto Plano,
for sharing your wisdom and always believing in me*

*To my committee Prof. Norman Krieger, Dr. Spencer Myer and Dr. Brent Gault
for your encouragement and guidance*

Table of Contents

List of Examples	vi
List of Appendices	vii
Chapter 1: Background	1
Chapter 2: Chen Yi	5
Chapter 3: Unsuk Chin	11
Chapter 4: Wendy Lee	20
Chapter 5: Conclusion	25
Bibliography	41

List of Examples

Example 2.1. Chen Yi “Duo Ye”, mm. 74-77.	7
Example 2.2. Chen Yi “Guessing”, mm. 40-49.....	9
Example 2.3. Chen Yi “Guessing”, mm. 100-110.....	10
Example 3.1. Unsuk Chin Etude No. 3 “Scherzo ad libitum” mm. 27-32.	15
Example 3.2. Unsuk Chin Etude No. 2 “Sequenzen” mm. 28-34.	16
Example 3.3. Ligeti Etude No. 4 “Fanfares” mm. 1-8.	17
Example 3.4. Unsuk Chin Etude No. 1 “In C” mm. 1-5.....	18
Example 3.5. Unsuk Chin Etude No. 4 “Scalen” mm. 98-104.....	19
Example 4.1. Wendy Lee “Kirie”, mm. 116-122.	22
Example 4.2. Wendy Lee “Kirie”, mm. 30-34.	23

List of Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview with Wendy Lee.....	27
Appendix 2. Score of <i>Macromusophagy</i>	31

Chapter 1: Background

In existing cross-cultural synthesis discussions in East Asian music, different scholarly camps have developed over the years. John Corbett described some East Asian composers like Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996), and Tan Dun (1957-) as “Asian new-Orientalist”. He argues that these East Asian composers use Asian elements that are appropriated by Western composers.¹ Fredrick Lau argues that East Asian composers use nationalistic elements to their advantage and as marketing strategies. They see the decision of including traditional elements as more than expressing oneself or cultural exchange, and describes this as ‘capitalising on Orientalism.’² Others see East Asian composers’ use of nationalistic or cultural materials as an intentional expression of their cultural identities. Conversely, other scholars argue that East Asian composers, like some Western composers, use traditional materials as compositional source materials without any cultural implications.³

Existing discussions on cross-cultural synthesis in East Asian music often neglect music where nationalistic elements are not subconsciously or intentionally embedded. Consequently, East Asian composers who resist including their native traditions in music composition are often overlooked in studies of identity and identity politics. In order to get the whole view of how culture plays a role in the development of East Asian composers’ musical identities, it is crucial to include discussions about composers who have less interest in including musical materials of their native culture and compare how culture plays a different role in the development of musical identity. I picked Chen Yi as a representative of East Asian composers who are comfortable quoting traditional music explicitly. In contrast, I have

¹John Corbett, “Experimental Oriental: New Music and Other Others,” in *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, ed. by Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

²Frederick Lau, “Fusion or Fission: The Paradox and Politics of Contemporary Chinese Avant-Garde Music,” in *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music* Everett, ed. by Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 27-28.

³Chih-Suei Shaw, "Discourses of Identity in Contemporary East Asian Music: Chen Yi, Unsuk Chin and Karen Tanaka" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2016), 9.

selected Unsuk Chin because of her reluctance in showing any traditional influences in her compositions, and Wendy Lee represents a middle ground between the two extremes.

The foundation of this essay is based on Chih-Suei Shaw's dissertation "Discourses of Identity in Contemporary East Asian Music: Chen Yi, Unsuk Chin and Karen Tanaka." In her thesis, she examines the question of identity focusing on the three contemporary East Asian composers through analysis of their works, their personal viewpoints, and the reception of their works. Shaw pointed out that the presence of "indigenous materials" is usually one of the main themes when analyzing East Asian compositions.⁴ A foreign composer is usually "expected" to show their home culture in their compositions, and when they do not do so they are excluded in cross-cultural synthesis discussions. Shaw's essay explores the different way in which each composer develops her musical identity and compositional voice through either embracing or rejecting cross-cultural fusion and locality, she used examples from Chen Yi's Symphony No. 3 (2004) and Unsuk Chin's opera *Alice in Wonderland* (2007). I aim to extend this discussion to the piano works of Chen Yi, Unsuk Chin, and Wendy Lee, with examples from their piano compositions.

This essay is a set of case studies, each chapter focusing on one East Asian female composer and discussing how culture plays a role or not in their musical identities, with examples from their piano compositions. I will look into their background, personal opinions expressed through interviews, and their piano works. Their viewpoints and ideas are assembled through existing interviews in books, journals and also an interview with Wendy Lee conducted by me. Since scholarship on each composer are in different stages, I will use different methods and strategies for each case study. Chen Yi has been discussed regularly in the context of identity discourse studies, and in this essay, I will focus on how her piano works *Duo Ye* and *Guessing* show her enthusiasm in cultural hybridity. Unsuk Chin has been gaining more attention in the past 10 years, but she had not been included in many identity discourses. I will be focusing on the central themes in her *Piano Etudes* and how this shows that cultural fusion is not one of

⁴ Ibid.

her main priorities when composing. Wendy Lee is one of the most established composers in Hong Kong, although there has not been any detailed examination of her works. She studied and taught in the US for a long period of time but eventually returned to her home country after that, which is different from the other two composers. Her research focused on the Western influences shown in piano pieces by Chinese composers like Yi Chen, Bright Sheng, and Qiqing Chen, but her piano compositions did not include much in the way of cultural references; instead they show that she is more interested in including non-music materials in her work. A close examination of Wendy Lee's *Macromusophagy* and *Kirie* will demonstrate Wendy Lee's interest in multi-disciplinary research.

Chapter One explores how Chen Yi considers music to be an universal inclusive language and embraces cultural fusion. Chen Yi is one of the typical examples when we think of cultural fusion in music, and we can find traditional Chinese elements everywhere in her compositions. There will be examples from *Duo Ye* and *Guessing* to illustrate how she handles cultural hybridity. Chapter Two explores how Unsuk Chin considers music to be a universally accessible language that should not be categorized according to nationality. Chin is frequently described as a composer who avoids using nationalistic materials because she does not want to be categorized as a Korean composer; critic Maris Gothóni has even commented that “the dangers of musical exoticism seemed too great to her”⁵ Examples from her *Piano Etudes* are included to illustrate how Unsuk Chin turns to musical influences other than her native Korean influences. Chapter Three explores how Wendy Lee uses music as a tool to connect disciplinaries. Wendy Lee has researched and written about the Western influences upon Chinese composers, but she does not use many Chinese elements in her own works. Instead, she utilizes non-musical elements in her piano compositions and music becomes a tool to connect different disciplines. Examples from *Macromusophagy* and *Kirie* will show her effort to create a bridge for different disciplines through music. My interview with Dr. Lee will be in the Appendix section.

⁵ Maris Gothóni, Program notes to Unsuk Chin, *Three Concertos: Piano Concerto, Cello Concerto, Šu*, Deutsche Grammophon, 481-0971, 2014, CD.

This essay aims to show how culture plays a role in developing one's musical identity and language; how a similar cultural background affected these three composers differently and how their interaction with East and West culture is shown in their piano works.

Chapter 2: Chen Yi

Chen Yi was the first Chinese woman to receive a Master a Master of Arts in music composition from the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. She then went abroad to USA for her Doctor of Musical Arts at Columbia University and moved to the United States to continue her career after graduation. Chen Yi often quote Chinese folk songs in her composition, her expertise in Chinese folk songs was developed during the Cultural Revolution when she was taken to a work camp in the countryside and played “revolutionary songs” on her violin for the other workmen. Chen Yi’s compositions are famously known for the fusion of Chinese and Western elements; she is described as a composer who bonds different cultures “transcending cultural and musical boundaries.”⁶

Although Chen Yi is the pioneer of writing compositions with influences both of East and West, she did not learn about traditional Chinese folk songs until The Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution was an important time for Chen Yi as she started to build her musical identity as a musician and composer:

Two years of hardship, like a working in the countryside, educated me a lot with the basic language. There is my native language that the farmers spoke. Actually it’s the first time for me to realize that this is my native language! It’s not classical. It’s not Mozart! [Both laugh] It’s not Beethoven that I’m used to. Then I started to realize that I should find my own voice. After all this working a patch of ground, hard working with farmers, living together and going to mountains, I realized that I have to think into my cultural roots very deeply in order to find my own voice, to have a unique language to speak in.⁷

⁶ KT Wong, “Chen Yi,” KT Wong Foundation, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.ktwong.org/collaborators/chen-yi>.

⁷ Bruce Duffie, “Composer Chen Yi: A Conversation with Bruce Duffie,” accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.bruceduffie.com/chenyi.html>.

Chen Yi's parents were both classically trained musician, and she grew up under the influence of Western music by Mozart and Beethoven, therefore she naturally used Western compositional techniques in her works, combined with Chinese folk elements which is her part of her upbringing:

Since I speak naturally in my mother tongue, in my music there is Chinese blood, Chinese philosophy and customs. However, music is a universal language. Although I have studied Western music extensively and deeply since my childhood, and I write for all available instruments and voices, I think that my musical language is a unique combination and a natural hybrid of all influences from my background.⁸

To Chen Yi, music is a universally inclusive language that bonds different cultures, and this is also an important philosophy that she conveys through her compositions. When asked on her opinion on composing music that has a combination of cultural influences:

I believe that music should be a universal language that is understood by all; that is, it should be something that could help to bridge the gap between people of different cultures. In my own music, I tend to draw freely on the musical elements that I feel should sound at the particular moments of the piece. The different compositional devices provide us composers with more possibilities.⁹

In her piano compositions, Chen Yi gives equal parts to the Chinese and Western elements, and we can see that she believes that both cultures should equally coexist.¹⁰ *Duo Ye* is one of Chen Yi's early piano works, composed in 1984 and it received first prize in the 4th National Composition Competition in China in 1985. In 1980, when Chen Yi was studying in the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, she travelled to Guangxi province with other classmates to study the folk tunes of the Yao and Dong ethnic groups. At the event they performed a traditional song and dance – Duo Ye. Duo Ye is a slow dance

⁸ John De Clef Piñeiro, "An Interview with Chen Yi," New Music Connoisseur, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://hsumusic.blogspot.com/2012/04/chen-yi-interview-these-are-excerpts.html>.

⁹ Wendy Lee, *Chinese Composers, Western Piano Works: Unpacking Aspects of Musical Influence* (Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2007), 130-131.

¹⁰ Chih-Suei Shaw, "Discourses of Identity in Contemporary East Asian Music: Chen Yi, Unsuk Chin and Karen Tanaka" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2016), 38.

where a chorus stands in a circle surrounding a bonfire while singing the short phrase “Ya Duo Ye,” and a lead singer improvises the lyrics of a song made with short tunes. The Dong minorities passionately sang and danced to welcome Chen and her classmates, and she was very touched and deeply impressed by their enthusiasm and energy. “Ya Duo Ye” is an onomatopoeia that is sung as a refrain with intervals of major seconds, minor thirds, and perfect fourths. Chen Yi took the pitch material and the three intervals from the chorus in Duo Ye as the melodic motive in *Duo Ye* to form the dancing rhythmic chorale as the accompaniment. The call and response element in Duo Ye dance is shown deliberately with the lower and upper registers of the piano. The ornamented singing is another characteristic of Chinese folk tune style, and Chen Yi imitates the singing style by decorating the main melody with grace notes.¹¹



Example 2.1. Chen Yi “Duo Ye”, mm. 74-77.

Copyright © 1985 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Other than capturing the spirit of the Duo Ye dance, the rhythmic base of the piece is inspired by two traditional Chinese rhythms: “The Sum of Eight” and “The Golden Olive.” These two rhythmic organizations originated from a Chinese traditional percussion ensemble named *Shifan Luogu*. The meter design, groupings of notes and the contrasts and combinations between high and low parts are all inspired by these two rhythmic organizations.¹²

There have been a number of analyses of the compositional techniques and structure of *Duo Ye*, with slightly different conclusions, but all agree on the Western compositional influence shown in the piece. Xiaole Li suggested that *Duo Ye* is designed in five parts showing musical characteristics from

¹¹ Chen Yi, “Tradition and Creation,” *Current Musicology* 16/17 (1999): 60-61.

¹² *Ibid.*, 62-63.

variation, rhapsody, concert, fantasy, and sonata. Li argues that *Duo Ye* is successful and significant not only because of its traditional and national elements, but also because of Chen Yi's combining of Chinese folk idioms and aesthetics with characteristics of Bartók and Stravinsky like pantonal, polymodal techniques and frequent change of meters etc.¹³ We can see the compositional techniques of 20th-century contemporary composers, but the structure is similar to a modified sonata form. In *Duo Ye*, the overall design is a single-movement sonata form, with mm. 1-116 as the exposition, mm. 116-120 as the development and mm. 121-134 as the recapitulation, ending with a coda starting at m.135 to the end of the piece.¹⁴

The exposition, which consists of two themes and their fragmentations, shows the “duality of two contrasting themes” characterized in 19th- century sonata form instead of the “tonal duality” in 18th century.¹⁵ The second theme is centered on a key area that is a tritone away from the primary tonal center C#¹⁶ instead of the usual dominant key area in the traditional sonata form. Although the development and recapitulation are relatively short compared to the exposition, the original material resurfaces, and the primary tonal center is resolved and confirmed.¹⁷ When looking closely into the design of *Duo Ye*, it perfectly illustrates how Chen Yi described her musical language as an “unique combination and a natural hybrid of all influences from my background”.¹⁸

Another example that perfectly illustrates how Chen Yi translates her own culture and background into her compositions is *Guessing* (1989). Like many other of Chen Yi's piano compositions, *Guessing* is based on a famous Southern Chinese folk song and nursery tune *Cai Diao* (which translates to “guessing the tune” in English) and Chen Yi gave the English title *Tune of Question-Answer about*

¹³ Xiaole Li, “Chen Yi's Piano Music: Chinese Aesthetics and Western Models” (PhD diss., University of Hawaii, 2003), 161.

¹⁴ Wendy Lee, *Chinese Composers, Western Piano Works: Unpacking Aspects of Musical Influence* (Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2007), 17-18.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Wendy Lee, *Chinese Composers, Western Piano Works: Unpacking Aspects of Musical Influence* (Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2007), 22.

¹⁷ Berry Wallace, *Form in Music*, 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 200.

¹⁸ John De Clef Piñeiro, “An Interview with Chen Yi,” *New Music Connoisseur*, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://hsumusic.blogspot.com/2012/04/chen-yi-interview-these-are-excerpts.html>.

Common Sense. In this piece, Chen Yi again combines Western compositional techniques like polyphony and complex rhythms with Chinese folk song instead of following the structure of the folk song strictly.

In her program notes of *Guessing* she wrote:

I often remember the very popular Chinese folk song “Guessing” which is in a humorous antiphonal singing style. For this piano piece, I took a fragment of the tune from the song and developed it in pitch, range, dynamic, rhythm and expression, using basic technique of piano performance. The piece shows a simple and rustic feeling in an obviously strong Chinese musical style.¹⁹

The tune *Guessing* is energetic, playful and humorous and Chen Yi uses off-beat accents, syncopations, ornaments, combination of slurs and staccatos to create the atmosphere. Sudden changes of meter and rhythmic patterns also add to the whimsical effect, and the drone-like perfect fifths and octaves in the left hand create a percussive effect. The form of the piece is a form of theme and five variations with transitional sections.²⁰ Chen Yi utilized different intervals, dynamics, and articulations throughout the piece to show the call and response. For example, in the first variation, the call or question is represented by octaves in the left hand, and the response or answer is the fourths that come afterwards.²¹

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the piano piece "Guessing". Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The first system, starting at measure 40, shows a rhythmic pattern in the right hand. The left hand features a "Call" pattern in the bass clef, consisting of a series of octaves (G2, G3, G4, G5) highlighted in yellow, followed by a "Response" pattern in the treble clef consisting of a series of fourths (G4, C5, F5, Bb5) highlighted in purple. The second system, starting at measure 45, shows a similar pattern but with the "Call" in the bass clef (G3, G4, G5, G6) and the "Response" in the treble clef (G4, C5, F5, Bb5). The labels "Call" and "Response" are placed below the respective musical phrases in yellow and purple text.

Example 2.2. Chen Yi “Guessing”, mm. 40-49.

Copyright © 1985 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

¹⁹ Yi, Chen, *Guessing* (King of Prussia, Pennsylvania: Theodore Presser, 2000).

²⁰ Lirui Xiong, “Selected Solo Piano Works by Three Living Asian Female Composers” (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2022), 24.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

In the third variation, the call or question has a thicker texture with chords and loud dynamics, and the response or answer has a thinner texture with runnings and soft dynamics.²² The thoughtful and deliberate design by Chen Yi can help the audience understand the characteristics of the folk song easily, even without detailed analysis on the piece.

Example 2.3. Chen Yi “Guessing”, mm. 100-110.

Copyright © 1985 by Theodore Presser Company. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Because of Chen Yi’s background and upbringing, the “East meets West” fusion comes naturally to the composer. In *Duo Ye*, *Guessing* and other works by Chen Yi, we can see how modern piano playing technique and Western compositional techniques do not undermine the traditional Chinese elements, but instead they complement each other and create a special sonority on the piano that can not be found in other piano compositions.

²² Ibid., 30.

Chapter 3: Unsuk Chin

Unsuk Chin is one of the most influential composers from Korea in the 20th century. She self-taught the piano at a young age and studied composition at Seoul National University. She then moved to Germany to study with György Ligeti at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg. She won many international prizes including the Grawemeyer Award in 2004, the Wihuri Sibelius Prize in 2017 etc. that brought her attention and fame nationally and internationally.²³ Chin is known for her music that is not based on any specific culture, and her opposition to categorization, but she has expressed admiration for Anton Webern, Pierre Boulez, Iannis Xenakis, Luciano Berio and others.²⁴

As another émigré composer from Korea to be internationally known after Isang Yun, they are similar in many aspects. Isang Yun was also born in Korea, travelled to Europe (Paris Conservatory) to study composition, and lastly settled in Berlin Germany. Yun's music is famous for its cultural fusion of traditional Korean music and Western avant garde techniques, his music uses musical devices that is associated to Korean traditional instruments or music. On the contrary, we see very little involvement of Korean traditional culture in Chin's music. In an interview, Chin has explained the difference of upbringing between herself and Isang Yun, that led to a different relationship with traditional Korean music:

Isang Yun was born in 1917, at the time when traditional Korean music was still actually played in the villages. However, I grew up with European music and almost never heard any folk music. [. . .] Besides, there was a generational issue; that is, the court music tradition had already been interrupted by the Japanese occupation of Korea in 1910, roughly 50 years before I was born. Therefore, I had a very different relationship with the Korean music tradition from the very beginning. This resulted in some differences between Yun and me. [. . .] Many people asked me

²³ “Composer Biography: Unsuk Chin,” Boosey & Hawkes, accessed January 18, 2024, https://www.boosey.com/pages/cr/composer/composer_main?composerid=2754&ttype=BIOGRAPHY.

²⁴ Hae Young Yoo, “Western Music in Modern Korea: A Study of Two Women Composers” (DMA diss., Rice University, 2005).

later why I did not go to study with Yun in Germany. But it was never an issue of discussion and, musically speaking, I believed that studying with Yun would not help me in the slightest.²⁵

Chin shares that traditional music of her birth country was not part of her upbringing, contrary to the common belief that Asian composers are usually familiar to their local culture, and so it was not part of Chin's compositional process to include traditional Korean music. Other than Chin's background of limited exposure to Korean traditional music, her attitude towards incorporating musical materials that are "related" to Korea also results in the infrequent appearance of traditional materials in her piano compositions. Chin does not want to be categorized as a "Korean composer, and so she avoids using Korean materials in her works.

Chin is against categorization and so she always stressed on different occasions that her music does not belong to any school; she wants to write music that speaks to everyone; and her audiences can get something out of her compositions even if they do not know anything.²⁶ When asked in an interview whether she has studied Korean traditional music, she indicated that she would prefer using materials from other origins, because "when any one uses Korean material it becomes obvious right away, so I don't want to use it."²⁷ Her goal is not pursue a fusion of East and West, but to create her own music realizing her own ideas and drawing from sources with which she resonates.²⁸

On the rare occasions that Chin writes for traditional Asian instruments or shows explicit Asian culture influences in her works, she does so in such a way that the traditional elements do not overshadow her ideas in the work. For example, in *Su for Sheng and Orchestra*, she mentioned in an interview that she wanted to avoid writing a direct melody because it would sound like Asian traditional music. She is only

²⁵ Chih-Suei Shaw, "Discourses of Identity in Contemporary East Asian Music: Chen Yi, Unsuk Chin and Karen Tanaka" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2016), 108.

²⁶ Ibid., 146.

²⁷ Hae Young Yoo, "Western Music in Modern Korea: A Study of Two Women Composers" (DMA diss., Rice University, 2005), 143.

²⁸ Chih-Suei Shaw, "Discourses of Identity in Contemporary East Asian Music: Chen Yi, Unsuk Chin and Karen Tanaka" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2016), 107.

interested in writing her own music and so she did not write any melody, but only melodic lines presented through harmonies from different groups.²⁹

Instead of Korean or Asian elements, we can frequently see “Western” influences in Chin’s compositions. *Die Troerinnen* (1986) which is an orchestral piece for female singers, women’s choir and orchestra, is based on the texts from Euripides’ play *The Trojan Women*. The opening of Chin’s *Cello Concerto* (2009) quotes the first few bars of Claude Debussy’s piano prelude *Des pas sur la neige*.³⁰ Nevertheless, non-European traditions can also be seen in the works, especially Gamelan, which she mentioned in an interview that she was exposed to through her teacher Ligeti. She described Gamelan having “universal qualities but Korean music is understood only by Koreans.”³¹ Although avoiding quoting or include Korean music, she is open to utilizing Western and non-Western music in her works:

In every piece, I try to create certain colours or nuances which don’t exist in European music. Of course, I compose “contemporary music” which has its tradition in the West and my music is always written for standard musical instruments. But, because of my cultural origin, I have a certain aversion to the typical timbre of the European orchestra - for me, it is just an institution from the 19th century - and I have a great deal of affinity with non-European musics. So, I always try to put a completely different colour into my compositions through my experience with the music from outside of Europe.”³²

Because of Chin’s obvious avoidance of including Korean traditional materials in her works, she is seldom included in scholarship that discusses cultural identity in music, but in an interview, she said:

²⁹ Sarang Kim, “Changjak Gugak Music in the Twenty First Century: An Overview with Focus on Three Western Trained Korean Composers: Unsuk Chin, Il Ryun Chung, and June Hee Lim” (DMA. Diss., University of California Santa Cruz, 2018), 25.

³⁰ Chih-Suei Shaw, "Discourses of Identity in Contemporary East Asian Music: Chen Yi, Unsuk Chin and Karen Tanaka" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2016), 113.

³¹ Hae Young Yoo, “Western Music in Modern Korea: A Study of Two Women Composers” (DMA diss., Rice University, 2005), 143.

³² Boosey and Hawkes. “Unsuk Chin discusses her new Double Concerto.” Boosey and Hawkes. January 2003. Accessed November 15, 2003. <https://www.boosey.com/teaching/news/Unsuk-Chin-discusses-her-new-Double-Concerto/10381>.

But to avoid misunderstandings: I am for diversity, for the equal existential rights of different musical cultures but I am against the so-called "world music", which is for the most part only a commercial banalization and exploitation of the original oral music cultures, which are in fact often facing the treath of their disappearance and extinction.³³

To Chin, music is a widely accessible musical language, and just like a society that is made up of different authentic cultural origins, art and music is also created through mixing and exchanging, therefore it does not make sense to categorize music according to cultural origin, and there should not be such thing as "Asian music" or "German music."³⁴ She welcomes listeners to take away whatever they want from her works in today's world of global, international musical culture.³⁵

UnsuK Chin's *Piano Etudes* (1995-2003) are her only works for solo piano. The title pays tribute to past Western composers who have written Etudes for the piano like Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, and Ligeti. and they represent a level of technical difficulties or challenges for the performer. Chin has written 6 etudes to date, and each of them has a subtitle: Etude No. 1 "In C," No. 2 "Sequenzen," No. 3 "Scherzo ad libitum," No. 4 "Scalen," No. 5 "Toccata," and No. 6 "Grains." From the titles we can see Chin referring to different musical terms or practices: "Scherzo ad libitum" and "Toccata" are musical genres and "Sequenzen" and "Scalen" are musical techniques. The etudes illustrate what Chin described as "creating a world with reference points set in Western and non-Western in equal measure."³⁶ We can see the many influences of Western composers like Ligeti, Bartok, Messiaen, and non-Western elements like gamelan music. There are not obvious Korean traditional influences shown in the etudes, as Chin said

³³ US Asians, "UnsuK Chin interview: Daring to Cross Many Boundaries," *US Asians* (blog), accessed November 15, 2023. <https://usasians-articles.tripod.com/unsuk-chin-music.html>.

³⁴ Chih-Suei Shaw, "Discourses of Identity in Contemporary East Asian Music: Chen Yi, UnsuK Chin and Karen Tanaka" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2016), 106.

³⁵ US Asians, "UnsuK Chin interview: Daring to Cross Many Boundaries," *US Asians* (blog), accessed November 15, 2023. <https://usasians-articles.tripod.com/unsuk-chin-music.html>.

³⁶ Boosey and Hawkes. "UnsuK Chin discusses her new Double Concerto." Boosey and Hawkes. January 2003. Accessed November 15, 2003. <https://www.boosey.com/teaching/news/UnsuK-Chin-discusses-her-new-Double-Concerto/10381>.

that she does not like to quote or insert Korean music, and her interest in traditional music is more shown in her orchestral works than in the piano music.³⁷

As Chin's teacher, Ligeti's influence on Chin can be seen in her works clearly. Critic David Babcock has compared her works to Ligeti's and described that "its flexibility and playfulness recall Ligeti (a sense of humour still seems to be a rare thing in contemporary music), but the actual harmonic language is quite different - less systematic, more spontaneous."³⁸ Chin's Etude No. 1 "in C" uses the overtone series of C, and in Etude No. 5 "Toccata", she uses harmonies that are derived from the C overtone series. Ligeti also favored using overtones in his works for example the *Hamburg Concerto*.³⁹

Ligeti was greatly influenced by Béla Bartók who is also Hungarian, and we can also see Bartók's influence in Chin's compositions. The most recognizable feature of Bartók that Ligeti and Chin both utilized is the *aksak* rhythm. *Aksak* is a rhythm from Turkish folk music that is subdivided unevenly to create a "limping" or "slumping" effect.⁴⁰ In Etude No. 3 "Scherzo ad libitum", we can see asymmetrical (3+3+2) *aksak* rhythm.

Example 3.1. Unsuk Chin Etude No. 3 "Scherzo ad libitum" mm. 27-32.

© Copyright 1995 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

Solely for the use by Prudence Poon

³⁷ Hae Young Yoo, "Western Music in Modern Korea: A Study of Two Women Composers" (DMA diss., Rice University, 2005), 146.

³⁸ David Babcock, "Korean Composers in Profile," *Tempo*, no. 192 (1995): 19.

³⁹ Soo Kyung Kim, "A study of Unsuk Chin's Piano Etudes" (DMA diss., University of Georgia, 2012), 17.

⁴⁰ Kurt Reinhard, Martin Stokes and Ursula Reinhard. "Turkey," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deanne Root, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/grovemusic/display/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000044912>.

Other than *aksak* rhythm, ostinato, which is another Ligeti's signature, is also seen in Chin's etude No. 2 "Sequenzen."

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Unsuik Chin's Etude No. 2, "Sequenzen". The first system, starting at measure 28, features a complex rhythmic pattern in the bass clef with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = c 120$. The upper staff contains a melodic line with various ornaments and dynamics, including a *cresc.* marking and a *ff sub mf non legato, marcato* instruction. The second system, starting at measure 31, shows a continuation of the bass line with a *cresc.* marking and a triplet of eighth notes. The upper staff features a melodic phrase marked *mp* with a slur and a fermata.

Example 3.2. Unsuik Chin Etude No. 2 "Sequenzen" mm. 28-34.

© Copyright 1995 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

Solely for the use by Prudence Poon

Ligeti uses ostinatos significantly in his works, for example in his Etude No. 4 *Fanfare*, but he usually uses exact ostinato while Chin uses mostly rhythmic ostinatos with variations and permutations.⁴¹

Vivacissimo, molto ritmico, ♩ = 63, con allegria e slancio

3+2+3/8

mp

pp sempre legato, quasi senza pedale

pp sempre

Example 3.3. Ligeti Etude No. 4 “Fanfares” mm. 1-8.

Copyright ©1986 Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz, Germany

All Rights Reserved

Used by permission of European American Music Distributors Company, sole U.S. and Canadian agent for Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG, Mainz, Germany, publisher and copyright owner.

Chin has expressed her admiration for Gamelan and how it can be understood by everyone universally; in these piano etudes we can also see gamelan music being presented in different ways. In the first etude “In C”, the polyphonic texture that consists of three layers each with its own role, which resembles the three groups in a Gamelan ensemble (main melodic materials, embellished melodies, rhythmic figures).⁴² The base layer is a long-sustained C as the pedal tone in the low register. The middle layer are notes marked with *sforzando* and spread out in the top and middle staves in the score, they are overtones based on the note C and have a bell-like texture. The top layer is the melody marked with

⁴¹ Hae Young Yoo, “Western Music in Modern Korea: A Study of Two Women Composers” (DMA diss., Rice University, 2005), 104.

⁴² Ibid., 92.

sempre legato combined with chordal progressions on the top staff.

The image shows a musical score for Unsuk Chin's Etude No. 1 "In C", measures 1 through 5. The score is written for piano, with a treble clef on the top staff and a bass clef on the bottom staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes several performance instructions: "depress silently" in the first measure, "sost ped al fine" at the bottom left, "sfz" (sforzando) in the first and second measures, "p" (piano) in the third measure, and "mp" (mezzo piano) in the fourth measure. A dashed line above the staff indicates an "ossia" (alternative) version of the music starting at measure 8. The score also includes "sempre mezzo stacc" (always mezzo staccato) and "sempre legato" (always legato) instructions. The notation features complex chordal textures and melodic lines, with some notes marked with accents and slurs.

Example 3.4. Unsuk Chin Etude No. 1 “In C” mm. 1-5.

© Copyright 1995 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

Solely for the use by Prudence Poon

In No. 4 Etude “Scalen,” she repeatedly uses a figure of decorated clustered chords that has an effect like the Gamelan gong.

The image shows a musical score for Unsuik Chin's Etude No. 4, "Scalen," measures 98-104. The score is in common time (C) with a tempo of 152-168 and is marked "tempo rubato". It features a piano (p) dynamic at the beginning and a forte (f) dynamic later. The music is characterized by decorated clustered chords in the bass line, which are described as having an effect like the Gamelan gong. The score is written for piano and includes a treble and bass clef.

Example 3.5. Unsuik Chin Etude No. 4 “Scalen” mm. 98-104.

© Copyright 1995 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

Solely for the use by Prudence Poon

Due to the background and upbringing of Unsuik Chin, she chooses not to insert obvious Korean traditional music because of the fear of being categorized as a “Korean composer”, but instead she uses other musical traditions that she admires and considers that as her culture background and musical language.

Chapter 4: Wendy Lee

Wendy Wan-Ki Lee is currently an Associate Professor of Music Composition at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). She received her Ph.D. in Composition and Theory from the University of Michigan. Prior to her faculty role at CUHK, she has held teaching positions at the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music and State University of New York at Binghamton.

As a composer, Wendy Lee is the recipient of numerous commissions and honors, including those from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Aspen Music Festival, Banff School of Arts, Chicago Ensemble, Contemporary Record Society, Florence Gould Foundation, Hong Kong Arts Development Council, Hong Kong Composers' Guild, Mobius Ensemble, Orford Arts Centre, Phoenix Concerts, Renée B. Fisher Composer Award, Government of Canada, and many others. Her compositions have been performed by many leading contemporary music ensembles, and at significant music festivals and concert venues throughout Asia, North America, and Europe. Recently, she was awarded a Humanities Fellowship from the Chinese University of Hong Kong to work on a project that involves music, science, and dance. This collaboration culminated in performances in the U.S. and Switzerland, and publication of a DVD and journal article; the highlights of such were featured in Detroit Performs on Detroit Public Television. As a theorist, Wendy is interested in interdisciplinary research. Her solo piano works *Macromusophagy* and *Kirie* shows her effort on contributing to disciplines outside of music. Her work on music by Chinese American composers has appeared in several journal articles. Her book "Chinese Composers, Western Piano Works: Unpacking Aspects of Musical Influence" looks into piano works by Chinese composers that combine Chinese traditional practices and aspects of Western art music.⁴³

Although born and raised in Hong Kong, Wendy Lee has a relatively Westernized background, and also has lived in Hong Kong under the British rule. Because Chinese folk tunes are not part of her upbringing, we rarely see traditional Chinese elements in her compositions especially piano works. Due to

⁴³ Wendy Lee, *Chinese Composers, Western Piano Works: Unpacking Aspects of Musical Influence* (Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2007).

the multi-cultural nature of Hong Kong, and since Wendy Lee has studied and worked abroad for a long period of time, she has developed an open mindset and likes to discover new things and she includes new elements in every composition.⁴⁴

Macromusophagy is an example of Wendy Lee's open-mindedness, and her willingness to explore unknown territories. Written by Lee in 2011, it is an attempt to explain the process of macroautophagy through this solo piano piece, and to explore how macroautophagy, which is a scientific concept, inspires musical relationships.⁴⁵ Macroautophagy is a complex process that involves "dynamic membrane rearrangements in which parts of the cytoplasm are sequestered within double-membrane phagophores."⁴⁶ The piece consists of 6 sections that depicts the different stages of one autophagy cycle.⁴⁷ The goal of this piece is to present a summary of macroautophagy in a way that is interesting and understandable, so that the audience will be able to understand the basic steps of this complex scientific process.⁴⁸ Characteristics of macroautophagy is translated to musical aspects: the overall duration and tempo of the piece is related to the duration of one complete autophagy cycle, the tempo and meter changes and phrasing of the piece are related to the transition of autophagy stages, the climax, rhythm, and dynamics of the piece is related to how active the molecules are in the autophagy cycle etc.⁴⁹

In this piece, Wendy Lee sees one of composer's role in this piece as similar to an "active reporter" who is "surrounded by all the excitement that happens from within the cell in the heat of the moment". The composer is someone who experiences the changes at each stage in the autophagy cycle and expresses and interprets the scientific data collected through music.⁵⁰ *Macromusophagy* perfectly shows composer Wendy Lee's interest in interdisciplinary research, she aims to connect different disciplines through her composition.

⁴⁴ From my interview with Wendy Lee, interview transcript included in Appendix 1.

⁴⁵ W-K Wendy Lee and Daniel J Klionsky, "Macromusophagy: A solo piano musical representation of macroautophagy," *Autophagy* 10, no. 5(2014): 723.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 721.

⁴⁷ Score in Appendix 2

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 735.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Other than cross-disciplinary interest shown in *Macromusophagy*, Wendy Lee's another piano composition *Kirie* composed in 2009 shows her interest in non-Chinese culture. *Kirie* is “cut pictures” in Japanese, which is the art of paper cutting, it is first originated in Xinjiang, China in the 6th century as decorations. Common themes of Japanese *Kirie* include illustration of the daily lives of peasants and honoring theatrical and legendary characters. *Kirie* is a profound traditional art that emphasize on the multiple layers of colorful dyed paper and the sharpness of the paper-cut edges. Wendy Lee used pentatonic layerings and wide-spaced intervals like perfect fourths and fifths to show the beauty of *Kirie*.

The image shows a musical score for Wendy Lee's piano composition "Kirie", measures 116-122. The score is written for piano and consists of two systems. The first system starts at measure 116 and ends at measure 119. The second system starts at measure 120 and ends at measure 122. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 4/4. The music features wide intervals and pentatonic layerings. Dynamics include *f* (forte) in measure 117, *ff* (fortissimo) in measure 120, and *sub. ppp* (sub-pianissimo) in measure 122. The score is divided into two systems by a dashed line. The first system has a treble clef and a bass clef. The second system has a treble clef and a bass clef. The score is written in G major and 4/4 time.

Example 4.1. Wendy Lee “Kirie”, mm. 116-122.

Copyright © 2013 by Hong Kong Composers' Guild. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

The symmetry of paper cutting is shown as quintuplets, sextuplets, 5/8 or 7/8 meters in the design of the piece. Most importantly, the composer would like to deliver a message, through her well-thought-out composition, that things that look simple upon first sight are actually intricate, like Japanese Kirie.⁵¹



Example 4.2. Wendy Lee “Kirie”, mm. 30-34.

Copyright © 2013 by Hong Kong Composers' Guild. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Although we see more of Wendy Lee’s interdisciplinary research in her compositions and do not see much Chinese culture materials in Wendy Lee’s compositions, her book “Chinese Composers, Western Piano Works: Unpacking Aspects of Musical Influence” examines piano works by Chinese composers that combine Chinese traditional practices and aspects of Western art music. The composer analyzed Chen Yi’s *Duo Ye*, Bright Sheng’s *My Song*, and Chen Qigang’s *Instants d’un Opéra de Pékin* to show how Western compositional devices like Sonata form, variation form and so on, complement the Chinese musical characteristics in these piano pieces.⁵² Wendy Lee’s research shows effort by Chinese composers to entertain the issue of “East-meets-West” and to integrate their home culture with Western compositional techniques. Wendy Lee’s theoretical analysis shows how Chinese composers transform Chinese musical characteristics into sonorities that can be produced on the piano, which is an instrument historically originated from the West. One of the signature Chinese musical characteristic is the abundance of folk songs and traditional instruments. Pentatonicism is often seen in folk songs and so pentatonic scales are often used by Chinese composers.⁵³ The importance of singing is also stressed by

⁵¹ Wendy Lee. *Kirie*, in *Resonating Colors: Piano Works*, ed. Yip Ho-kwen Austin, 22-29 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Composers' Guild, 2013).

⁵² Wendy Lee, *Chinese Composers, Western Piano Works: Unpacking Aspects of Musical Influence* (Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2007), 8.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

Wendy Lee in the book. The three piano pieces that she focuses on are all related to traditional folk singing in China, which is different from Western classical art songs.⁵⁴

From Wendy Lee's book, we can see that she embraces the idea of East-West fusion, and she explores underlying sonic influences and techniques adapted to the piano in these piano compositions by Chinese composers, hoping that this will not only help pianists perform these pieces in a more culturally informed way,⁵⁵ but also to take these approaches and extend them in different ways to assist the performance of music deriving from various cultural backgrounds.⁵⁶ During my interview with Wendy Lee, she mentioned that some perspectives have changed since she wrote the book in 2012. The three composers Chen Yi, Bright Sheng and Chen Qigang that she analysed and interviewed are now the "older" generation of Chinese composers that needed to write with Western structure in order to fit into the Western world. They all survived through the Cultural Revolution and were brought up with Chinese traditional folk tunes, so they have the folk elements naturally embedded in their compositions. Contrary to the "older" generation of Chinese composers who wanted to wash away their Chinese influence at times, young composers today have more freedom to build their own cultural identity and the traditional Chinese elements can be an advantage because of a sense of authenticity.⁵⁷

Wendy Lee's way of dealing with her cultural identity and developing her own unique musical language is different from Chen Yi and Unsuk Chin. She is interested in creating and conveying music in new and creative ways, using music to connect different disciplines. This provides another possibility and perspective for composers and musicians that want to explore more outside their home culture and other traditional music influences.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 4-5.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 6-7.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁷ From my interview with Wendy Lee, interview transcript included in Appendix.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Chen Yi, Unsuk Chin, and Wendy Lee all have a similar background in leaving their home country in East Asia to study in the West. After graduation, Chen Yi and Unsuk Chin settled in a foreign country, Wendy Lee has worked in different schools in United States and decided to return to Hong Kong. Although the three composers have similar backgrounds, the difference in their upbringing shaped their musical identity differently.

For Chen Yi, Chinese traditional music is something that is implanted in her, she grew up learning everything about it – the repertoire, language, instruments, and also the philosophy and thinking behind the culture and the music. It was Chen Yi’s natural language and mother tongue. Chen Yi described that Western classical music is “inside her soul”, but her Chinese root can never be changed like “you can never get rid of the blood” even when her style grows richer and is more inclusive to other cultures.⁵⁸ It is natural for Chen Yi to incorporate Chinese elements in her piano compositions with Western influences. In *Duo Ye*, we can see Western musical characteristics in a traditional Chinese folk tune. In *Guessing*, it is another folk song sang when children are playing riddle game written in a theme and variation style. Chen Yi’s musical language mostly consist of the Western musical styles and traditions that she grew up with, and the Chinese traditional folk songs that she learnt during the Cultural Revolution in China.

While composing with traditional tunes serves as a comfort to Chen Yi, it becomes a problematic issue for Unsuk Chin. Unsuk Chin believes that including any obvious Korean link in her composition will lead to her being categorized as a Korean composer or sn Asian composer; whereas Chen Yi did not mind the label she was given and also admitted that she was commonly called Chinese American composer.⁵⁹ In addition, Chin did not grow up with a lot of traditional Korean tunes and so it was not part of her upbringing or background, it is not something that is natural to her. Instead, she utilizes other

⁵⁸ Frank J. Oteri, “He Said, She Said: Zhou Long and Chen Yi,” *New Music USA* (blog). August 1, 2006, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://newmusicusa.org/nmbx/he-said-she-said-zhou-long-and-chen-yi/2/>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

different traditions that she finds inspiring like Bartok, Ligeti, and also Gamelan music. Although she avoids using culture of her origin, her interests in Western and other non-Western cultures are shown in her *Piano Etudes*. In the *Piano Etudes*, the title itself is a reference to a Western genre, we also see ostinato and *aksak* rhythms which is frequently used by Bartok and Ligeti, and the imitation of Indonesia Gamelan ensemble. Unsuk Chin's musical language mostly consist of musical styles of 20th century European composers like Bartok and Ligeti, and also non-European culture like Gamelan.

Wendy Lee holds a third position where she uses music as a tool to connect disciplines instead of relating them to culture. Like Unsuk Chin, she was not brought up with traditional music, although understanding the characteristics of Chinese traditional tunes, she is not familiar with them enough to be constantly quoting them in the manner that Chen Yi or other composers who survived the Cultural Revolution in China did. Wendy Lee lived in Hong Kong before studying abroad and Hong Kong had been a British colony for more than 150 years. The multicultural environment in Hong Kong helped the composer to have an open mind, but also results in the challenge of building her own cultural identity. Lee was not discouraged by this, instead she broke through the barriers and used her music to present other non-music cultures like papercutting and even a scientific research autophagy. Lee's musical language is about creating a bridge across boundaries through music, and always creating something new and different, compared to her prior compositions.

Through the three case studies, we can see the diverse musical identities resulting from the difference in era, country, political environments, family background and so on. I hope that this essay can provide more perspectives in how culture does not necessary play a heavy role in one's musical development. A composer or musician does not necessary represent the culture of their birthplace. We should have the freedom to develop our own cultural and musical identity as we wish, without any restrictions from nationality or ethnicity.

Appendix 1: Interview with Wendy Lee

October 19, 2023

Hong Kong

The following is an English summary of the interview that was conducted in Cantonese.

What are your thoughts on writing for a western instrument using non-Western source material?

Usually when a composer writes for a Western instrument using non-Western source material, they try to use the essence of the Chinese musical elements, and somehow use the instrument to capture and execute these sounds. For example for Chinese folk singing style there are a lot of repeated notes and vibrato that is hard to achieve on the piano which is a fixed-intonation instrument, so sometimes they would use grace notes and runs to imitate those wavering vocal sounds of folk singing. When they use traditional folk melodies, they sometimes lengthen the phrasing and slightly alternate the rhythm to achieve a “revival” effect, but the listeners will still be able to relate to traditional music when they listen to it. And because these pieces are not a transcription of Chinese traditional music but are their own creation inspired by Chinese traditional music, so there is a personal color in their compositions, for example combining dissonances or using syncopated rhythms. In Chinese folk singing or instrumental playing it is usually very free without the restriction of bar lines, and usually they would try to capture that kind of flexibility by using irregular meters, or adding grace notes.

What is your opinion on composing music that has a combination of cultural influences?

My upbringing is not so much into Chinese traditional music and its aesthetics, but of course growing up in Hong Kong I am influenced by the Chinese culture. But my own music I don't use or apply any folk tunes, but I do like octatonic or pentatonic sounds which exists my compositions. The most obvious example is in my string quartet *Crossroads*, there is an harmonic string section where I use pentatonic

harmonies, there are also pizzicato with bending which I imagine the sound is similar to the chamber setting in Chinese traditional music that has a serene atmosphere. But in my other piano works, for example *Kirie*, the title means paper cutting, I have used many pentatonic layerings, spatial and resonant chordal texture which resembles the spaciousness in Chinese traditional music. There is also paper cutting art in Chinese culture, they usually do it on red paper, while Japanese Kirie does it on mostly black paper. It is important to appreciate the papers but also the stories behind the beautiful images. Chinese music's subtle lines and sonorities is something that I am very into. In *Kirie*, there is a rhythmical section with sudden accents and syncopated rhythms which I have thought of Chinese percussion. So I think the Chinese aesthetic is in me but Chinese folk song is not part of my upbringing so I do not make conscious decision to include them is not something that one of the first things that would come to my mind when composing.

How your experience abroad affect your musical identity or compositional process?

I am an open-minded person, and I care about harmonies and texture a lot in my compositions, I consider myself a traditional composer, tonal music and its rich history is very important to me. And as a pianist myself, I really love the deep sound of Russian music. In my own compositions, my priorities are the harmonic design, melodic, and the structure, I am into the sound of the piece more than the improvisatory aspect of it. My experience abroad helped me to be brave and try something new without the baggage, for example the similar style of music that young composers should do, the perception of how new music should be like etc. Whereas when I was in the US, there were so many different genres like jazz, musical theatre and I felt more comfortable to think about what I really want to say in my music that is uniquely mine.

Some composers reflect on their roots more when they are abroad, do you thinking this happened to you when you were abroad?

I studied with Bright Sheng and he is not so much into that, although his upbringing is very much Chinese and he experienced the Cultural Revolution. When I was in the US, I have not expected that I would learn some Chinese elements because Sheng's compositions have a lot of Chinese elements. But he has never said that because I am Chinese so I have to learn those elements, but because I learnt about his compositions, I also thought about my own cultural background, but his upbringing is different from mine that he worked in the troops and had to perform and memorize Chinese songs, so I didn't take it to heart that I have to find my roots but I did somehow question my own identity. The challenge is because Hong Kong is an international city and my upbringing is very westernized, a lot of times the Chinese elements are lacking. For composers like us who left Hong Kong at a young age, building our own identity is an important issue. When we see other composers who uses traditional elements, we would reflect on what is our culture. I think culture identity is a challenge for this generation of Hong Kong composers. But when there is no firm root, it makes you more open-minded sometimes, because a lot of things can become part of you and your culture. Interestingly, the older generation of Chinese composers like Chen Yi and Zhou Long actually wanted to wash away their Chinese background because they needed to fit into the Western world, that is why a lot of times they would embed Chinese elements in an overarching Western design, so that it could be more appealing to Western audiences. But now, composers having a Chinese background could be an advantage because they have an authenticity of the Chinese elements. The perspectives have changed throughout the years.

How did you have the idea for Macromusophagy?

I got the invite from Prof. Daniel J Klionsky, who is a life science professor at the University of Michigan, he wanted to use a non-scientific way to present autophagy to his students. I myself am not a big fan of scientific music like randomized computer music, because audience would shut off in a while when listening to it, so I wanted to make it a regular piece of classical music with structure. I designed the piece to be a whole macroautophagy cycle, it was very interesting to me collaborating with non-musician, communicating back and forth with the scientist. We added choreography at the end and found some

dance students to perform and record it. The whole process of the piece can be found on Youtube.

(https://youtu.be/iTI76Q76DLA?si=n0si2J_te0NtZrOF)

What do you see as your role as a composer?

When I write a piece, I think of what I want to say in the music that would mean something to the people listening to it. I am very conscious of the receiver-end, some composers write for themselves and do not care a lot about how the audience think about their pieces, but I think this doesn't give me much satisfaction; I don't mean that I need to please the audiences, but I need to be aware of what the audiences want in their experiences. At the same time, I have a few goals for every piece: do something different or new personally, present what I want to bring through my music, design the overall structure in a way that the audience will have the experience that I want them to have.

Appendix 2: Score of *Macromusophagy*

MACROMUSOPHAGY

for solo piano

Moaning ♩ = 52 Wendy Wan-Ki Lee

Piano

mp, with rubato *mf*

rit. -----

Meandering and Expanding

11 ♩ = 104

pp *mp* *molto rubato*

Sua

Sos. up

14 *Sostenuto down*

p *simile*

hold pedal *Sos. up*

Sos. down

17

mp, poco a poco agitato

Sos. down Sos. up

20

mf

Sos. down Sos. up

24

f

Sos. down Sos. up

26

sub. p

Sos. down Sos. up

28

sub. *ff*

sub. *mp*, push forward

31

fff

l.v.

l.v.

Autophagosome Formation

35

♩ = 132

p, muffled

37

energized

l.v.

Copyright © 2011 by Wendy Lee. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

39 (LH over)
mp, dreamlike *mf, preciso*
ped.

42 *molto crescendo*

45 *f*

48

Copyright © 2011 by Wendy Lee. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Fusion

* 8va is for right hand only. Left-hand pitches remain as written. Both hands should be two octaves apart throughout.

Copyright © 2011 by Wendy Lee. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

81 *8va*

Musical score for measures 81-84. Treble clef, 4/8 time signature. Measure numbers 81, 82, 83, 84 are written below the staff. A dashed line labeled "8va" spans the first two measures. The music consists of eighth notes and quarter notes in both hands.

85 *8va*

Musical score for measures 85-88. Treble clef, 4/8 time signature. Measure numbers 85, 86, 87, 88 are written below the staff. A dashed line labeled "8va" spans the first two measures. The music consists of eighth notes and quarter notes in both hands.

89 *8va* **Digestion**

Musical score for measures 89-91. Treble clef, 4/8 time signature. Measure numbers 89, 90, 91 are written below the staff. A dashed line labeled "8va" spans the first two measures. The music consists of eighth notes and quarter notes in both hands. At the end of measure 91, there is a section of chords marked "fff, con forza".

92

Musical score for measures 92-95. Treble clef, 4/8 time signature. Measure numbers 92, 93, 94, 95 are written below the staff. The music consists of eighth notes and quarter notes in both hands.

Copyright © 2011 by Wendy Lee. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

96

fff

Musical score for measures 96-98. The piece is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. The right hand features a melody of eighth notes with a descending chromatic line, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The dynamic is *fff*.

99

ff

Musical score for measures 99-101. The piece is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. The right hand features a melody of eighth notes with a descending chromatic line, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The dynamic is *ff*.

102

f, heavy and marchlike

Musical score for measures 102-105. The piece is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. At measure 102, the right hand changes to a melody of quarter notes. At measure 103, the time signature changes to 3/4, and the right hand plays a melody of quarter notes. The left hand continues with eighth notes. The dynamic is *f*, with the instruction "heavy and marchlike".

106

Musical score for measures 106-109. The piece is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. The right hand features a melody of quarter notes with a descending chromatic line, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Copyright © 2011 by Wendy Lee. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Musical score for measures 110-113. The piece is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The melody in the treble clef consists of eighth-note chords and is marked with a slur. The bass line in the bass clef features a steady eighth-note accompaniment. A dashed line labeled '8vb-' is positioned below the bass line.

Musical score for measures 114-117. The piece is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The melody in the treble clef consists of eighth-note chords and is marked with a slur. The bass line in the bass clef features a steady eighth-note accompaniment. A dynamic marking of *ff* is present at the beginning of the system. A dashed line labeled '8vb-' is positioned below the bass line.

Musical score for measures 118-120. The piece is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The melody in the treble clef consists of eighth-note chords and is marked with a slur. The bass line in the bass clef features a steady eighth-note accompaniment. A dashed line labeled '8vb-' is positioned below the bass line.

Musical score for measures 121-124. The piece is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The melody in the treble clef consists of eighth-note chords and is marked with a slur. The bass line in the bass clef features a steady eighth-note accompaniment. A dashed line labeled '8vb-' is positioned below the bass line.

Copyright © 2011 by Wendy Lee. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

125

push forward

8vb-

129

accelerando

LH over *mp*

8va-

Freely

132

pp, evaporates

ppp, somber

8vb-

Copyright © 2011 by Wendy Lee. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Bibliography

- Babcock, David. "Korean Composers in Profile." *Tempo*, no. 192 (1995): 15–21.
- Boosey and Hawkes. "Unsuik Chin discusses her new Double Concerto." Boosey and Hawkes. January 2003. Accessed November 15, 2003. <https://www.boosey.com/teaching/news/Unsuik-Chin-discusses-her-new-Double-Concerto/10381>.
- Chen, Yi. *Duo Ye*, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania: Theodore Presser, 2000.
- Chen, Yi. *Guessing*, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania: Theodore Presser, 2000.
- Chen, Yi. "Tradition and Creation." *Current Musicology* 16/17 (1999): 59-72.
- "Composer Biography: Unsuik Chin." Boosey & Hawkes. Accessed January 18, 2024. https://www.boosey.com/pages/cr/composer/composer_main?composerid=2754&tttype=BIOGRAPHY.
- Corbett, John. "Experimental Oriental: New Music and Other Others." In *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, edited by Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, 163-186. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
- De Clef Piñeiro, John. "An Interview with Chen Yi." *New Music Connoisseur*. Accessed November 15, 2023. <https://hsumusic.blogspot.com/2012/04/chen-yi-interview-these-are-excerpts.html>.
- Duffie, Bruce. "Composer Chen Yi: A Conversation with Bruce Duffie." Accessed November 15, 2023. <https://www.bruceduffie.com/chenyi.html>.
- Gothóni, Maris. Program notes to Unsuik Chin, *Three Concertos: Piano Concerto, Cello Concerto, Šu*. Deutsche Grammophon, 481-0971, 2014. CD.
- Kim, Sarang. "Changjak Gugak Music in the Twenty First Century: An Overview with Focus on Three Western Trained Korean Composers: Unsuik Chin, Il Ryun Chung, and June Hee Lim." DMA diss., University of California Santa Cruz, 2018.
- Kim, Soo Kyung. "A study of Unsuik Chin's Piano Etudes." DMA diss., University of Georgia, 2012.
- Lau, Frederick. "Fusion or Fission: The Paradox and Politics of Contemporary Chinese Avan-Garde Music." In *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music* Everett, edited by Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau, 22-39. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004.
- Lee, Wendy. *Chinese Composers, Western Piano Works: Unpacking Aspects of Musical Influence*. Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2007.
- Lee, Wendy. *Kirie*. In *Resonating Colors: Piano Works*. Edited by Yip Ho-kwen Austin, 22-29. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Composers' Guild, 2013.
- Lee, W-K Wendy, and Daniel J Klionsky. "Macromusophagy: A solo piano musical representation of macroautophagy." *Autophagy* 10, no. 5(2014): 721-735.

- Li, Xiaole. "Chen Yi's Piano Music: Chinese Aesthetics and Western Models." PhD diss., University of Hawaii, 2003.
- Oteri, J. Frank. "He Said, She Said: Zhou Long and Chen Yi." *New Music USA* (blog). August 1, 2006. Accessed November 15, 2023. <https://newmusicusa.org/nmbx/he-said-she-said-zhou-long-and-chen-yi/2/>.
- Reinhard, Kurt, Martin Stokes, and Ursula Reinhard. "Turkey." *Grove Music Online*. Edited by Deanne Root. Accessed November 15, 2023. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/grovemusic/display/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000044912>.
- Shaw, Chih-Suei. "Discourses of Identity in Contemporary East Asian Music: Chen Yi, Unsuk Chin and Karen Tanaka." PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2016.
- US Asians. "Unsuk Chin interview: Daring to Cross Many Boundaries." *US Asians* (blog). Accessed November 15, 2023. <https://usasians-articles.tripod.com/unsuk-chin-music.html>.
- Wallace, Berry. *Form in Music*. 2nd ed. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1986.
- Wong, KT. "Chen Yi." KT Wong Foundation. Accessed November 15, 2023. <https://www.ktwong.org/collaborators/chen-yi>.
- Xiong, Lirui. "Selected Solo Piano Works by Three Living Asian Female Composers." DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2022.
- Yoo, Hae Young. "Western Music in Modern Korea: A Study of Two Women Composers." DMA diss., Rice University, 2005.