

Research Article Master Liu Tianhua: Erhu Composition

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Research Article

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1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

To first briefly define Liu Tianhua, he is the maestro of the national music in modern China. Liu Tianhua is considered by many to be a pioneer when it comes to Chinese national music education, and a famous composer, performer, and also the educator of music arts in modern china. Furthermore, Liu has made remarkable progress in the erhu compositions (Ingram, Liu, & Ng, 2020). It is to note that his erhu compositions show the time and era in which they were made, and the erhu compositions could also be used as a set point for the future development of the erhu. Furthermore, Liu in order to make his erhu compositions uses the Chinese national music as an inspiration as well as western music that he can integrate in his music (Jiti, 2019). This practice of his of combining the best of both worlds of traditional Chinese music and modern and classical western music has given birth to a new era of erhu composition. Hence it has been observed by many experts of the same fields that his music is ahead of his times regarding the thought process and the technology used. This is so because he draws inspiration from both parts of the world and due to this there are many new methods and composition processes that goes into creating such an erhu composition.

Hence, it is safe to say that Liu Tianhua's music is full of foreign methods that reflect the ideologies and times of that era as well as the ideologies of Chinese traditional era as well. He explored the expressiveness and notations of erhu, normalized new methods and composition processes, changed the musical instruments, and improved methods of memorizing notations (Jianpei, 2018). Moreover, Liu introduced the erhu practices in the university from the civil society and normalized the discipline of erhu ad advocated standardized teaching for erhu, contributing greatly to the passing on the skills of erhu, the preservation of traditions and the future progress in the erhu style. It is to note that when it comes to the number of songs produced by Liu, the amount is only ten erhu songs and three pipa songs (Jedeck, 2019). Despite the small number, due to the uniqueness and creativity of music pieces, almost of his songs have held a significant position in the history of Chinese folk music,

Because his pieces were unique and of mastery level that grabbed the attention of its listeners undivided, erhu from being simply a Chinese folk music has now in recent times become a professional practice where countless experts are actively utilizing the style of erhu to make and compose their unique soundtracks and music (Sun & Zhou, 2019). Thus, it is safe to say that if there was no Liu Tianhua, there would be no popularity in regards to erhu. His work since later have continuously managed to spark the attention from new and coming modern artists (Yuanyuan, 2020). So in this paper, the general intention is to show the reader the works of Liu Tianhua and the significance of his work that has impacted the music cultures and artists alike in the Chinese music practices.

1.2 Research Objectives

- To explore the Liu Tianhua's background of the composition and the influence those works have had on erhu composition.
- To correctly analyze the musical form and connotations of Liu Tianhua's music and soundtracks.

1.3 Research Questions

To what extent has Liu Tianhua's works had in the erhu music composition? It is to say that one of the intentions of the paper is to find out the impact Liu had on the generations to come and how well or what is the current status of his work is in the perception of modern erhu music composition (Liu, Beijing in the Contemporary Pipa World, 2020). What can the reader learn from his works based on the studies being done on his works? Both life experience and living situation of LIU Tianhua have made influences on his creation. It has been identified that he had a strong moral background and respectful family upbringing and the way and methods he deployed to communicate the messages through his music.

In terms of performing musical instruments, he acquired knowledge in a vast number of musical instruments and different types of music. It was identified that Liu had an ability to play various instruments of musical nature such as erhu, pipa, violin and it is to note that his mastery over instruments except for erhu was also very high (Sun & Zhou, 2019). While all of that, he also studied operas and folk songs. This factor allowed him to go in the depts. of civil society. Later onwards, his dedication has made him proficient in all kinds of instruments and varying folk music, to further apply the sounds and rhythmic sounds and melodies of the folk music into his works (Wong, 2020). Due to his studies, the musical compositions that he created were according to the rules of playing musical instruments.

Due to his knowledge in kunqu opera, he could integrate the musical factors of kunqu opera into his erhu compositions. For example, the musical piece "Bianri Xin Shuiling", which was a combination of bamboo and silk music is a variation of "Xin Shuiling", a Qupai of kunqu (Zhang, 2019). It is to note that Liu's erhu composition consist solely of the compositions elements of the Peking opera, which is related to his solid foundation of the music of Peking opera. Furthermore, due to his moral and cultural background and the loyalty to the Chinese traditions, his work

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regardless of how great it was, was accepted by all the population of china in modern times as revolutionizing (Yuanyuan, 2020). To do justice to such a significant figure, the research has now also have to look at some of the historical significance of Liu and the works and the level of expertise in his area of field.

Liu gained mastery through the comprehensive study of mostly all the elements of the music and incorporate them into his peking opera and not only that but also his erhu composition. It is to note that the Liu's works also influenced the study of bamboo and silk music in the southern parts of China (Ng, 2021). The factors of the bamboo and silk music can be found in many of his composition music for example his solo compositions involving the erhu which was named "the sound of agony". Other works like "moonlit night", other pieces like "singing at leisure" and many more mostly show the roots of the traditional style of the bamboo and silk music showcasing the its feature and its beauty that is usually found in the southern parts of China (Utz, 2021). In his works, Liu acquired the knowledge of playing a heptachord and through successful application of the overtone of this instrument sound, Liu incorporated the notes and instruments in his composition. Furthermore, it is important to bring attention is that many of these performances had also some parts of violin in it. Liu Tianhua utilized many of the methods and techniques of the violin were used in his erhu music composition (Vuong, 2020). Not only that, additionally, Liu set up a goal for himself to also acquire mastery in western band music which was also used as in techniques of such practice in later parts of his compositions.

When it comes to learning music theories, it was found that Liu also used many of his composition technique that he learned through the western theory of music composition and combined them in his own works (Wei, 2018). It is to note that his main profess, professor Stahr had taught him many foreign composition techniques such as harmony, counterpoint and systemically step by step composition. The bamboo music helped him to gain popularity in the department of music in the southern parts of China. His professor, Stahr was also well versed in the field of music and due to his guidance it is safe to say that Liu's spirit for music was kept ignited and he kept on producing his erhu composition that would later become the stepping point and a driving factor that contributes significantly in the popularity of erhu composition in the modern era of China music composition environment.

To outline the cultural accomplishments of Liu Tianhua, he was very well educated in the Chinese traditions and was nurtured through the upbringing of traditional Chinese thoughts from his childhood days (Zhang, 2019). Furthermore, due to his interest in traditions and cultural, he willingly chose to remain in that thought paradigm over his life time. With no surprise, his erhu compositions were also greatly inspired by Chinese traditions and hence all of his musical composition were laid on the undertones symbolizing the Chinese culture and its traditions (Yan, 2021). Due to this style of music, the composition pieces which also contained the Confucianism made all the people of China to be responsible and serve the Chinese people and its economy enthusiastically, and for the youth of the nation to serve and take responsible decisions that could help the country in the future (ZHANG, 2020). The influence his pieces had on the general

population is immense and it could greatly be seen as one of the more revolutionizing that enticed people to be better for the sake of their nation.

2. Literature Review

The current study is conducted in order to investigate and discover the achievements of the Chinese musician Liu Tinhua and thoroughly study his work. He is known to be a landmark in music industry and had set his own place in the history of Chinese music with his efforts and hard work. He has worked for classic music and a lot of other musicians have countless performed his work. Liu Tinhua's life has been studied in detail and analyzed with deep observation in this dissertation. His work, background of his creations, ideas with inspired and encouraged him and different achievements would be discussed (Qi-ming, 2019).

1. Reviews

According to different researches conducted it has been investigated that Liu Tinhua was known to be popular personality among the Chinese people who are keen to listen to music. He devoted his life in order to entertain others with the splendid skills he had for music and became famous with his wonderful creations. He contributed to national music as well and played a great role in the development of national music of China. His hard work and continuous efforts have also been remarkable in contributing to the national education sector of China. One of the most popular compositions of Liu Tinhua is erhu that is still performed by other musicians and taught as an important collection in music institutes. Therefore researching and analyzing his further compositions and studying Liu's life would help to know about his skills even better (Hannes, 2019).

2. The Knowledge of Erhu

According to a recent study conducted has stated that erhu is an important asset of Chinese music being a national instrument and bowing tool in China used for creating sound effects in music. Erhu is no doubt the most popular musical instrument in China but the method of playing is same like the Thai musical instrument known as Sao Wu. The meaning of Erhu can be derived from its name as well which implies that "Er" means "two" and this shows that an instrument having two strings to is known as erhu. This instrument came into being in the Tang Dynasty of China that was from 612 to 907 with a history of more than 1000 years. The instrument consist of a skin that can be usually a Python skin (Yoshiteru, 2020).

Moreover, it has been observed that erhu can be played by rubbing the skin with a bow to make a unique sound with vibration through the pipe. The two strings of the instrument are in a good relation with each other with a range of d1-g. Erhu is a very beautiful and strong tool used for music as it is made of wood. Most commonly mahogany wood is used in its manufacture but others such as Pterocarpus microphylla, ebony, Pterocarpus macrophylla and others can be used as well. While discussing the structure of Erhu its one barrel is covered with the skin of snake usually

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python, which is the great source of music pronunciation of the instrument with unique pitch of sound. The strings of Erhu are made of steel (Haur, Chen, & Sung, 2019).

Resonator: I has been studied that the resonator plays an important role in the sound creation with the help of Erhu while making music sounds. It is known to be a resonance box consisting of hexagonal shape mostly. It can also be made with other shapes such as circular, octagonal and back circular etc. Resonator is an important equipment used in the structure of Erhu as the back of resonator is made with decorative wood window which is carved. The resonator is designed with unique parameters which implies that the wood window can be 15 cm long in length while its diameter can be measured as 8.8 cm (Lun, 2018).

Snake Skin: According to a study the skin of python is usually used in the structure of Erhu and is placed in front of resonator. When the strings are vibrated on the skin of snake being used in the Erhu, the sound is produced that is unique and soothing. This shows that the skin needs to be of high quality as the texture of skin has a great impact on the sound being produced and the vibration needs to be strong enough to produce such sound. It has been observed in various studies that the quality of sound being produced and the volume of Erhu both depend on the snake skin and its texture. On a general point of view it has been stated that the larger the scale of python skin would have a significant impact on the better sounds produced by Erhu. In order to get best quality of sound from erhu the skin of python with 11 to 13 scales is usually used (Chen, 2019).

The Neck of Erhu: While using Erhu, the left is most probably placed on the stick or the pillar of Erhu that can also be called as trunk. This pillar or stick has a great role as it is used to keep balance while playing music with the help of Erhu during performance. The neck of Erhu is mostly 81 cm and a diameter could be about 0.55 inches and 1.83 in centimeters. The top of Erhu is called its head with the upper part consisting of two pegs while the lower region is covered being inserted in the resonator. The shape of Erhu's head has a different shape such as curved neck and dragon's head is also fixed at the top (CHAO, 2020).

Tuning Pegs: According to the studies it has been implicated that there are two tuning pegs in the Erhu that are present in the upper part of the neck. One peg is placed on the upper and one is lower to it and the function of these two pegs is to adjust the pitch of sound produced by the Erhu. The two pegs have been used to hold and adjust the strings of Erhu such as the upper one controls the thick string and the lower one adjusts the thin string. Most commonly two types of pegs are used including the wooden peg and the mechanical peg in order to adjust the pitch of instrument (Z., 2019).

3. Research Methods

Throughout the study of the life and social background of Liu Tianhua, the analysis and content of his works, the study has conducted an in-depth and a comprehensive overview of Liu Tianhua's efforts. The methods that are utilized in gathering data in the form of folk songs mainly comprise of quantitative and qualitative methods of research, observation, interview methods and the

literature review methods. The researches of this article are made on the basis of qualitative analysis and objective stats. Specifically, the qualitative analysis are the method of deduction and induction, generalization and abstraction, and syndissertation and analysis are adopted to conduct this work. The study and efforts of Liu Tianhua which was conducted by him in the last 10 years of his life when he was resided in Beijing. When the article process all kinds of material that is kept by Liu Tianhua himself and the individuals who had interviews him. The article has extracted first-hand information, understand the nature of things, recognizing the facts and explore the inherent laws.

3.1 Content:

In this section, here are some content which will be used further in the content analysis of the study. These content was adopted from the previous research conducted by Liu, Y in 2020.

- How much do you know about Erhu? And where do you learn to play Erhu?
- Do you play Erhu every day? In a time, how many Erhu you can play?
- Are you associated with Erhu recently?
- Do you know about the work of Liu Tianhua? How can you demonstrate it?
- From the works of Liu Tianhua, what work do you like the most?
- Have you ever tried to learn about the life or social background of the era of Liu Tianhua?
- Have you ever conducted any study on the methods of works performed by Liu Tianhua?
- Would you like to inherit and play the work of Liu Tianhua?

3.2 Research Location:

For conducting this study, multiple location has been decided for conducting the research. Such as Liu Tianhua memorial hall as this is the birthplace of Liu Tianhua who lived here the most of time for 25 years since his birth. The second location is National Orchesta which is located in Jiangsu, China. It is the region of professional folk singer. It is the only high level ethnic Orchestra in the hometown of Mr. Liu Tianhua. Third location for this study was Peking University Beijing, China. The decision taken for this location is because he studied here from age 25 to age 37. There are lot of tracks and study of Liu Tianhua's life. Moreover, the research article has conducted study in Nanning City and interviewed Erhu performers. One is a folk musician who has played a lot of work of Liu Tianhua and one is a university professor.

3.3 Research Process:

For the research purpose, the data has collected from the library and internet. Moreover, the data for the study is also collected from the questionnaire, literature analysis, interview, and literature analysis. After the process of data collection, the data which is obtained from different fields are categorized into fieldwork and library. Moreover, the reliability of the documents are analyzed which is collected from the internet. Then, the 10 questions are prepared which are related to the research before the process of interview. For recording and organizing all the interviews, two

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recording devices are utilized at the same time. Then the research progress towards collecting the name, phone number, address book, and email of every respondent because the research needs to make additional contacts with interviewees. After this the data has been classified and reserved for further processing.

4. Content Analysis

Chinese opera flourished during Ming and Qing Dynasties (1368-1912). Erhu played in addition of rap, folk song and opera as a supporting role. Foreign invader in 1894 entered China through Opium wars and occupied China's land. There was an extreme turmoil and in 1912 there was established a provisional government in China. 'Moral education' was taken as core and emphasis was made on 'aesthetic education'. Music course since then officially gained the status of a subject. Liu Tianhua, Xiao Youmei, Cai Yuanpei etc. are the pioneers of Chinese music in modern music education. While inheriting the traditional Chinese music Liu Tianhua drew techniques for western musical instruments and created many classical erhu works. Erhu became the representative of Chinese folk music, since it was considered as a solo professional instrument officially.

Liu Tianhua is a music teacher, erhu performer and a composer of Chinese music, he was born in the Jiangsu province. He served as a middle school music teacher in his early life. Then in Peking University Beijing he taught music. He was also a national music innovator. In China he is considered an influential music teacher. Liu Tianhua always had a thirst of learning new music. He learned heptachord in his teenage by going to Henan province. Learned theories to create western music and how to play violin and achieved success in every part. He had studied several traditional subjects such as Chinese literature, Science, Buddhism and Chinese Confucianism, which reflected his thoughts.

In all his Life Liu Tianhua had composed 10erhu works. His life had a solid foundation of music because of his rich experience, high accomplishments in culture and other external factors. These erhu works were in Chinese National Music stands out as the most exceptional achievement of Liu Tianhua. He had beautiful melodies and distinct characteristics in all three categories of his compositions. He was the first one who accomplished combining traditional Chinese music with western music. He mastered trumpet and violin in western music. He also studied ways of singing in western style. In opera music Liu Tianhua studied Peking and Kunqu opera.

By going through the life of Liu Tianhua and his learning of the instrument we can say that in first phase he learned Heptachord by saving money and going to Henan to learn and teach his students, then in second phase he learnt Pipa and how to perform it systematically. In the third phase he learnt violin and these violin skills that he learnt made his erhu foundations firmer. In the fourth phase he learnt theories of western composition. This benefitted him in every aspect of his life. The fifth phase is about the different thoughts and cultural influences in his life. Since he was born in a traditional old style Chinese family helped him in composition of erhu which represented typical old-fashioned style.

In terms of learning different thoughts and cultures, the first part can be regarded as the influence of Confucianism on Liu Tianhua. Since all his life he wanted to save Chinese national music, these efforts of his were pretty much in line with Chinese Confucianism. The second phase is the Buddhist influence and the thoughts he had. As a child he used to go to a Buddhist temple near his house where he learnt Buddhist music which is reflected in his compositions. The third phase of influence on Liu Tianhua was learning new thoughts and cultures. He was the one who put forth the proposition that western music must be let to integrate into Chinese music. The fourth phase in the life of Liu Tianhua's life was the influence of literary thoughts. His father opened an old-fashioned school and taught other elementary level students. He was open to accepting new things which was very beneficial for Liu Tianhua in early stage of his life. He had written following erhu songs i.e. The Sound of Agony (1918), Moonlit Night (1924), Music in Bitterness (1926), Tough Life (1927), Bird song in a desolate mountain)1928(, Singing At Leisure)1928(, Beautiful Night)1928), Marching on the Bright Road (1931), Sad Song (1932) and Shadows of candles, flickering red (1932).

5. Conclusion

There are 2 standards according to which 10 erhu works of Liu Tianhua can be classified: The first one being the division of ten pieces into three categories as per different performance and musical mood. One is the music that illustrates life scenes, natural scenes, contains comfortable melody and slow rhythm, one is lyrical that yearns for bright future, has a pleasant rhythm and is bright with clear tunes and one is the music that has sadness and dark reality of the overall society during those times containing sad melody. In these 10 works of Liu Tianhua there is mono period music, poly-music form, variation form and trilogy type.

Among several categories the first one is about the semi colonial and semi feudal system in China in those times, Liu Tianhua was very poor at that time and his songs depicts the same in his 'The Sound of Agony', 'Song of Melancholy', 'Elegy' and 'Play on single string'. In the second category lies his compositions that depicts the positivity, patriotism, and a bright future. For this purpose, he composed songs such as 'Beautiful Night', 'Marching on the Bright Road' and 'Shadows of Candles, Flickering red'. Lastly, his third category which depicts thoughts and emotions as well as scenes and beauty of life and nature the essence of which can be found in his song 'Moonlit night', 'Bird song in a desolate Mountain' and 'Singing at Leisure'. The fourth category divides the Liu Tianhua's work into four types as per various tonality and modes of music such as Large mono period music: 'Elegy'. Poly-Music: 'The sound of Agony', 'Singing at Leisure' etc. Music in variation form: 'Shadows of candle flickering red', 'song of melancholy', and trilogy type music: 'Marching on bright red road' and 'Play on a single string'.

The works of Liu Tianhua is based on Chinese Pentatonic scale which is blended with the western scale. This pentatonic scale is comprised of five tones. These pitches do re mi sol la, are only five after their arrangement. In China 'do' corresponds to GONG (palace), 're' corresponds to SHANG (resolution), mi corresponds to JUE (horn), 'sol' corresponds to ZHI (test) and lastly 'la'

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corresponds to YU (wings). Since the pentatonic scale is widely renowned in China, formed a complete music theory system and was used in Chinese ancient folk music it is now termed as 'Chinese scale'. In pentatonic scale music sounds smoother and slower without any robust sense of conflict because of absence of 'dissonant interval'. Mostly the signatures are duple meter and quadruple meter of the pentatonic scale music which is the characteristics of Chinese scale. Each tone in this sound can be utilized as the main tone and the main sound of the music is its ending sound. Each note in the music has relationship as major-second, major-second, minor-third, major-second. There are no semi tones with JUE and GONG being the only minor third and major second tones respectively. Liu Tianhua made his music stable and included beat in his music was to keep his music flowing and to make his music sporty and rich respectively.

Pentatonic scale is divided into three steps on the basis of analysis. With the step one being the listing of all the distinctive sounds in the track. Step 2 being the discovery of major thirds in the sounds since there is presence of only one major third in the pentatonic scale. Locating this major third is actually deciding the GONG sound. Looking at the last tone is the step three in any track. Since the main tone in the Chinese pentatonic scale is the last tone. The scale is pentatonic scale of A SHANG if the last tone is A.

The major and minor pentatonic scale in western music played a significant role in European music. Among seven notes of major pentatonic scale there is a major third pitch that lies between **I** and **III** modes. The modes which stable the whole tone are **I**, **III** and **V** modes in pentatonic scale, it is the major triad that the major chord they constitute. This makes the major pentatonic scale with, suitable for expressing powerful, loud, lyrical, and clear emotions, since the major triad is delightful and colorful. There are seven notes that a minor pentatonic scale is composed of. There exists between the **I** and **III**, the minor third interval. The minor triad are the major chords that are created by the **I**, **III** and **V** notes. This minor triad has dark and gloomy colors. Consequently, this makes the colors of minor pentatonic scale, delicate, soft, twisty plots, suitable for euphemistic emotions and melancholic emotions. There occurs two different musical colors since the minor pentatonic and major pentatonic scale in western music is different from Chinese pentatonic scale. Liu Tianhua made his music both novel in sense of tone and rich in Chinese characteristics by creatively merging both Western and Chinese music.

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