

**Composing, Revising, and Performing Suzhou Ballads: a Study of Political Control and
Artistic Freedom in *Tanci*, 1949-1964**

by

Stephanie J. Webster-Cheng

B.M., Lawrence University, 1996

M.A., University of Pittsburgh, 2003

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MUSIC DEPARTMENT

This dissertation was presented

by

Stephanie Webster-Cheng

It was defended on

October 31, 2008

and approved by

Mark Bender, Associate Professor, East Asian Languages and Literature, Ohio State University

Xinmin Liu, Assistant Professor, East Asian Languages and Literature

Wenfang Tang, Associate Professor, Political Science

Andrew Weintraub, Associate Professor, Music

Akin Euba, Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Music, Music

Dissertation Advisor: Bell Yung, Professor of Music, Music

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Stephanie J. Webster-Cheng, PhD

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This dissertation explores the dynamics of political control of the arts and artistic freedom in the musical storytelling art of Suzhou *tanci* between 1949 and 1964, years marked by extensive revision of traditional performance repertoire, widespread creation of new, contemporary-themed stories, and composition of boldly innovative ballad music. I examine four stories and ballads either composed or revised during this time, looking broadly at the role of the State in the creative process. I consider the role of high-ranking officials whose personal comments to artists shaped their creative processes, and the role of societal political pressure placed on artists through political movements and shifting trends in the dramatic arts.

I study the artists' responses to these political forces as expressed in their newly composed and revised works. I examine decisions made during the creation of story and ballad texts, and analyze bold innovations taken by three artists during the composition of ballad music. I suggest that the musical innovations be viewed both as responses to the coercive political atmosphere of the 1950s and 1960s and as significant expressions of artistic freedom within this politicized atmosphere.

This dissertation begins with an overview of the main research questions, theoretical framework, research methodology, and literature. This is followed in Chapter 2 by an introduction to the art form, and an exploration of the 1950s-1960s period in Chinese history in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, I examine the revision of the traditional story *Jade Dragonfly*, and the composition of new music in the story's climactic ballad *Fighting for the Son*. In Chapter 5, I

study the creation of the new story *We Certainly Must Fix the Huai River*, and the composition of new music in the pivotal ballad *Staying for the New Year*. In Chapter 6, I explore the musical innovations made during the creation of two new ballads *New Mulan Song* and *Butterfly Loves the Flower*. Chapter 7 summarizes Chapters 4, 5, and 6, offers concluding thoughts regarding the nature of political control and artistic freedom in the Chinese arts during the 1949-1964 period, and suggests broader implications for the field of ethnomusicology.

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PREFACE

My interest in Suzhou *tanci* began in 2003 when my husband introduced me to the art form that he had heard so frequently broadcast over the radio in Shanghai during the 1980s. After doing some preliminary research on the topic based on materials available in the United States, I became intrigued by the 1949-1967 period of the art form. The limited information provided in the sources I examined suggested that much change occurred in *tanci* repertoire, performance practice, and music during this time, but few details of these changes were noted. Naturally drawn to the story-telling nature of the art form as well as this particular period in Chinese history, I sought to further explore this topic through interviews and archival research in China. When applicable, I have included portions of these interviews in the body of my dissertation. However, missing from my study are the voices of the performers who are deceased, including Xu Lixian and Jiang Yuequan. In the sections in which I discuss the musical styles of these musicians, I have attempted to represent their voices through quoting from their own writings and including portions of my interviews with their colleagues.

In my dissertation, I have adopted the following conventions in regards to capitalization and italicization of Chinese terms, titles, and proper names. In referring to story titles and titles of ballads within stories, I adopt the Chicago Manual of Style's convention of italicizing all titles when many musical works of different lengths are mentioned. When I have translated a term from Chinese to English, such as "upper hand" (*shang shou*), I first give the English translation

in quotations followed by the pinyin romanization for this term in parenthesis. For translations of names of official departments or bureaus, such as the Department of Culture (*Wenhua Bu*), I give the English translation followed by the *pinyin* romanization for the proper name in parenthesis. Translations of political movements, such as the Great Leap Forward and Cut the Tail, follow capitalization rules of proper names, while translations of political slogans, such as “push out of the old to bring forth the new,” are given without caps, in quotations.

In this dissertation, I employ the following terminology. I use the honorific term “artist” (*yiren*) to describe experienced *tanci* performers such as Jiang Yuequan, Yu Hongxian, Zhao Kaisheng, and Xu Lixian. I also follow the Chicago Manual of Style convention of referring to the Chinese Communist Party occasionally as “the Party” rather than “the party” to avoid ambiguities in referencing. Finally, in the following chapters, I refer to the following time periods in Chinese history by name only:

Ming dynasty	1368-1644 A.D.
Qing dynasty	1644-1911 A.D.
Republic of China	1911-1949 A.D.
People’s Republic of China	1949 A.D.-

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the dynamics of political control of the arts and artistic freedom in *tanci* between 1949 and 1964, a period marked by widespread social, political, and economic changes enacted by the newly-formed government as well as extensive reforms in the performing arts. I look at the coercive influence of the State on the performers' artistic process, particularly as seen in the composition, revision, and performance of story repertoire. I also examine the artists' nuanced responses to the State as expressed through their creative process, the body of new and revised story repertoire, and musical innovation.

1.1 MAIN QUESTIONS ASKED

In this study, I pose three main questions. First, in what ways did the State inform, guide, or otherwise influence artistic activity between 1949 and 1964? To address this question, I consider factors in the artists' social environment that either instigated or influenced certain composition and revision projects, such as Mao's 1942 "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art" (henceforth, "Yan'an Talks") and the Thought Reform campaign of 1951. I also examine specific arts directives made by State officials and informal conversations that occurred between high-ranking officials and performers. I draw on Gramsci's theory of hegemony and subsequent

scholars' expansion of these ideas to explore the various coercive elements that contributed to the State's control over creative activity in *tanci* during the 1950s-1960s period.

Secondly, how did artists respond to these ideological factors, particularly in terms of their revision, composition, and performance activities? To answer this question, I draw from historical sources, such as newspaper articles and published story texts, in which the composition and revision process of high-profile stories and ballads has been documented. I also consider first-hand descriptions of the composition and revision process as conveyed to me through interviews conducted during my fieldwork. In addition to these sources, I examine story texts and analyze ballad music. As will be illustrated in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, these primary sources offer valuable insight into the nature of artistic response during this period.

Third, how was artistic freedom expressed in *tanci* during this time? Here, I examine one of the responses: the trend of musical innovation in ballad composition, particularly by three artists from the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe. I consider their musical innovations in terms of the politics of the 1950s and 60s and in terms of efforts by the State to control other factors of artistic production. Specifically, I aim to answer the following questions: Why did the artists turn to musical innovation? What was the relationship between this innovation and the politics of the era? How can their musical innovation be interpreted as expressions of artistic freedom? I argue that while other aspects of the creative process, including text production, were often subject to political critique and control, ballad music provided artists with a space for relatively free creative expression.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND APPROACH

In this dissertation, I draw from research in a number of academic disciplines such as political science and history for their definitions and approaches to studying concepts such as hegemony, ideology, and human agency. I also draw from research in ethnomusicology and various disciplines within East Asian Studies that focuses on the topic of reform within the Chinese performing arts during the 1950s and 1960s.

1.2.1 Hegemony

Before I can address the complexities that characterize the relationship between the Chinese State and *tanci* artists during the 1950s and 60s, I must first acknowledge the hegemonic nature of the relationship. Here, I draw on Gramsci's theory of "hegemony" as discussed in his *Prison Notebooks* (1929-1935), and particularly the idea that a social group asserts its dominance over another through "intellectual and moral leadership" exercised by a particular set of ideas embodied in civil society (Gramsci 1971, 24). In terms of this dissertation, I will be looking at the process by which the Chinese State dominated *tanci* artists through their ideas embodied in Shanghai society.

One key component of Gramsci's theory is that hegemonic domination cannot be maintained "by force alone," but also requires the subordinate group's "consent" to the dominant's ideas. As Gramsci explained in his *Notes on Machiavelli*, "The 'normal' exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary regime is characterised by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force

predominating excessively over consent” (Gramsci 1977, 80, fn).¹ According to Gramsci, consent is not freely given by the subordinated class, but must be built by the dominant group in order to maintain hegemony. As Lears further explains this concept, “Ruling groups do not maintain their hegemony merely by giving their domination an aura of moral authority through the creation and perpetuation of legitimating symbols; they must also seek to win the consent of subordinate groups to the existing social order” (1985, 569).

Several scholars have expanded upon Gramsci’s theory, noting that due to the nature of the consent-building process, the dominant class’s ideas come to shape and pervade the subordinates’ entire “lived reality.” As a result, it becomes very difficult for these people to separate themselves from this reality. As Raymond Williams explains:

Hegemony is then not only the articulate upper level of ‘ideology’ nor are its forms of control only those ordinarily seen as ‘manipulation’ or ‘indoctrination’ it is a whole body of practices and expectations over the whole of living; our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values-constitutive and constituting-which as they are experienced as practices appear reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. It is, that is to say, in the strongest sense a ‘culture,’ but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes. (Williams 1977, 110)

Also, as Frederick Lau has shown in the case of *dizi* musicians who “voluntarily consented to become functionaries of the state apparatus,” hegemony in fact *works* because the subordinate is persuaded to “internalize and consent to the dominant way of thinking as natural” (1996, 127).

Other scholars have additionally pointed out that Gramsci’s view of “consent” does not require that the subordinate must 100% agree with the dominant’s ideas. As Lear explains,

Consent, for Gramsci, involves a complex mental state, a “contradictory consciousness” mixing approbation and apathy, resistance and resignation. The

¹ See also Benton 1984 (102).

mix varies from individual to individual; some are more socialized than others. In any case, ruling groups never engineer consent with complete success; the outlook of subordinate groups is always divided and ambiguous. (Lear 1985, 570)

In addition, Strinati hints at the idea that subordinated groups may make decisions separate from measures of coercion:

It can be argued that Gramsci's theory suggests that subordinated groups accept the ideas, values and leadership of the dominant group not because they are physically or mentally induced to do so, nor because they are ideologically indoctrinated, but because they have reason of their own." (Strinati, 1995: 166)

In this dissertation, I discuss instances when performers' creative decisions seemed to stem from multiple, conflicted motivations. I will also discuss instances when performers supported State ideology in their musical compositions to such a high degree that it appears that their decisions were made outside the boundaries of coercion.

1.2.2 Ideology

The term "ideology" has been defined many ways, and employed for a multitude of purposes and theoretical approaches by political scientists as well as those in other fields and disciplines.² As Gerring (1997) has noted, the term remains a "highly flexible conceptual tool" despite the fact that scholars have, at times, haphazardly adopted the term, and stretched its meanings too far, thus leading to what he has termed as a "muddying" of the semantic field" (959, 980).

In this dissertation, I have adopted Gerring's suggestion to avoid a "best fit" definition, and instead develop my own context-specific definition. Gerring urges scholars to develop their own definition based on his own criteria including location, subject matter, subject, position,

² As Gerring has noted, this trend has been especially noticeable in the decades following World War II (1997, 957). See Gerring 1997 for a general overview of the many approaches to the term (958-966).

function, and motivation (1997, 966-979). I have constructed my definition based on his criterion. First, I refer specifically to *political ideology* used by the Chinese State and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for purposes of domination. In Thompson's words, political ideology is "linked to the process of sustaining asymmetrical relations of power, that is, to the process of maintaining domination" (1984, 4). This narrow usage contrasts a broader use of the term that has been employed in other research, such as Stuart Hall's (1985) definition: "systems of representation...systems of meaning through which we represent the world to ourselves and one another" (103).

Secondly, I do not consider all political ideology of the CCP during the 1949-1964 period, but specifically that which relates most directly to the performing arts and literature. I examine official cultural policy, directives written for the arts community, political slogans used in the arts, and both official and informal communication between political leaders and artists. My purpose for such a broad application of the term is to go beyond studies that have examined artistic changes within the context of official cultural policy only,³ and look at all potential ideological factors that *tanci* artists would have encountered within their social context.

1.2.3 Artistic Agency

Some scholars have depicted the subordinate within a hegemonic relationship as "powerless" and "an impotent hostage in the hands of an ineffable destiny" (Urbanati 1998, 370). However, in my study, I argue that the performers expressed agency, or power, through their compositions, revisions, and performances. As a result, I suggest that the performers' responses to the hegemonic ideas of the Chinese State be viewed as examples of their "artistic agency," or

³ This approach is taken by Holm (1991).

decision-making power as artists. My conception of “artistic agency” stems from Lau’s study of *dizi* musicians in which he suggested that “ideology” be viewed “not as a monolithic fixed entity that resides above people and dictates human actions from the top down but rather as an articulation of the individuals’ choice made in reference to a larger dimension” (1996, 16).⁴ As Lau pointed out, the advantage of this approach is that it accounts for the artists’ “decision-making power” expressed during the creative process.

The idea that musical products, in general, are shaped by individuals’ decisions stems back to earlier research in ethnomusicology when Blacking (1977) noted that the “processes of music-making and their musical products are consequences of individual decision-making about how, when, and where to act and what cultural knowledge to incorporate in the sequences of action” (4). In another instance, Blacking noted that musical change “...is brought about by decisions made by individuals about music-making and music on the basis of the experiences of music and attitudes of it in different social contexts” (1977, 12).

I build on Lau’s and Blacking’s ideas by examining the subtle variances in artistic response as expressed through the creative process. I conceptualize these different responses as points that can be plotted on a spectrum between the endpoints of “active consent” and “active dissent.” The figure below aims to visually depict this range of responses.

⁴ Holm (1991) and Baranovitch (2003) also adopt this view of the hegemonic relationship between the State and artists in China.

represents instances when a lesser degree of dissent was expressed. Similarly, the larger arrow on the right-hand side represents instances when artists enthusiastically consented to political factors through their creative works while the smaller arrow represents instances when a lesser degree of consent was expressed.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

1.3.1 Field Research

I conducted research on two separate trips to Shanghai and Suzhou, China, first, during June and July of 2004 and secondly during September and October of 2006. Since my 2004 trip was preliminary in nature, my purpose was to gather as much information about the musicians, repertoire, and performances of the 1950s and 1960s as possible. In 2006, I focused more directly on specific repertoire and musicians of the Shanghai and Suzhou Pingtan⁵ Troupes. During both trips, my research consisted of two main aspects: 1) interviews with performers, officials, and leaders associated with the two troupes during this time, and 2) archival research. In addition, I attended numerous performances at storyhouses (*shuchang*) throughout Shanghai and Suzhou, and purchased a collection of recordings and recent publications about the art form.

⁵ Here, the term “pingtan” refers to two different narrative arts, *pinghua*, which consists of only spoken storytelling, and *tanci*, which consists of both spoken and sung storytelling. As will be explained in the following chapter, the two art forms share certain similarities, but also differ substantially.

1.3.1.1 Interviews

In 2004 and 2006, I conducted in-depth interviews with two performers and two scholars closely linked to the 1950s and 60s period of *tanci* history either through their own personal experiences or their interest in the topic. In 2004, a family friend introduced me to Zhou Hong, an upcoming performer from the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe.⁶ During the early 1980s, Zhou studied with Yu Hongxian, a Shanghai performer well known for her performances during the early 1960s. Due to her own personal interest in the history of the art form, Zhou agreed to introduce me to the performers, repertoire, and musical styles of *tanci* through four formal interviews conducted over the course of two months.

Interview topics included the history of performance guilds and troupes, famous performers and their musical styles, the system of style lineages, storytellers' training, and changes in performance repertoire. The interviews, each of which lasted between three and four hours in length, were conducted in the living room of Zhou's apartment. She answered my questions through verbal explanations, sung demonstrations, and excerpts played from cassette recordings. During one of these interviews, Zhou taught me how to sing the first half of the traditional ballad *Sighs from the Palace (Gong Yuan)*. In addition to these interviews, I met Zhou on many other occasions during my field research in 2004 and 2006, particularly at performances she gave at various locations throughout Shanghai and Suzhou.

In 2006, I conducted an interview with another performer, Zhou's teacher Yu Hongxian, an artist especially well known for her performances of ballad adaptations of Mao Zedong's poetry during the early 1960s. Although I had met Yu previously in 2004, she had not agreed to a formal interview at that time due to poor health. In 2006, Yu gave vivid verbal descriptions of

⁶ Bender discusses Zhou Hong in his 2005 article "Assistant Storytellers: Personal Narratives and Insights."

her past performance experiences, and also sang to demonstrate specific musical elements. The entire interview lasted approximately three hours. Zhou Hong also participated in this interview, and often both teacher and student would answer a particular question at the same time, first beginning in Mandarin and then slipping into fast-paced Shanghai dialect. Since I am not fluent in the Shanghai dialect, I relied on a research assistant to translate these portions of the interview when they occurred.

In addition to Zhou Hong and Yu, I also interviewed Zhou Liang and Wu Zongxi, two men whose professional and personal connections to the art form stem back to the early years after the establishment of the PRC. Zhou worked as the head of the Suzhou Culture Bureau during the late 1950s and early 1960s (Wu 1996, 145). Prior to this, he worked in the office of the Chinese Communist Party in Suzhou, though his affiliations with the Party are thought to stem back to before 1949 (Wu 1996, 145). Wu was appointed as the “leader” (*lingdao*) of the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe beginning in 1952 (Wu 1996, 144). Both Zhou and Wu were intricately tied to creative activity in *tanci* during the 1950s and 1960s due to their official positions. As a result, they also shared many personal connections with performers as well. Due to their official positions and close ties to *tanci* throughout the 1950s and 1960s, both men published extensively on the art form after the Cultural Revolution, during the 1980s and 1990s. Although they are considered scholars within the *tanci* communities in Shanghai and Suzhou, their work has largely been viewed as separate from the musicological research on *tanci* carried out in academic institutions such as the Shanghai Conservatory.

In 2004 and 2006, I interviewed Zhou in the library of his Suzhou apartment. Each interview lasted between three to four hours in length, and was recorded. In 2004, I asked Zhou about major historical trends in *tanci* as well as his official role with the Suzhou Pingtan Troupe

during the 1950s and 1960s. In 2006, my interview with Zhou focused on specific political movements that impacted *tanci* composition and revision between 1949 and 1964, and the Suzhou Pingtan Troupe's revision of the full-length story *Pearl Pagoda*. Although the focus of each of these interviews differed, the interview style was very much the same. Prior to each interview, Zhou requested that I mail him a copy of the questions that I intended to ask. When we met, Zhou read from a script that he had written ahead of time in which he had prepared very thorough answers to my questions. Since Zhou preferred not to be interrupted while he read his responses, I generally waited until he had finished to ask him additional questions. During each visit, Zhou gave me a copy of his most recent publication on the art form, books that can only be purchased at certain bookstores in Suzhou.

I also conducted interviews with Wu Zongxi in 2004 and 2006; each of these lasted approximately three to four hours in length. In 2004, I met Wu in a coffee house near his apartment in Shanghai. During this interview, Wu discussed the history of the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe, and particularly the performers and musical styles of the 1950s and 1960s. Zhou Hong also attended this meeting since she had first introduced me to Wu. In 2006, I interviewed Wu in the teahouse of a park, also nearby his apartment. During this interview, Wu described his experiences composing *We Certainly Must Fix the Huai River* and *New Mulan Song*. He also described changes made by troupe members Jiang and Cheng during the revision of the traditional story *Jade Dragonfly*. As with Zhou, Wu gave me several of his recent *tanci* publications at the conclusion of the interview.

1.3.1.2 Archival Research

My fieldwork also was heavily comprised by archival research. In 2004 and 2006, I examined primary sources from the archives of the Shanghai Municipal Library including published

versions of performance texts from the 1950s and 60s. I also studied articles about *tanci* that were published in the Shanghai *Xinmin Evening News* (*Xinmin Wanbao*). These articles were printed in “New Pingtan” (*Xin Pingtan*), a column that appeared between 1949 and 1958 that regularly featured texts of newly composed ballads as well as short articles written on topics of contemporary interest. Due to its content, the “New Pingtan” column provides valuable insight into the political and artistic trends in the first few years following the establishment of the PRC. In 2006, I also studied primary sources including period recordings and published versions of performance scripts from the archives of the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe.

1.3.2 Approach to transcription

In this dissertation, I have based my musical analysis and study of musical innovation on transcriptions of four prominent ballads, *Fighting for the Son*, *Staying for the New Year*, *New Mulan Song*, and *Butterfly Loves the Flower*.⁷ My transcriptions are based on performances that were originally recorded during the 1950s and 1960s. Due to their popularity after the Cultural Revolution, many of these early recordings, including *Fighting for the Son*, *New Mulan Song*, and *Butterfly Loves the Flower*, were released again during the 1980s and 1990s. However, my transcription of *Staying for the New Year* is based on an original 1950s recording from the archives of the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe.

In my transcriptions, I focus primarily on the vocal line since it is considered the greatest indicator of musical style. I have employed symbols from Western art to represent most vocal ornamentation, but also have added some of my own symbols and notated certain ornamentation in detail at times. Since my primary focus in this dissertation is the sung melody, I have notated

⁷ See Appendix D for transcriptions of these ballads.

the articulation of the instrumental interludes in less detail. In addition, I have only notated the interludes performed between sung phrases, an approach commonly employed in cipher note transcriptions of ballads published during the 1980s.⁸ In order to distinguish the two distinct melodic lines of the accompaniment, I have notated the two parts in different registers; in general, the line played by the *pipa*, a pear-shaped lute, is notated one octave above the line played by the *sanxian*, a three-stringed banjo-type instrument. However, in instances when the two instruments play in unison, I have only notated one melody line.

1.3.3 Analytical Approach

In this dissertation, I examine four different types of story repertoire, or genres, performed during the 1950s and 60s: the Full-length Story (*changpian*), the Middle-length Story (*zhongpian*), the Opening Ballad (*kaipian*), and the Mao Zedong Poem Ballad (*Mao Zedong shici*). These are four of the most common genres of this period; as a result, many examples exist today. Another genre, the Short-length Story (*duanpian*) also was common during the 1950s and 60s; however, unlike the other genres, there are few extant examples of this type of story.

For each genre, I examine a specific ballad and/or story: the ballad *Fighting for the Son* from the Full-length Story *Jade Dragonfly*, the ballad *Staying for the New Year* from the Middle-length Story *We Certainly Must Fix the Huai River*, the Opening Ballad *New Mulan Song*, and the Mao Zedong Poem Ballad *Butterfly Loves the Flower*. These works were very popular amongst audiences during the 1950s and 60s period, resulting in a number of recordings and

⁸ This approach can be seen in the Shanghai volume of the *Anthology of Chinese Narrative Music*, the *Selection of Xu Lixian's Singing Style* and the *Selection of Jiang Yuequan's Singing Style* (See Jiang 1986).

publications of performance scripts. Today, many audience members are still familiar with these works, and, at times, contemporary artists perform them. In addition to their artistic merit within the *tanci* community, these works are viewed as being politically significant due to the unique circumstances surrounding the creation of each.

1.3.4 Project Scope

In my dissertation, I primarily concentrate on creative activity within the *tanci* community between the years 1949 and 1964. These two years frame a period within *tanci* that was marked by bold musical innovations and politicized story repertoire quite unlike other periods in the genre's history. 1949 is significant because it marks the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC). As will be explored in Chapter 2, soon after its establishment, political and arts leaders sought to reorganize and refocus the performing arts in order to bring artists into "service of the people" (*wei renmin fuwu*). Within the *tanci* community, the year 1964 is important because it is when virtually all performances stopped due to the emphasis on contemporary repertoire in the dramatic arts as well as public criticism of the art form by Mao's wife Jiang Qing.⁹

In addition, my study primarily considers the creative activities of the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe (*Shanghai Pingtantuan*). The Shanghai troupe not only was the first state-sponsored performance troupe for *tanci* artists, it also carried the reputation during the 1950s and 1960s as being one of the most prominent due to its high-profile membership. Many famous performers from Suzhou joined the Shanghai troupe when it first formed in 1952. Most of these performers

⁹ See Chapter 3 for a more extensive discussion of Jiang Qing's involvement with the performing arts during the early 1960s.

had come to Shanghai during the previous decade to perform in the many teahouses found throughout the growing city. As a result of the Shanghai troupe's prestigious membership, its performances were often attended by high-ranking political officials, and critiqued in leading newspapers while the activities of many less prominent performance troupes in the region were generally not as well documented. The Shanghai troupe also was considered to be musically distinct from the other performance troupes in the region due to the fact that many of its members had developed new approaches to performing *tanci* music.

1.4 STATE OF RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.4.1 English-language research on *tanci*

A number of scholars have produced English-language research about *tanci* including Chen (1961), Chi (1965), Hrdlickova (1965), Schmidt, and Simmons (1992 and 1993). In addition, Blader (1978 and 1999), Du (1995), and Rifkin (1999) have published on the topic of *pinghua*, which is considered to be the “sister” art form of *tanci*.¹⁰ However, the most substantial research on the art form has originated from Bender, Benson, Tsao and Hodes. Of these, Bender is perhaps the most prolific; his research on the art form spans over twenty years.¹¹ In his recent monograph (2003), he draws from his background in the field of folklore to explore the “terrains of oral expression” in the course of a performance of the story *Meng Lijun* (4). Here, Bender adopts the Greg Sarris's terminology “oral territory” to consider certain elements of a storytelling performance that often are not studied, including “asides, meta-anecdotes or dialogue

¹⁰ For additional musicological resources about Chinese storytelling in general, see: Rees 1991, Wang 1990, and Tsao 1989.

¹¹ See Bender 1984, 1988, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2003 and 2005.

with audience” (Bender 2003, 70).¹² In addition to translating a large part of this particular story, Bender thoroughly introduces the history, repertoire, performance practice, and performance contexts of this art form. To date, Bender’s work stands out as the most comprehensive English-language study of *tanci*.

Stemming from his background as a historian, Carleton Benson (1996) focuses on a different period in *tanci* performance as well as a different genre of performance repertoire, the Opening Ballad.¹³ Benson explores the manipulation of Opening Ballads that were performed on the radio during the early 1930s, and specifically, how advertising agents used these ballads in order to simultaneously promote capitalist and political goals (Benson 1996, 118). Benson’s research contributes a unique perspective to the study of the pre-1949 period of history by examining the important role that women played in early radio audiences.

Musicologist Tsao Pen-Yeh contributes a third approach through his analysis of *tanci* music and specifically the relationship between the text’s speech-tones and the vocal melody (Tsao 1976, 1986, 1988, 1989 and 1998). In his 1988 monograph, Tsao provides a short description of *tanci* music and a brief overview of the alleged origins of the art form, before his detailed analysis of twelve ballads. In his analysis, he isolates recurrent motives in the vocal melody, and studies the relationship between speech tones and melody. Tsao’s work stands out for his meticulous approach to musical and linguistic analysis as well as his extensive transcriptions and transliterations of the twelve ballads and their texts.

Nancy Hodes has adopted yet another approach to study *tanci*. In her dissertation (1990), she compares two versions of the traditional story *Three Smiles Romance* (*San Xiao*) as

¹² In addition to “oral territory,” Bender (1998) has also focused on the concept of “shifting” between different modes and registers that occurs during a performance.

¹³ See also Benson 1995 and 1999.

represented in a written form that she refers to as the “performance-related songstory” (*changci*) (Hodes 1990, 9). Hodes thoroughly discusses the differences between the types of stories that existed during the 1930s, including stories that were written down for the purpose of reading only (the written-to-be-read “simulated songstory”) and those that were written down but intended to capture the essence of a performance (the “performance-related songstory”).

Although she largely focuses on the pre-1949 period of *tanci* research, she briefly addresses the 1949-1964 period. She describes three types of research conducted during this time including “articles in popular culture magazines,” “reports of fieldwork done by folklore workers,” and “scholarly research” (61-67). While she mentions several scholars from Suzhou, she does not mention scholarship originating from Shanghai researchers such as Wu Zongxi.

1.4.2 Chinese-language research on *tanci*

As noted by both Hodes (1990) and Bender (2003), scholarly research of *tanci* began in the 1920s and 1930s with work by Zheng Zhenduo, Zhao Jingshen, Li Jiarui, Tan Zhengbi, Chen Ruheng, and A Ying (Bender, 29 and Hodes, 20). Hodes describes these scholars as “friends who corresponded with each other,” and who were also part of the “„progressive’ intellectual scene active in the May Fourth Movement¹⁴ and beyond” (20). The bulk of their research consists of collections and catalogues of *tanci* texts, which included both those meant for performance and others meant only for leisure reading. They also wrote a number of short essays, and wrote about the art form in their own fields of research (Hodes, 21-22).¹⁵

¹⁴ The May Fourth Movement, touched off by the 1919 student protests of the Versailles Treaty, was an intellectual-led movement towards national independence.

¹⁵ See Hodes’s dissertation for a more detailed account of these scholars’ research during the 1920s and 1930s (1990, 20-60).

Since 1949, the majority of Chinese-language research on the art form has originated from outside the university system from cultural worker researchers such as Zhou Liang and Wu Zongxi. Much of Zhou's research has emerged since the Cultural Revolution,¹⁶ and has focused largely on the history of the art form leading up to the Cultural Revolution. This focus can be seen in his five-part article "Suzhou Pingtan Historical Chronicle" (*Suzhou Pingtan Shihua*) published in the periodical *Pingtán Art* (*Pingtán Yishu*) during the mid-1990s¹⁷ and his 2002 monograph *Suzhou Pingtan Historical Document* (*Suzhou Pingtan Shigao*). Zhou also has edited several books including most prominently *A Record of Chen Yun's Communication with the Pingtan World* (*Chen Yun He Suzhou Pingtanjie Jiaowang Shilu*) (2000), which is a collection of letters written by the high-ranking Communist Party leader as well as transcripts of talks he gave to artists and troupe leaders during the late 1950s through mid-1980s. Most recently Zhou has edited *Pingtán Letters* (*Pingtán Shujian*) (2004), a collection of letters that were written by different artists who lived during the Qing dynasty through 1980s.¹⁸

Wu, who has also published under the pseudonyms Xia Shi and Zuo Xuan, has explored various theoretical and aesthetic dimensions of *tanci* in his research. This focus can be seen in three of his works *How to Enjoy Pingtan* (*Zenyang Xinshang Pingtan*) (1957), *Miscellaneous Articles on Pingtan* (*Pingtán Sanlun*) (1983), and *Casual Talks On Pingtan* (*Pingtán Tanzong*) (2004). In 1997, he also published a collection of articles that were originally written during the 1950s and 60s, *Writings on Suzhou Pingtan Storytelling* (*Suzhou Pingtan Wenxuan*).¹⁹ At the

¹⁶ The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was a ten-year period of radical political, economic, and social campaigns launched by Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party Mao Zedong with the purpose of realigning China to Communist ideals.

¹⁷ See Zhou 1995.

¹⁸ Other works edited by Zhou include: *Suzhou Pingtan* (2000a) and *China's Suzhou Pingtan* (2002).

¹⁹ See Bender 1998b for an extensive review of this work.

time, these articles were published in leading Shanghai newspapers such as the *Xinmin Evening News* and *Revolution Daily* (*Jiefang Ribao*).

In addition to his own research, Wu has edited several large-scale projects related to the twin *pingtan* arts, *pinghua* and *tanci*. During the 1950s and 1960s, he edited two compilations of Opening Ballads (Xia 1958 and 1962). After the Cultural Revolution, Wu also edited the comprehensive *Dictionary of Pingtan Culture* (*Pingtán Cidian*) (1996). Similar in content to Zhou's 1988 *Pingtán Information Handbook* (*Pingtán Zhishi Shouce*), the *Dictionary of Pingtan Culture* includes performers' biographies, definitions of terminology, descriptions of performance repertoire, histories of performance troupes, and names of story houses. The dictionary also features extensive charts, which document the transmission of a particular story from its initial performance date through the 1980s.

Most recently, Wu has edited the Shanghai volume of the *Anthology of Chinese Narrative Music* (*Zhongguo Yinyue Quyi Jicheng*), one of the four major anthologies on Chinese traditional music that has been published in China since the Cultural Revolution.²⁰ The other three anthologies in the series concentrate on folk songs, instrumental music, and opera. The Shanghai volume of the narrative song anthology includes over nine hundred pages of ballad transcriptions, an introduction to the music of the art form, and brief biographies of twenty artists.

Besides Zhou and Wu, other individuals have published Chinese-language research on *tanci*. Cultural associations, performance troupes, and publishing companies also have collaborated on certain publications.²¹ Most of this research consists of musical (cipher-note)

²⁰ ZBW 1997. See Wong 1990 for a review of the narrative song (*quyi*) anthology project.

²¹ See SWC 1959, 1960, 1962, 1965a, 1965b, and 1966, Bo 1958, Hu 1957, Pan 1962, Tan 1985, Zheng 1985, SQX 1991, and SPT 1979 and 2006.

transcriptions, catalogues of repertoire, and excerpts from performance texts. Since the early 1980s, *tanci* performers, fans, and scholars also have published essays on a variety of subjects in the journals *Narrative Arts* (*Quyí*) and *Pingtán Yishu* (*Pingtán Storytelling Arts*). However, most articles published in these journals focus on contemporary issues stemming from the 1980s and 1990s.

In addition to these sources, a wealth of information has recently been made available online, primarily through two main websites, the Suzhou Pingtan Troupe's *China's Pingtan Network* (*Zhongguo Pingtan Wang*)²² and the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe's *Shanghai Pingtan Network* (*Shanghai Pingtan Wang*).²³ The two websites are similar in content; both contain news of upcoming concerts, reviews of recent performances, bios of current and past performers associated with each troupe, bulletin board "chat rooms" for fans, and short descriptions of performance repertoire excerpted from the *Dictionary of Pingtan Culture*. The two websites additionally stream audio and occasionally post video clips of recent performances.

1.4.3 Studies of the Chinese Performing Arts, 1950s-1960s

A number of scholars have written about the 1950s-1960s period in the Chinese performance arts. They have studied a variety of different art forms including cinema (Clark 1988), ritual music (Jones 1999), instrumental traditions (Lau 1991, 1995, and 1996), "crosstalk" (*xiangsheng*) (Link 1984), marionette theatre (Ruizendaal 2006), folk song (Tuohy 1998), regional opera genres (Chen 1995, Ferguson 1988, Qin 1988, Stock 2004, Yung 1984), narrative

²² See SZQX 2005

²³ See SPT 2004.

song genres (Ferguson 1980), drama (Chin 1980, Mackerras 1981) and Western classical music (Yang 2007).

In their research, these scholars have explored a number of topics related to the reform of the arts during this period. Mackerras (1975 and 1981), Tung and Mackerras (1987), and Chin (1980) have all discussed the drama reform movement in general, particularly as it was orchestrated and carried out by the national government. Ruizendaal (2006) and Stock (2006) have further described this reform movement in terms of two regional traditions, Quanzhou marionette theater and Shanghai opera (*huju*). Chen (1995) and Link (1984) have focused on the revision of performance repertoire in Flower and Drum Song of Hunan province (*huaguxi*) and “crosstalk,” respectively, including the State’s role in censorship of traditional works, and conflicts faced by the artists as they revised. Clark (1988), Lau (1991 and 1996), Wong (1984), and Yung (1984) have each examined artistic processes behind the creation of new works, particularly in regard to cinema, *dizi* repertory, “songs of the masses,” and Cantonese opera.

In the majority of these studies, the State is depicted as controlling the arts and by extension, the artists. In other words, many of the authors adopt a “top-down” model to describe artistic activity during this period. For example, one recurrent approach, as seen in Chen (1995), Chin (1980), Clark (1988), Ferguson (1980), Ferguson (1988), Mackerras (1975 & 1981), Qin (1988), and Tung (1987), is studying how official policies, bureaus, and promulgations directed the revision of drama repertory. Although this approach is helpful for illustrating the State’s role in the reform process, it neglects to consider the role of the artist. Other scholars including Link, Lau, Jones, and Yung, have alternatively focused on the artists’ role in the reform process while, at the same time, also recognizing the instrumental role of the State. Lau (1996), in fact, argues

for a more comprehensive adoption of this “bottom-up” perspective when studying Chinese art forms.

1.5 CHAPTER OUTLINE

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. Chapter one presents the scope, theoretical framework, methodology, and sources employed in this project. In Chapter two, I introduce the art form, including the main tenants of its performance practice and the concept of musical style. I also briefly discuss its history prior to 1949. Following this, in Chapter three, I provide a historical overview of the 1949-1964 period in China, drawing attention to the specific events, people, and cultural policies that shaped the performing arts during this time.

In Chapter four, I focus on the revision of traditional *tanci* repertoire, or that is, stories created prior to 1949. Through the example of *Jade Dragonfly (Yu Qingting)*, a Qing dynasty story revised by the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe during the late 1950s and early 1960s, I examine the general types of changes that were made during the revision process within the context of specific arts directives and political slogans of the time. I also consider the influence of Party leader Chen Yun and his close relationship with the Shanghai troupe. In addition, I explore instances of artistic freedom as expressed through the creation of new ballad music, and other instances when due to their lack of freedom in text production, artists clashed over opposing artistic interpretations.

In Chapter five, I study the creation of *We Certainly Must Fix the Huai River (Yiding Yao Ba Huaihe Xiuhao)*, a Middle-length Story based on the performers’ own experiences during the Thought Reform Campaign of 1951. Through studying extant narratives about the

composition process and the actual story itself, I highlight the many ways that artists were influenced by the political atmosphere of the time to compose this story. I also explore how the political atmosphere stimulated one artist to develop a new musical approach in a prominent ballad from the story.

In Chapter six, I focus on two ballads composed during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Opening Ballad *New Mulan Song* and the Mao Zedong Poem Ballad *Butterfly Loves the Flower*. As in the previous two chapters, I stress the significant role played by official ideology in the creative process. In this case, I examine the role of powerful political endorsement, given through conversations that occurred between performers and high-ranking political figures such as Zhou Enlai, shaped the composition and performance of both works. I also explore the radically new musical approaches taken in the two ballads as well as the composers' own political motivations for employing these techniques.

Finally, in Chapter seven, I summarize the previous chapters and draw several conclusions regarding the nature of State control of the arts and artistic freedom during this period in *tanci* history. I explore possible reasons why, in these cases, artistic freedom was expressed through the composition of new ballad music. Finally, I suggest broader implications of this study, especially as it pertains to research of the 1950s-1960s period in Chinese music history and ethnomusicology, in general.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF SUZHOU *Tanci*

Suzhou *tanci* is a professional musical storytelling, or narrative, art originating from the city of Suzhou in Southeastern China. [See figure below] Performers of the art form use a combination of spoken narrative, sung ballads, and instrumental accompaniment to convey tales with themes of romance, tragedy, supernatural events, and self-sacrifice, to name a few. Many of these stories have been passed down from teacher to student through oral transmission for over two centuries, while others have been more recently added to the performance repertoire.



Figure 2: Map of Suzhou in Jiangsu Province (red) and Shanghai (pink), China

In this chapter, I provide a general overview of *tanci* by examining elements central to its performance practice, including performance contexts, varieties of presentation,²⁴ the role of spoken sections and sung ballads, the concept of musical style, artists' training, and transmission practices. I examine these aspects from a historical perspective, focusing broadly on how they have changed over the past two centuries. I do not discuss performance repertoire here because it is discussed in length in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Many scholars have sought to capture the multifaceted nature of this art form by adopting terminology such as "Suzhou chantefable,"²⁵ "plucking rhymes,"²⁶ "strum lyrics,"²⁷ "southern singing narrative,"²⁸ and "story-singing."²⁹ Since I will be discussing the many aspects of the art form in detail, here I employ the original Chinese terminology "*tanci*."

In this chapter, I occasionally also use the terminology "pingtan." The word "pingtan" refers to both *tanci* and *pinghua*, the two closely related, yet distinct storytelling arts performed in the Jiangnan River Valley region. While *tanci*, as will be explained below, consists of both spoken storytelling and sung ballads, *pinghua* consists of spoken storytelling only. Moreover, the two genres differ in terms of their performance repertoire and practice. Since my dissertation concerns *tanci* only, I only employ the term "*pingtan*" in the context of official organizations, such as the names of performance troupes. In this usage, the term can be understood as referring to performers of both art forms, *tanci* and *pinghua*.

²⁴ Here, I adopt Bender's terminology to refer to the different duo and trio ensembles in which *tanci* is performed (2003, 42).

²⁵ Bender 2003, 3

²⁶ Hanan 1973

²⁷ Mair 1985, 354.

²⁸ Tsao 1988

²⁹ Hodes 1990, 2.

2.1 PERFORMANCE CONTEXTS

The earliest record of *tanci* dates back to the mid-sixteenth century, Ming dynasty, when the genre was first mentioned in a travelogue written by Tian Rucheng. Later during this period, *Legend of the White Snake (Baishe Zhuan)* emerged. This story is believed to be the earliest text that was performed in the same style as *tanci* today (Tsao 1986, 223). Little is known about these early years of performance. However, it is thought that the art form was typically performed in open-air markets or temple fairs up through the mid-19th century (Bender 2003, 15).

Beginning in the mid 19th century, live performance most often occurred in teahouse storytelling venues. Three types of teahouses were found throughout Shanghai during this time, the “teahouse story house” (*chaguan shuchang*), the “tea tower story house” (*chalou shuchang*), and the “pure story house” (*qing shuchang*) (Benson 1996, 19). The “teahouse story houses” were informal establishments patronized by the mostly male laborers from the surrounding neighborhood while the tea tower story houses were more formal venues in finer teahouses (Benson 1996, 17). The “pure story houses” were the most exclusive venues, often located in the best teahouses in the city.

During the late 19th through early 20th century, these venues were found throughout Southeastern China, especially in the major cities such as Suzhou, Wuxi, and Changsha. During this time, it is thought that approximately two hundred “tea tower story houses” and “pure storyhouses” existed in Shanghai. In general, these venues were patronized by non-elite men of the lower and middle class, with the exception of the tea tower story houses located in the International Settlement, which were attended by elite members of society (Benson 1996, 30). Women, in general, did not attend public storytelling performances during this time due to the

risk of being mistaken for a prostitute; though, it is thought that they listened to the art form at private performances given at their home (Benson 1996, 29).

Teahouses during this time were largely characterized by their simple decoration. As Benson notes, most venues had been transformed into story houses with a “minimum of effort and expense” (Benson 1996, 23). A raised stage was constructed at the back or corner of the tearoom. The storytellers performed seated on high-backed chairs, and a small table was typically placed between the two chairs on which the performers placed their teacups and instruments when they were not being played. The audience, generally ranging between eighty and one hundred guests in total, sat around small square tables below the platform on backless benches or stools. Though the elderly, hard of hearing, or especially affluent audience members were given priority seating around a long table that was placed in front of the stage, called the “old folks table” (*laoren tai*) or the “first candidates’ table” (*zhuan yuan tai*) (Bender 2003, 21).



**Figure 3: Model of a late 19th c. story house, Suzhou Pingtan Museum, Suzhou, China
(Picture taken by author on September 27, 2006)**

In addition to simple decoration, teahouses of this time period were also characterized by a lively, and at times, raucous atmosphere. While listening to story performances, the audience also sipped tea, nibbled on snacks that were peddled in the tearoom, played chess with other visitors, battled crickets, and exhibited favorite songbirds (Benson 1996, 24). The “carnival-like atmosphere” of the story houses was compounded by the storyteller’s performance of earthy humor and the rowdy and unrestrained responses of its male audience (Benson 1996, 35, 39). Performers who failed to satisfy the audience’s demand were often verbally accosted and some were even physically thrown off of the stage (Benson 1996, 39).

During the 1920s, new venues emerged throughout Shanghai that offered both women and men the opportunity to attend public *tanci* performances. These venues, called “amusement centers” (*yule chang*), offered “a broad variety of traditional and nontraditional entertainments under one roof” (Benson 1996, 21). At the most famous of these centers, the Great World Entertainment Palace (*Da Shijie Yule Chang*), visitors could choose between two to three performances at any one time.

During the early 1930s and 40s, the number of story houses in Southeastern China continued to increase. This was especially true in the growing city of Shanghai, where in addition to the traditional venues, storytelling artists performed at some 500 venues including “amusement centers,” clubs, restaurants, and dance halls (Bender 2003, 15; McDaniel, 486). Beginning in the early 1930s, many artists also performed ballads on the radio. This new medium drew many new listeners to *tanci*, including a large number of women who had never attended story house performances before. In addition, radio broadcast led to the composition of new ballads that advertised consumer products during the early 1930s, and promoted propaganda

of the Nationalist government during the New Life Movement³⁰ of 1934 (Benson 1996, 139-140).

After the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, performances were given in venues that catered more to the new working class, such as factories, large dance halls, and outdoor stages in the countryside. Through these new venues, large numbers of people were exposed to the art form. For example, many dance halls during that period could seat up to seven hundred people (See Wu 1996, 479-80). The new performance venues also facilitated the introduction of the genre to new groups of people, particularly factory workers and farmers. Many artists, especially those belonging to nationalized troupes, performed in these new venues in addition to their daily story house engagements. These performances continued until 1964, when all *tanci* performances essentially stopped. As a result, almost all story houses in the region were closed at this time, and remained closed throughout the duration of the Cultural Revolution.

Today, *tanci* continues to be performed in story houses most of which were established during the 1980s and 1990s, after the Cultural Revolution. These venues tend to vary greatly in terms of physical appearance. Some story houses are very large, with seating for several hundred visitors, and resemble a contemporary theater. One example is the Brilliant Abundance Story House (*Guangyu Shuchang*) in Suzhou, which built on the site of the original Brilliant Abundance Guild, offers comfortable seating arranged in rows below the raised stage (see figure below). The stage of this story house is adorned with traditional art, and lit by permanent fixtures.

³⁰ During the New Life Movement (*Xin Shenghuo Yundong*), instituted by the Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-Shek in 1934, citizens were encouraged reject Capitalist values in favor of Confucian ideals. The purpose of Chiang's movement was to rally the people against the Communism.



Figure 4: Brilliant Abundance Story House, Suzhou, China (Picture taken by author on October 5, 2006)

Other story houses are much smaller and more simply decorated. One example is the Lu Art Story House (*Luyi Shuchang*) located in Shanghai's Lu Xun Park, which I visited on June 7, 2004. Seating for approximately thirty-five listeners consisted of folding chairs arranged in rows. On the raised stage sat the performers' chairs and a small table; behind them hung a solitary scroll. One unique venue is the Pingtan Museum Story House (*Pingtán Bowuguan Shuchang*), decorated in the traditional style of a formal story house from the Qing dynasty (see figure below). This story house contains permanent audience seating, consisting of ornately carved chairs set around long tables, and much artwork throughout.



Figure 5: Suzhou Pingtan Museum Story House; Suzhou, China
(Picture taken by author on September, 27 2006)

2.2 VARIETIES OF PRESENTATION

Typically, *tanci* is performed either solo (*dan dang*) or by a duo (*shuang dang*). When a story is performed solo, the artist accompanies him or herself on the *sanxian*, a three-stringed banjo-like instrument (see figure 6 below). However when a pair performs, one of the artists plays the *sanxian* while the other performs on the *pipa*, a pear-shaped plucked lute (see figure 7 below). In this configuration, the artist playing the *sanxian* is usually designated the lead performer, or literally “upper hand” (*shang shou*), while the *pipa* player functions as the supporting performer, or the “lower hand” (*xia shou*). The lead artist performs major character roles and narrates the tale. He or she is also responsible for controlling the overall pace of the story. The supporting artist, on the other hand, performs the roles of female and minor characters. This person must be attentive to the lead performer’s cues, and also support him or her with instrumental

accompaniment. As Bender notes, one difference between the solo and duo presentation is that the solo artist is able to take complete control of the story, while the duo must work together “tossing” the story back and forth between themselves (2003, 43).



Figure 6: Solo presentation, Shanghai performer Yu Hongxian, pictured in the 2004 (Wang 2004, vi)



Figure 7: Duo presentation, Shanghai performers Zhou Hong and Gao Bowen, pictured in 2004 (Wang 2004, vi)

Up until the 1940s, men often performed solo while women tended to perform together in duos or trios. Mixed gender pairs emerged during the 1920s when some men began performing with their daughters or wives. Male and female performances duos became more common during the 1930s and 1940s through the founding of the Universal Abundance Guild (*Puyushe*), the first performance society to accept both men and women, in 1935. However, these mixed gender duos did not become commonplace until the 1950s (Bender 2003, 13, 43). In a mixed gender duo, men traditionally performed the lead role while women performed the supporting role. However, with the emergence of strong female performers such as Yu Hongxian and Zhou Hong during the last twenty years, it is becoming more common to see women performing the lead role.

2.3 VISUAL ASPECTS OF PERFORMANCE

Since *tanci* artists perform from a seated position and typically remain still from the waist down, arm and hand movements and facial expressions play an important role in a storytelling performance. These elements, which are referred to collectively as “hands and face” (*shoumian*), are necessary for character portrayal and seem to bring the description in the stories to life (Bender 2003, 60). During the spoken parts of a performance, storytellers often use particular stylized gestures instead of fully acting out certain actions in the story (Bender 2003, 16). When a storytelling duo performs together, they will interact with each other through verbal communication and gesture; however, they will never touch each other (Bender 2003, 60).

During the singing of ballads, visual portrayal of the characters occurs almost solely through the facial expressions and eye movements of the lead performer, or the storyteller singing the ballad. Since this performer must use his or her arms and hands for playing the *sanxian*, gesture is rarely used. However, occasionally the upper hand will gesture with one of his or her hands during the singing of a ballad. During this time, the supporting performer remains still and virtually expression-less while accompanying the lead on *pipa*. As a result, the audience's attention is drawn to the more animated expressions of the lead performer.³¹

2.4 SPOKEN SECTIONS AND SUNG BALLADS

2.4.1 Spoken sections

A typical *tanci* performance is divided into sections of speaking and singing. During the spoken sections, the performer conveys the majority of the story's plot through dialogue and narration. Performers use the third person narrative's voice (*biao*) to narrate events in the story, and to "intrude" on the character's thoughts (Bender 1989, 41). The voices of the different characters in the story are performed in the first person (*bai*). They are distinguished through use of a specific speaking style, dialect, and gestures. For example, a literary speech style referred to as *Zhongzhou yun* is used to perform the voices of certain elite characters (Bender 2003, 53).

In addition to the main story line, "humor" (*xuetou*), or "short remarks, quips, and anecdotes" from outside the main story line are spoken in performance (Bender 2003, 50). There are three types of "humor" that might be performed during a story including 1) "humor in the

³¹ See Bender 1999 for a description of the types of "shifting" that occurs during a typical *tanci* performance.

meat” (*roulixue*), or “humorous events entwined in the thread of the frame story,” 2) “inserted flowers or “stuck-ins” (*chuancha*), or “humorous remarks and anecdotes inserted into the narrative or as part of the introductory patter before the actual storytelling begins,” and 3) “small sales” (*xiaomai*), or “humorous quips not over a sentence or two long, sometimes satiric or ironic, which can be a part of the frame story or the inserted narratives” (Bender 2003, 50). The artist inserts this “humor” at different points throughout the course of the main story. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, “humor” was often labeled as “lewd” or “pornographic” after 1949. As a result, artists stopped performing it, and many removed these sections from traditional story repertoire.

2.4.2 Sung ballads

This study primarily focuses on the sung sections of a *tanci* performance, the ballads. There are two main types of ballads sung during the course of a story performance, the Opening Ballad (*kaipian*) and the Interspersing Ballad (*changduan* or *xuanqu*). A performance typically begins with an Opening Ballad (*kaipian*) sung before the story proper. This ballad, which often consists of a musical selection taken from another story, allows the performers to warm up their voices, test the acoustics of the performance venue, and alert the audience that the main story will begin soon. The Interspersing Ballads are sung passages that intersperse the spoken performance of the story proper. Their text often consists of a reflection of a particular character’s thoughts and emotions. Both the Opening Ballads and Interspersing Ballad may be performed in either of the conservative speech registers, *Subai*, a conservative form of the Suzhou dialect, or *Zhongzhou yun*. Although during the 1950s and 1960s, some Opening Ballads were also performed in Mandarin. One difference between the two types of ballads is that the Opening Ballads are

thought to be stricter in form and have tighter lyrics than the Interspersing Ballads (Bender 2003, 58).

In both types of ballads, the text is paired into couplets, an “upper line” (*shangju*) followed by a “lower line” (*xiaju*). These lines may be five, seven, eight or ten syllables in length; though seven syllables is the most common, especially in traditional ballads. In terms of the melodic structure, the upper line tends to end on a “non-gravitational pitch,” which tends to make the vocal line sound “incomplete” (Tsao 1998, 264). The lower line usually ends on a more stable pitch, and offers the listener more sense of finality (Tsao 1998, 264). The specific ending pitches of both upper and lower lines is determined by the specific “stylistic school” (*liupai*) that in which the ballad is being performed.³² As Tsao observes, the melodic material in the middle of each line is largely determined by the “linguistic qualities of the text syllables” (1998, 264).

In addition to the vocal melody, the musical structure of the entire ballad is thought to closely reflect this couplet structure of the text. A typical musical phrase in a ballad consists of an instrumental introduction (inst. intro.) followed by the upper line, which is sung with instrumental accompaniment (UL/inst acc) (see figure below). When performed in certain musical styles, the instrumental accompaniment may drop out during the singing of the upper and lower lines. Next, an instrumental interlude is played (inst. int.). This immediately precedes the singing of the lower line, which is also accompanied (LL/inst acc). The next phrase begins with an instrumental introduction, or interlude, which is usually longer than the interlude performed between the upper and lower lines. As will be explored in Chapter 6, during the 1950s and 1960s, artists such as Xu Lixian and Zhao Kaisheng, at times, departed from this

³² See section 2.5 for a discussion of musical style in *tanci*.

traditional structure by shortening or altogether eliminating instrumental interludes between sung lines.

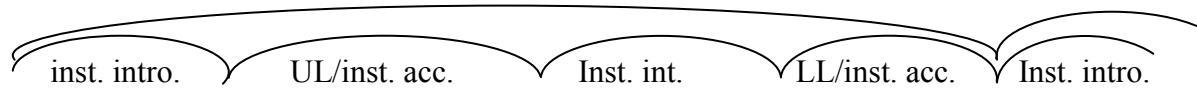


Figure 8: Typical musical phrase structure in a *tanci* ballad

The instrumental accompaniment serves two important roles in a ballad performance. As seen above, it links the two textual couplets together through the instrumental interlude, and also supports the vocalist during the singing of the upper and lower lines. In general, the accompaniment consists of melodic and rhythmic patterns that are repeated with slight variation throughout the ballad. The specific patterns that are played are pre-determined by the “stylistic school” in which the artist has been trained.³³

2.5 CONCEPT OF MUSICAL STYLE

Since the late 19th and early 20th centuries, individuality in musical style has been stressed in vocal and instrumental performance. Artists have developed their own unique performance styles or “tunes” (*diao*) in order to appeal to audiences’ sense of aesthetics, and to remain artistically competitive with their peers. As Tsao explains, since stories are familiar to most audience members, they are attracted to the “details and the style of presentation” rather than the “novelty of content” (1998, 262). Simply speaking, these tunes are distinguished by the artists’ unique approach to melody and rhythm, and can be conceived of as the basic melodic and

³³ For examples of interlude patterns performed in the style of the Jiang School see Chapter 5.

rhythmic framework of the ballad. However, several contemporary performers and researchers have noted that the artist's approach to vocal embellishment, breathing, and pronunciation also serves an important role in characterizing a particular tune (Zhou 2004; Zuo 1983, 139).

As will be explained in the following section, *tanci* tunes are passed down from teacher to student through oral and aural transmission. Over the years, this transmission process has led to the development of style lineages, also referred to as “stylistic schools” (*liupai*). As in other orally transmitted musical forms, these schools changed as they were passed down from generation to generation. In fact, many new schools emerged as the result of students combining their teacher's tune with other musical influences, including other schools in which they may not have received formal training and outside musical sources of interest such as Kun and Peking opera. When an artist's musical performance style was thought to have significantly diverged from that of their teacher's, a new tune was established. Interestingly, the legitimacy of this new style largely rested in the audiences' ability to recognize and identify it. That is, despite the performers' efforts to distinguish him or herself musically, only the audience was given the artistic power to recognize and name the new school (Zhou 2004).

The earliest schools, the Yu, Ma, and Chen, were created during the 18th and 19th centuries of the Qing dynasty. During the late 18th century and early 19th centuries, Yu Xiushan created and performed the Yu Tune (*Yu Diao*), a style characterized by a wide vocal range, highly embellished melody, and generous use of *rubato*. It is thought that Yu developed his tune partially based on Kun opera and folk songs from Southeastern China (Wu 1996, 131). Since this time, the style has been used primarily for portraying young men and women roles.

A second early school, the Chen Tune (*Chen Diao*), was also established during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Created by Chen Ouqian, the Chen Tune is

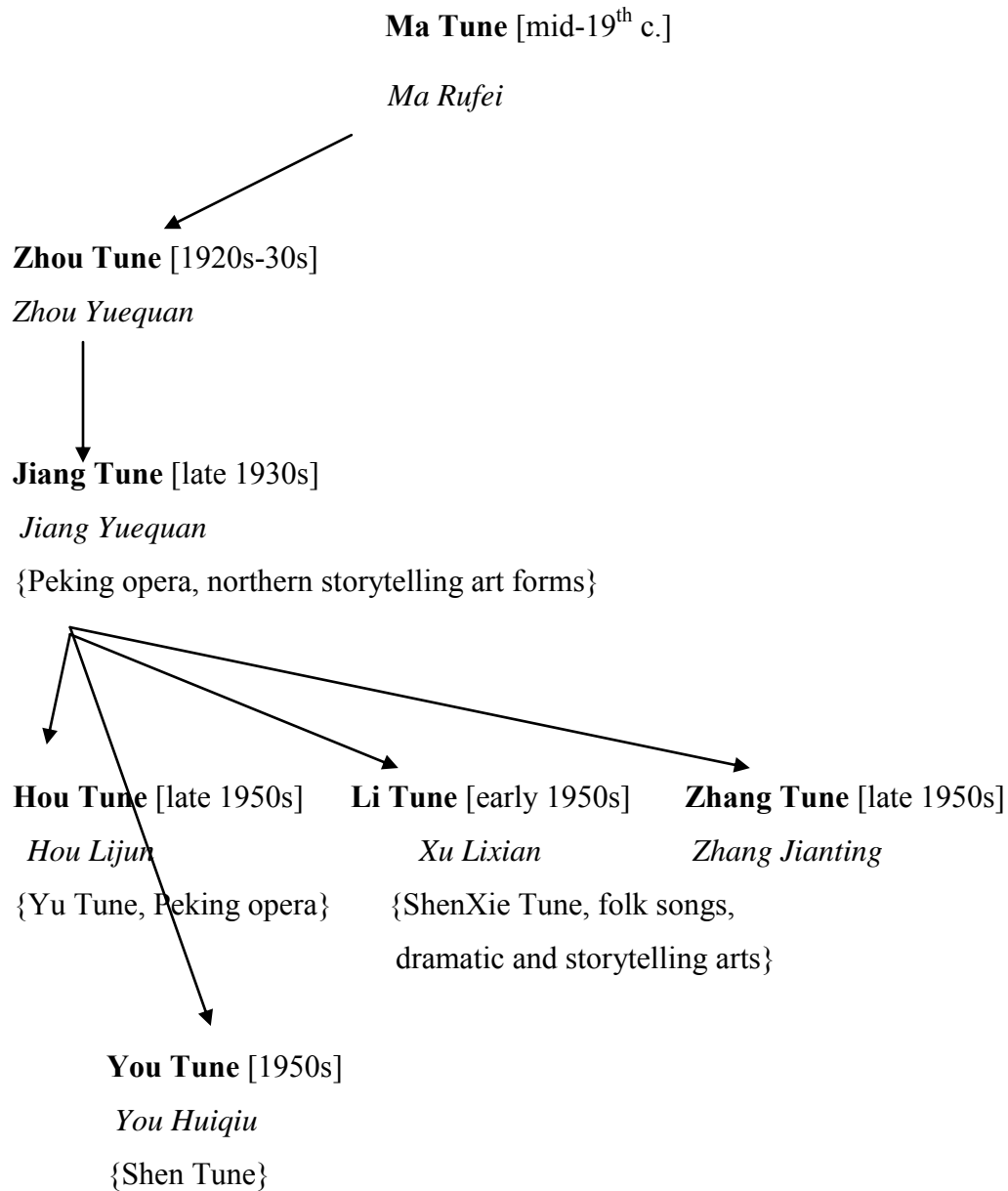
characterized by its “tight melodic structure, emphasis on pronunciation, and deep vocal timbre” (Wu 1996, 131). Like the Yu Tune, the Chen Tune is thought to contain the influences of Kun opera due to Chen’s background in the art form prior to becoming a *tanci* performer. Today, the Chen Tune is often used to portray elderly character roles. During the twentieth century, Shanghai artists Liu Tianyun, Yang Zhenxiong and Jiang Yuequan were well known for performing this style (Wu 1996, 97).

Later, during the mid 19th century, Ma Rufei established the Ma Tune (*Ma Diao*), a style that has been characterized by its “repeated notes, stepwise melodic movements, and narrow vocal range” (Tsao 1998, 264). In addition to his stylistic developments, Ma Rufei was also well known during his time for adapting the traditional story *Pearl Pagoda* into the *tanci* repertory. In general, the Ma Tune is thought to be more recitative in nature than the Yu and Chen Tunes. Some have described it as “largely following the speech tones and syllables in the text” (Wu 1996, 131).

The Yu, Ma and Chen Schools are important not only because they are the earliest stylistic schools, but also because they are the fundamental tunes from which all subsequent styles were developed. In other words, all tunes that are performed today can theoretically be traced back to the Yu, Ma, or Chen Schools. Since, as explained above, a typical tune is generally composed of multiple musical influences, tracing the history of a particular school can be complex. Below, I have charted the lineage of one branch of the Ma School based on information given in performers’ biographies listed in the *Pingtun Dictionary* (Wu 1996). Although within the art form such lineage charts are usually used to trace the transmission of a particular story, I have included this chart for the purpose of visually representing the links between several major Schools of Style. Next to the name of each school, I have noted the

approximate years of its creation. Below the name of the school, I have listed the artist known for its creation as well as additional musical influence thought to have been incorporated.

Ma School Lineage Chart



{ }=additional stylistic influences

Figure 9: Ma School Lineage Chart

2.6 PERFORMERS' TRAINING AND TRANSMISSION OF *TANCI*

As mentioned above, throughout the history of *tanci*, the apprenticeship relationship between teacher and student has played a vital role in transmission of the art form. During the late 18th through mid-twentieth century, the teacher hand selected his apprentices, usually a young boy or girl who was believed to have artistic potential. The teacher then officially accepted the student into the apprenticeship relationship during a formal ceremony referred to as “reverencing the master” (*baishi*). Tsao links the significance of this ceremony to the high monetary and artistic value attributed to the teacher’s knowledge: “Since each performer specialized in only one of two long stories which were regarded as a private possession for maintaining his livelihood, the acceptance of an apprentice was, in pre-1949 eras, a serious matter...” (1986, 224).

Following this ceremony, the student’s education was carried out over the course of several years. The difficulty of the training as well as the independence allotted to the student progressively increased according to the teacher’s assessment of the student’s artistic capabilities. The apprenticeship generally began with the student doing household duties for the teacher while he independently learned the master’s art through secret observations of performances. Gradually, when the student was thought to have shown enough initiative, the master taught him or her through oral and aural transmission, or “word by word” and “sentence by sentence” (Tsao 1986, 225). This training continued until the student was allowed to perform

minor roles as the master's lower hand. Finally, the end of the apprenticeship was marked by a public performance by the student as lead performer.³⁴

The apprenticeship relationship not only facilitated the oral transmission of the art form, it also was the means by which young performers gained access to highly esteemed and profitable storytelling venues. During the late 19th through mid-20th century, performance guilds were established in Shanghai and Suzhou; the most prestigious of which included the Brilliant Abundance Guild in Suzhou, the Universal Abundance Guild (*Puyushe*), and the Surplus Abundance Guild (*Runyushe*) in Shanghai. Guild leaders paid heavy dues to storytelling venues in exchange for performance rights at their establishment. As a result, guild members were guaranteed performance opportunities in certain story houses, but were not allowed to perform in others that were the domain of other guilds. Because of this, storytellers who did not belong to a guild often faced difficulties locating performance venues. As McDaniels states, "The simple truth is that no one who did not belong to one of two storytellers' guilds in Republican era Shanghai had a chance of finding employment in any of that city's more than 500 storytelling houses" (488). However, by studying with a senior member of a performance guild, a young artist was also able to gain entry to the guild's profitable performance venues.

After the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, this apprenticeship system underwent significant changes, and privately run guilds, including the Brilliant Abundance Guild and the Surplus Abundance Guild, were closed.³⁵ Soon after, the majority of artists who had belonged to these guilds joined nationalized performance troupes. Due to this change, transmission of stories rarely occurred within the exclusive teacher and student relationship.

³⁴ See Tsao 1986 for a more thorough description of the training conducted at each stage of the apprenticeship (225).

³⁵ As will be described in Chapter 3, the apprenticeship relationship was further de-emphasized during the 1960s when the State banned the "reverencing the master" ceremony.

However, within the troupes, younger performers continued to learn from older, more experienced performers. Within the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe, for example, informal musical exchange occurred between older and younger generations of performers, at times leading to new musical developments.

Since the Cultural Revolution, the majority of early training in *tanci* performance has been carried out at the Suzhou Pingtan School, a post-secondary school established in the late 1980s.³⁶ Upon graduation, some students formally apprentice an experienced performer who is also a member of a nationalized performance troupe. Nowadays, this apprenticeship relationship may last only one year. Technology such as recording devices, CD players, and the Internet has also impacted transmission of *tanci*. While some teachers still teach performance repertoire “word by word” and “sentence by sentence,” it is believed that many students today also rely heavily on tape recorders and other technology to learn the art form (Zhou 2004).

³⁶ See Bender 2003 for more information on the training that occurs at this school (34).

3.0 THE DRAMATIC AND NARRATIVE ARTS IN CHINA: 1950S-1960S

This chapter provides an overview of the political atmosphere of the 1950s and 1960s period in China, and particularly the movements, directives, and trends that shaped the performing arts, including *tanci*. The purpose of this chapter is to provide background information for the later discussions of stories and ballads in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

After the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, performing arts throughout China experienced extraordinary change as a result of the new politicized purpose ascribed to the arts by the Communist Party and Mao Zedong. This atmosphere was particularly intense in the dramatic arts when it came to the subject of performance repertoire. Due to its traditional subject matter, repertoire composed prior to 1949 was often considered unsuitable for promoting the State's policies, campaigns, and ideology. As a result, during years of political intensity such as the early 1950s, the Great Leap Forward,³⁷ and the years preceding the Cultural Revolution, the State discouraged the performance of traditional repertoire, and even banned a number of plays. At the same time, the State encouraged artists to compose new, contemporary-themed plays thought to be better in spreading its ideological message.

However, Chinese leadership did not sustain this emphasis on contemporary repertoire for long. During two periods in particular, the Hundred Flowers movement of 1956 and the

³⁷ As noted later in this chapter, the Great Leap Forward (1957-1959) was an economic campaign launched by Mao Zedong in which modernization of the country was pursued through setting ambitious production goals in industry and agriculture.

years following the Great Leap Forward, the State was forced to adopt a more relaxed approach to the dramatic arts. As a result, the “political pendulum” swung back in favor of traditional repertoire, and contemporary repertoire was performed less frequently. As Hsin explains, “The rise and fall of the influence of the two traditions [contemporary and traditional repertoire] depended very much upon the political climate of the time when the top leadership rigidified or relented control over the intellectuals” (Chin, 101).

As in the dramatic arts, *tanci* experienced this “swinging pendulum” between new, contemporary themed repertoire and traditional works throughout the 1949-64 period. Below, I explore the events, people and policies that led to the rise and fall of these two types of repertoire at different points throughout the period. I draw heavily from the history of drama due to the close relationship between the dramatic and narrative arts in Chinese culture. I organize my discussion based on the following division:³⁸ 1) 1949-1956, the early years of the PRC, 2) 1956-1958, the Hundred Flowers Movement and Anti-Rightist Period, 3) 1958-1962, the Great Leap Forward and aftermath, and 4) 1962-1966,³⁹ prelude to the Culture Revolution. I also briefly discuss the Cultural Revolution period in *tanci*.

3.1 EARLY YEARS OF THE PRC: 1949-1955

During the first few years following the establishment of the People’s Republic, the country’s leadership devoted great effort to the restructuring of the performing arts as under State control, and the re-orientating of artists and their artistic products according to the new national ideology.

³⁸ I adopt Yung’s (1984) division of this historical period.

³⁹ I extend my study to 1966 here because most performing arts continued to be performed up to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. *Tanci* is one exception to this rule.

As Krauss notes, this reorganization did not occur in one single act or event, but “in a series of only partially coordinated economic and administrative measures” implemented during this period (2004, 34).

3.1.1 Influx of new ideology

After 1949, one of the main goals of the Chinese Communist Party in regards to the arts was to “reorient” artists’ thoughts as well as their artistic works according to Communist ideology, and specifically, Mao’s vision for the arts under Chinese Communism. Mao first articulated this vision in his 1942 “Talks at the Yan’an Conference on Literature and Art” (the “Talks,” henceforth). Here, he urged the use of literature and art in service of “the masses,” and in particular, four groups in society: the workers, peasants, soldiers, and urban petty bourgeoisie (MacDougall 1980, 63). After 1949, this idea became the guiding principle behind the creation of many plays, compositions, and ballads. In *tanci*, artists formed study groups at different points throughout the 1950s and 1960s to examine Mao’s ideas, an effort made easier by a 1953 reprint of Mao’s “Talks” included in the four-volume *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* (MacDougall 1997, 201).

In addition to encouraging artists to study the “Talks,” the State used a variety of other means to communicate its new ideology to *tanci* performers during the early 1950s including political slogans, official policies and personal conversations between Party leaders and performers. As will be explored further in Chapter 4, the slogan “weed through the old to bring forth the new” (*tui chen chu xin*)⁴⁰ spoken by Mao in 1950 was especially influential in motivating performers to compose new contemporary-themed repertoire during the early 1950s.

⁴⁰ Chin translates this slogan as “rejecting the old to let the new emerge” (98).

Moreover, it is thought that from 1952 on, the slogan became one of the basic guidelines for drama reform (Chin, 98).

3.1.2 Nationalized Performance Troupes

A large part of this reorganization process, especially in the dramatic and narrative arts, was carried out through the creation of nationalized performance troupes. Prior to 1949, the performing arts in China were largely a privatized industry. Many performers belonged to professional guilds or other private performance groups, which served to manage the artists' performing schedules and also played a role in their training.⁴¹

However within the first few years after 1949, many of these private guilds were dissolved and nationalized troupes were set up in their place. As Chen notes, in 1949 there were eighteen private performance groups of the narrative genre called Hunan flower and drum song (*huaguxi*) in Changsha, a city in south central China, but by 1953 all of these groups had fallen under government control (134). In Shanghai, three Shanghai opera (*huju*) troupes were nationalized by 1950 and many followed later in January of 1956 (Stock, 163).

Similarly in *tanci*, several nationalized troupes were established during the early 1950s, beginning with the Shanghai People's Pingtan Work Troupe (*Shanghai Renmin Pingtan Gongzuotuan*) on November 20, 1951 and the Suzhou City New Realistic Work Troupe (*Suzhoushi Xin Shixian Gongzuotuan*) on January 15, 1952 (Zhou 2002, 82). Later during the early 1960s, nationalized troupes of *tanci* and *pinghua* performers were founded in a number of cities throughout Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. When performers joined the nationalized troupes, they received a stipend, or salary, that was paid by the State. This salary was important

⁴¹ See Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of the performance guilds in *tanci* prior to 1949.

because for the first time performers did not have to depend on ticket sales for their income. As Krauss has explained, the significance of troupe nationalization was that the State became the major “patron” for the arts (2004, 37). However, joining the nationalized troupe also posed potential disadvantages for certain artists since performance schedules and repertoire were overseen by state-appointed troupe leaders. In fact, it is thought that some *tanci* artists refused to join the performance troupes during this time due to the considerable involvement of the State (Zhou 2004).

3.1.3 State Culture Institutions

The performance troupes formed the lowest level of the hierarchical network of institutions set up by the State during this early period to monitor the performing arts. At the highest level of government was the Ministry of Culture, an institution whose job was to implement the policies of the Chinese Communist Party in the cultural field through offices at the national, provincial, county, and local level. During the 1950s and 60s, the Ministry issued formal bans of plays, held conferences to promote the performance of traditional plays, and organized task forces to edit and revise traditional plays (Chin, 121, 126).

Under the Ministry of Culture was one of the most influential institutions in the reform of the dramatic and narrative arts, the Bureau of Theatre Reform led by playwright Tian Han. Established in June of 1950, the Bureau’s official duties were to:

...formulate policies of theatre reform, investigate theatrical repertoire and performances, to set up the new standard repertoire to arrange for people to edit, revise and create plays, to take care of the old actors and foster new performances and reform old organization of performance troupes. (Qin, 149)

Like the Ministry of Culture, the Bureau of Theatre Reform issued promulgations for the dramatic arts. One of its most significant statements during this early period of the PRC was its July 1950 resolution to ban or revise traditional drama that:

...contained ideas of superstitious, servility or feudalistic moral standards that could anesthetize or frighten the people, those depicting adultery or murder from jealousy, and those containing exaggerated speeches and or movements that could insult the workers and peasants (Chin, 120)

As a result of this resolution, the Ministry of Culture banned twenty-six traditional dramas between the years 1950 and 1955 (Chin, 120; Luo, 153). Although this resolution was intended primarily for the dramatic arts, *tanci* performers in Shanghai and Suzhou responded to this ban with their own self-imposed censure of traditional repertoire between 1951 and 1952, a period to which they referred to as the Cut the Tail Movement (*Zhan Weiba Yundong*).⁴²

In addition to the Ministry of Culture and Bureau of Theatre Reform, other State institutions were set up to oversee the performing arts, including the Art Bureau of the Communist Party Propaganda Department, which focused primarily on “ideology, culture and education” through its officials at the provincial, city and county level (Kraus, 42). Another institution, the Cultural Office within the General Political Department of the People’s Liberation Army, managed the musicians, dancers, novelists, and poets, associated with the army (Kraus, 42).

⁴² See Chapter 4 for a description of the Cut the Tail Movement in *tanci*.

3.2 THE HUNDRED FLOWERS AND ANTI-RIGHTIST MOVEMENTS: 1956-1958

In 1956, the political atmosphere in the dramatic and narrative arts shifted. Where before traditional repertoire was avoided in favor of composing new contemporary works, in 1956 it again became acceptable for artists to perform traditional works. In fact, Chinese leadership, in certain instances, encouraged the performance of traditional repertoire. What led to this shift in the political atmosphere?

3.2.1 Hundred Flowers Movement

In May of 1956, Mao introduced the policy of “letting a hundred flowers bloom” (*bai hua ji fang*) to Party leaders as an attempt to relax the Party’s control of artists and intellectuals following seven years of increasingly tightened control.⁴³ The Party supported this policy based on their desire for intellectuals to participate in the modernizing efforts underway in China. As Goldman explains, the Hundred Flowers campaign was supposed to “encourage a degree of intellectual freedom and criticism of bureaucratic repression in the expectation that the intellectuals would participate more actively in the party’s program for modernizing China” (39).

Intellectuals and artists responded enthusiastically to this new, relaxed political atmosphere. The new policy was thought to permit writers “greater variety in subject-matter and technique,” and as a result led to the creation of new literary magazines (MacFarquhar 1997, 175). In the dramatic arts, the policy inspired a June 1956 conference during which bans on “unhealthy” plays were relaxed, and plans were made to edit large numbers of traditional works

⁴³ Mao first encouraged intellectual debate earlier on January 20, 1956 (Goldman, 42). His use of the slogan dates back even earlier to an attempt to resolve a dispute over traditional repertoire in Peking opera in 1951 (Goldman, 43).

(Mackerras 1975, 167). Following this, on May 17, 1957, the Ministry of Culture issued a new directive that relaxed bans on other specific repertoire and delegated the “control” of other past banned works to the drama troupes and artists themselves (Mackerras 1981, 15). This directive was significant because it restored to performers the power to make decisions regarding performance material. As a result, traditional repertoire was revived in the dramatic and narrative arts, and performances of the new, contemporary-themed repertoire were temporarily suspended.

In addition to a renewed attention on traditional plays and stories, some intellectuals took advantage of this liberalized environment to express their political views, and in particular, to critique Party bureaucracy through their writing. Mao, in fact, encouraged this critique of officials in political and cultural-academic circles between February and April of 1957 (Goldman, 45). However, during the early months of 1957, Mao’s views concerning the Hundred Flowers Movement began to sound more contradictory in nature when Party bureaucrats that were closely associated with the leader came under attack (Goldman, 49). Goldman explains what he describes as a “fundamental ambiguity” with Mao’s Hundred Flowers policy:

He called for the expression of *all* points of view, but would not tolerate the articulation of basic disagreement with the policy itself. Thus, everyone supposedly could contend-except the four PLA writers and like-minded people, because they did not agree with his interpretation of the Hundred Flowers. All views were possible except those that disagreed with Mao’s. (50)

3.2.2 Anti-Rightist backlash: 1957-1958

The critique of the Party and top officials by non-Party members intensified in late May and early June 1957. When Mao himself became the focus of such criticism, he along

with the Party switched their policy of tolerance and moderation towards the intellectuals to one of persecution during the Anti-Rightist Campaign. The purpose of this campaign was twofold: 1) to silence the critics by labeling them “rightists,”⁴⁴ and 2) to tighten the control over intellectual life (Goldman, 56).

This campaign targeted intellectuals from all backgrounds who were identified as critics of the Party. By the end of 1957, it is thought that over 300,000 intellectuals, including writers, social scientists, scientists and economists, were labeled as “rightists,” and sent to labor camps, jail, or to the countryside as punishment (Spence, 572).⁴⁵ Shanghai opera troupes branded as “rightist” were also closed during this short-lived movement (Stock, 164). In the dramatic and narrative arts, performers, sensing a shift in the political winds, began avoiding the traditional repertoire that had risen to favor during the Hundred Flowers period, and re-focused their attention on contemporary-themed repertoire popular during the early 1950s (Mackerras 1981, 16; Chin, 132). As Mackerras explains, this shift away from traditional plays was instigated by the actors themselves, such as when on July 21, 1957, several famous actors urged a halt to the “indiscriminate revival of old plays” (Mackerras 1975, 167).

3.3 THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD AND AFTERMATH: 1958-1963

At the end of 1957, the CCP faced a great decision regarding the continued economic development of the country. Between 1952 and 1957, they had adopted the 1st Five Year Plan, a model used by the Soviet Union during the 1920s that encouraged rapid industrialization through

⁴⁴ To be labeled a “rightist” made one subject to a variety of social attacks due to the left-leaning politics of the time.

⁴⁵ Kraus claims that the number of intellectuals targeted by this movement was as high as 500,000 (41).

the development of heavy industry. Although this plan had worked during the early 1950s to increase production in both agriculture and industry, Chinese leadership thought that a second application of the program would not yield substantive results in either area of the economy.

As a result, some leaders, including Chen Yun and Zhou Enlai, suggested an alternate program that included a temporary emphasis on the development of light industry. In this plan, light industry would produce material goods that would act as incentives to the Chinese farmers for the increase of agricultural production (Spence, 575). However, Mao developed a different plan for economic development of the country, one in which rapid increase of agricultural production and growth in heavy industry was accomplished through mobilization of the mass rural labor force (Lieberthal, 89). The plan utilized mobilization techniques based on methods used in Yan'an, the revolutionary base of the Communist Party, during the Anti-Japanese War (1940s). As Lieberthal explains, in Mao's plan, "...superhuman work motivated by political zeal was the key to successful implementation of the new developmental approach" (88).

The campaign was guided by the "walking on two legs" (*liangtui zuolu*) strategy, which referred to a dual focus on increasing production in industry and agriculture. Under this strategy, immense effort was made throughout the country to achieve extremely high national production quotas in both areas. As Fairbanks describes, "the face of the country was changed with new roads, factories, cities, dikes, dams, lakes, afforestation, and cultivation for which the 650 million Chinese had been mobilized in nationwide efforts of unparalleled intensity and magnitude" (371). In addition, during the early months of 1958, the slogan to produce "better, faster, cheaper" was introduced as a way to motivate further increased productivity (Meisner, 216). Attempts to accomplish this task in industry during the summer of 1959 resulted in the creation

of hundreds of thousands of backyard iron “smelters,” many of which produced unusable steel (Fairbanks, 371).

However, this drive towards increased production could not be sustained. By 1960, the national economy was thought to be significantly damaged due to the action taken during the Great Leap Forward as well as the sudden withdrawal of Soviet aid to China (MacFarquhar 1993, 88). The country had additionally been devastated by natural disasters and widespread famine, which culminated in malnutrition, disease and death for tens of millions (Meisner, 236-7; Fairbank, 368). Finally, in light of the economic plight of the country, the Party officially abandoned the Great Leap campaign in June of 1961 (Lieberthal, 89).

3.3.1 The Great Leap Forward in the Arts

Political zeal and mass mobilization techniques also characterized work in the arts during the Great Leap Forward. Like the farmers and industry workers, artists were also asked to meet extremely high production quotas. For instance, during one year of the Leap, the Shanghai Musicians’ Association set a goal of producing 1500 songs (Kraus, 106). The Song and Dance Troupe of the Army’s General Political Department also set a high production goal of 1,545 songs, while the Central Experimental Opera Theatre set out to write 1,379 new dramatic works (Kraus, 106). A similar stress on high production was carried out in *tanci*, where performers were urged to compose hundreds of new Opening Ballads and Short-length Stories (*duanpian*). According to Wu, no one was excluded from this effort, and everyone was “required to write” (Wu 2006).

The Great Leap Forward in the arts also paralleled industry and agriculture in terms of their application of the “walking on two legs” policy. This policy was introduced to the arts on

June 13-14, 1958, during a major conference on drama held by the Ministry of Culture (Mackerras 1981, 17). In its general application, “walking on two legs” was interpreted as a dual focus on both traditional and contemporary repertoire.⁴⁶ However, in practice, the slogan did not imply an entirely equal focus on the two. As Mackerras explains:

In effect this [the “walking on two legs” policy] meant a continuing revival of traditional operas, provided their theme was patriotic and focused sympathy on the peasant and other masses as against the feudal ruling classes, and a new and heavy accent on dramas with modern and contemporary themes.
(Mackerras 1981, 17)

Yung describes the application of this policy in the dramatic arts as a “compromise,” one in which traditional repertoire would be performed in order to “draw in the audience,” while the new repertoire “relayed the „correct’ message” (1984, 146).

In *tanci*, the primary focus during the early years of the Great Leap Forward was composing new, contemporary-theme works, especially the shorter length genres mentioned above. The new works that were composed have been described as having a “strong political content” but “poor artistic quality” due to the strong political atmosphere of this period (Zhou 2006; Wu 2006).⁴⁷ In addition, most of these works were ephemeral in nature, or as in the words of scholars Zhou and Wu, “performed only once and then forgotten” (Zhou 2006; Wu 2006). As a result, little is known about the many works produced during the Great Leap Forward.

⁴⁶ See Mackerras 1981 for a translation of the resolution in which the policy was applied to the arts (17).

⁴⁷ This complaint was echoed in the field of cinema regarding films produced during this period (Clark, 80).

3.3.2 Aftermath of the Great Leap: 1959-1962

Between 1959 and 1961, while Party leaders struggled to find a solution to the economic fallout caused by the Great Leap Forward and the sudden withdrawal of Soviet aid, artists experienced a “period of relaxation,” during which the State relaxed its policy towards the arts. As a result of this more liberal political atmosphere, actors and storytellers again put aside contemporary repertoire in favor of traditional stories and plays (MacDougall 1984, 285). As Mackerras explains, the relaxation of “ideological pressure” made the actors and audiences lose interest in contemporary works, and also led to more attention being placed on old works (Mackerras 1975, 168). In *tanci*, this shift in the political atmosphere stimulated the revision of many traditional works, such as *Pearl Pagoda* and *Jade Dragonfly*, many of which were adapted as Middle-length Stories (*zhongpian*).⁴⁸

However, as with the earlier liberalized period in the arts, the open political attitude towards traditional repertoire was short-lived. During the 10th Plenum of the Central Committee held on Sept. 24, 1962, Mao renewed his call for class struggle (Tung, 8). Sensing a move towards a more restrictive political environment, artists soon made changes to their performance repertoire. Courses on drama theory offered by drama institutes were cancelled, plays written before or during May 4th era were eliminated from performance repertoire, and contemporary repertoire was again promoted (Tung, 8). In addition, China also notes that after the 10th plenum, productions of “plays portraying workers, peasants, and soldiers began to reemerge and

⁴⁸ As will be explained in Chapter 4, the Communist Party leader Chen Yun played an influential role in these revision projects due to his frequent communication with artists and troupe leaders throughout this period.

traditional plays were scarcely performed” (Chin, 163).⁴⁹ The move towards contemporary repertoire was confirmed later that year during the East China Spoken Drama Learning Festival held in Shanghai between December 25, 1963 and January 22, 1964, during which plays on contemporary themes were emphasized (Tung, 8).

3.4 PRELUDE TO THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION: 1964-1967

3.4.1 The re-emergence of contemporary repertoire

As the country gradually recovered from the economic fallout of the Great Leap Forward, Party leadership developed an increasingly strict attitude towards the arts, and particularly Peking opera. In general, traditional repertoire became the focus of harsh critique while the composition and performance of contemporary repertoire was enthusiastically encouraged. In March of 1963, the Ministry of Culture and the Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (CCPCC) jointly issued the “Notification of the Suspension of Ghost Plays,” concerning their disapproval of the prevalence of “ghost plays” (MacFarquhar 1997, 384). Later, in the fall of 1963, Mao criticized the Ministry for its alleged support of feudal drama, suggesting that if nothing was done that its name should be changed to the “Ministry of Emperors, Kings, Generals, Ministers, Scholars and Beauties” or the “Ministry of Foreign Things and the Dead” (Chin, 160).

⁴⁹ Chin traces this trend as represented in news reports. He notes that reports on mass drama in the People’s Daily newspaper activities rose from 11.76% in 1961 to almost 70% in 1963, and from Sept. 9, 1963 to June 2, 1964 the Guangming Daily published “133 articles in various aspects of drama reform” (Chin, 163).

During the early 1960s, Mao's wife Jiang Qing also became very active in the development and promotion of "revolutionary" Peking opera plays. Although she had resigned from her official position within the Propaganda Department in 1954, some believe that she used her close relationship to Mao and other influential communists such as Shanghai mayor Ke Qingshi to push her agenda with Peking opera (Chin, 155). Prior to 1964, she recruited young drama workers in Shanghai to experiment with Peking opera on contemporary themes (Chin, 157). She also claimed the top Peking opera troupe in Beijing as her "experimental field" (Chin, 164). As Chin notes, Jiang's actions were motivated by her belief that Peking opera was the "most stubborn stronghold of conservatism" (164). Later in 1964, Jiang became more actively involved in drama reform through formally critiquing Peking opera performances,⁵⁰ giving public speeches in which she encouraged the performance of revolutionary operas, and even urging the official criticizing of ten films (MacFarquhar 1997, 388-389). Mackerras describes Jiang's attempt to revolutionize theater from 1963 on as resulting in the "virtual suppression and the disappearance of most regional styles" by 1966 (Mackerras 1981, 76).

3.4.2 Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes

The move towards contemporary, or "revolutionary," dramatic repertoire and away from the traditional works was solidified during the Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes held in Beijing between June 5 and July 31, 1964. During the festival, twenty-nine troupes staged thirty-five Peking opera plays (Yung, 147). In addition to the plays, forums "on all aspects of making Peking Opera an effective means of portrayal of contemporary lives" were

⁵⁰ In May of 1964, Jiang gave the first of five detailed commentaries on how to perform *The Red Lantern*, a Peking Opera drama about communist resistance to Japanese imperialism (MacFarquhar 1998, 388).

held throughout the city. All of these events, including important speeches given by political dignitaries such as Mao were covered in leading newspapers and literary journals (Chin, 167). The Festival had a defining effect on the dramatic arts, establishing contemporary plays again as the preferred repertoire. Some scholars, in fact, have referred to this festival as the “climax of the Communist drama reform” (Chin, 167).⁵¹ Following this festival, performances of traditional repertoire immediately decreased. As Mackerras notes, “From that time onwards, traditional dramas were performed in Beijing only on a few special occasions” (1975, 169).

Likewise in *tanci*, virtually all performances of traditional stories ceased by 1964. While it is likely that the Festival played a large role in this event, Jiang Qing herself is also credited within *tanci* circles as bringing an end to these performances. Specifically, it is believed that her personal disdain for Shanghai artist Yu Hongxian’s performance of the Mao Zedong Poem Ballad “Butterfly Loves the Flower” incited her to publicly criticize the art form, calling it “the sound of hopelessness” (*mimi zhi yin*), and also motivated her to make statements such as, “if you hear it [*tanci*], you will die” (*tingle yao siren*) (Zuo 1982, 135). Immediately following Jiang’s comments, artists stopped performing traditional stories as well as newly composed stories that were thought to include traditional content (Zhou 2002, 165; Zhou, ed. 2002, 40). Performers refer to this period as the second Cut the Tail Movement. The period is seen as differing from the earlier Cut the Tail Movement since it was instigated by Party leadership rather than the performers themselves (Zhou 2006).

⁵¹ The East China Drama Festival in Shanghai, which as held December 1963 through January 1964, preceded the summer 1964 festival. During the winter festival, Shanghai mayor Ke Qingshi “lauded the new model revolutionary operas as ideological weapons to rally the people” (MacFarquhar 1997, 387).

3.4.3 The Cultural Revolution in *tanci*

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was launched in 1966 as Mao's attempt to "mobilize the masses in a large-scale social revolution that would aid in developing a solid Socialist economic base while transforming the ideology of the people" (Bryant, 34). As many scholars have noted, the revolution had catastrophic consequences for artists and intellectuals. Thousands of intellectuals were beaten to death or imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution, and that many more committed suicide or were relocated to the countryside to be reformed through labor (Spence, 605).

Although traditional art was condemned, performances of revolutionary music, especially Jiang Qing's model revolutionary works, was encouraged. By 1967, Jiang's revolutionary repertoire included five model operas, two modern ballets, and one symphony (Bryant, 46). Later during the revolution, "quotation songs,"⁵² military music, and songs from the *New Songs from the Battlefield* anthology also became accepted performance material (Bryant, 47-52).

The Cultural Revolution also brought about extreme changes for *tanci* artists. In Shanghai and throughout Jiangsu province, most performance troupes were disbanded and story houses closed.⁵³ Many performers were either imprisoned, sent away to rural areas, or changed careers (Zhou 1983, 226; Bender 2003, 18). Neither traditional nor contemporary works could be performed. Instead, as in many of the other art forms, performers turned to acceptable revolutionary works, in this case Jiang's "model revolutionary plays" (Wu 1998, 89; Zhou 2006).

When these revolutionary works were performed, they tended to resemble plays rather than *tanci* stories due to the elimination of many elements specific to the art form. As Wu

⁵² Bryant defines these as "Mao's writings set to music" (47).

⁵³ Zhou states that only one performance troupe and one story house in Suzhou remained during the Cultural Revolution (1983, 226).

explains, in these revolutionary works, artists performed only one role, and wore makeup and costumes to help in character portrayal (Wu 1998, 90). This contrasted greatly to *tanci* performance practice prior to the Cultural Revolution where performers relied on their voice and simple, stylized movements to depict several characters within a story. In addition, all spoken narration was removed in the revolutionary works, and a unique melody was composed for each song text (Wu 1998, 90; Zhou 2006). This contrasted to the long-held practice of singing ballad texts according to established “tunes.” Due to these major differences, these revolutionary performance styles were given distinct names, Ping Theater (*ping xi*) and Ping Song (*ping ge*) (Wu 1998, 90; Zhou 2006).

4.0 POLITICS, ARTISTIC AUTONOMY, AND THE REVISION OF TRADITIONAL REPERTOIRE

Soon after the establishment of the People's Republic, artists from Shanghai and Suzhou began to scrutinize their traditional performance repertoire, especially stories composed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries of the Qing dynasty. Spurred on by State directives designated for the drama community and the urgings of certain high-ranking Party members, performers sought to remove the “poisonous feudalistic content” from the old stories, including anything they deemed as “superstitious,” “pornographic,” or “old feudal content.” They also sought to infuse the old works with contemporary ideology through the extensive re-writing of the traditional stories. At times, this process incited disputes amongst the artists, many of whom held conflicting opinions concerning how the works should be revised.

In this chapter, I explore the role of the State in the revision of traditional repertoire during the 1950s and 1960s. Through a case study of the well-known story *Jade Dragonfly* (*Yu Qingting*), I examine the types of changes generally made as well as the role played by official directives, political slogans, and influential Party officials in directing these changes. I also study instances when artists expressed creative agency through their bold revisions of ballad music. Through analysis of *Fighting for the Son* (*Douzi*), a prominent ballad from *Jade Dragonfly*, I point out the major changes made to the work by the Shanghai performer Jiang Yuequan. This discussion is prefaced with a brief overview of traditional repertoire.

4.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL REPERTOIRE

In *tanci* circles, the term “traditional repertoire” (*chuantong shumu*) is used to refer to a body of stories composed largely during the latter half of the Qing dynasty (late 18th and early 19th century), though also including some works written during the early twentieth century. *Tanci* historian Zhou Liang defines “traditional repertoire” simply as “all stories composed prior to 1949” (Zhou 1997, 117). Due to the lack of written records, it has been difficult for scholars to determine exactly how many traditional stories existed prior to 1949. Zhou has estimated the number as ranging between twenty and thirty works (Zhou 2004, 61). However, this number does not include the hundreds of stories that circulated during the late Qing and early Republican periods that were referred to as “*wenci*,” works intended for private reading rather than live performance (Benson 1996, 48).⁵⁴

Stories in the traditional repertoire share a number of similarities. First, they are “full-length” works, meaning that are performed daily over the course of between two and four months. Though performances of some exceptionally long full-length stories are said to have lasted longer than one year (Zuo 1957, 3). Typically, two chapters of the story are performed each day, the total performance lasting approximately two hours in length (Bender 2003, 43). At the end of each day’s performance, the artist purposely leaves an unresolved conflict in the plot referred to as the “*guanzi*.” This “*guanzi*,” or cliff-hanger, serves to draw audience members back the following day when they would hear how the conflict would be resolved (Zuo 1957, 3; Bender 1995, 39).

⁵⁴ While some scholars regard these works as part of the *tanci* repertoire, others consider them to be an entirely separate genre due to their Mandarin-based texts.

Another similarity amongst the traditional stories is that the majority were not originally written by the artists themselves, but rather adapted from a variety of pre-existing sources including novels and plays (Zhou 1997, 119). For example, the story *Fate in Tears and Laughter* (*Ti Xiao Yin Yuan*) was adapted from a novel written by Zhang Henshui, *Tale of the Western Chamber* (*Xi Xiang Ji*) was adapted from a *zaju* (“variety play”), and *Pearl Pagoda* (*Zhenzhu Ta*) is thought to have been adapted from a version in “*xuanjuan*,” an oral performance tradition stemming from the Ming and Qing dynasties (Wu 1996, 65, 84, 86; Bender 2003, 10).⁵⁵ This convention of adapting outside sources for *tanci* performance continued after 1949, when artists again drew from contemporary novels and plays for their story’s subject matter.

The subject matter of traditional stories is diverse. The repertoire includes supernatural myths and legends such as *Legend of the White Snake* (*Bai She Zhuan*) and stories about feudal familial relations such as *Pearl Pagoda* and *Jade Dragonfly*. Zhou Liang has divided traditional *pingtan* repertoire, including both *pinghua* and *tanci*, into five categories: 1. “historical stories” (*lishi yanyi*), 2. “myths and legends” (*shenguai he xiayi*), 2. “stories about the overturning of wrongly-convicted people” (*yuanan pingfan gushi*) 3) “family ethics stories” (*jiating lilun gushi*), 5. “marriage stories” (*nannu hunyin gushi*) (Zhou 1997, 120). One common theme in *tanci* stories is “love between a gifted (but often poor) scholar and a beautiful and talented young lady” (Bender 2003, 41).

A distinguishing feature of traditional stories performed during late 19th and early 20th centuries was the use of bawdy humor in both sung and spoken sections. As Benson explains, during this time, “most of the stories were very old, very familiar and much beloved, but they were also very long, and possibly tedious if the performer failed to display his creative talents.

⁵⁵ See Appendix A.1 for a list of traditional story repertoire.

To keep the audience awake, he therefore took various liberties during performance” (1996, 49). One of the ways performers kept their audience’s interest was by singing ballads that were “often humorous in a lewd way” and “likely to arouse the interest of a male audience in the teahouse” (Benson, 1996, 50). Lewd “jokes” or “humor” (*xue*) also was performed in order to entertain the audience and create an “atmosphere of rowdy fun” (Benson 1996, 67). The performer Ma Chunfan, father of the legendary Ma Rufeï, is thought to have once described the humor in story performance as “completely based on vulgar language” (Benson 1995, 52).

After 1949, the love-themed plots and “lewd humor” of the traditional stories were quickly deemed politically unsuitable. As a result, artists began revising these works in order to make them suitable again to perform. However, few full revisions were completed during this time. This was due, in part, to the large amount of time needed to revise these massive stories as well as the historical interruption of the Great Leap Forward during the late 1950s.⁵⁶ For example, during the 1960s the Suzhou performer Wei Hanying worked on the revision of *Pearl Pagoda* but a full version of the story was not published until 1988. Instead of full revisions, sections or individual chapters of traditional stories were revised for performance either as a Middle-length Story (*zhongpian*), which were usually three to four chapters in length, or a Selected Chapter (*xuanhui* or *fenhui*), which usually consisted of one or more chapters. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, this approach to revision, especially common during the late 1950s through the early 1960s, was faster than revising the full work, and it also provided story houses with shorter stories that appealed to working-class audiences (Zhou 2002, 189).

⁵⁶ As mentioned in Chapter 3, performers turned their attention to composing new, shorter *tanci* repertoire during this period.

4.2 POLITICAL FACTORS

The State played a vital role in the revision projects undertaken in *tanci* during the 1950s and early 1960s. In particular, artists from Suzhou and Shanghai drew direction from official slogans and dramatic arts policies to guide their revisions. The high-ranking Party official Chen Yun also played a significant role through his numerous public statements in which he encouraged the revision of traditional stories. At times, Chen also offered instructions for the revision of specific repertoire. This section investigates the revision movement in *tanci* in terms of these ideological factors.

4.2.1 “Weed through the old to bring forth the new”

As explored in the previous chapter, political leaders established an atmosphere of reform in the dramatic arts during the early 1950s. Through political slogans and official directives, the State sought to encourage the revision of traditional repertoire, stimulate ideological reform in the performers’ minds, and bring about changes in organization of the performance troupes. One of the earliest official statements that encouraged such reform was Mao Zedong’s 1951 slogan “Let one hundred flowers bloom, weed through the old to bring forth the new” (*baihua qifang tuichen chuxin*) (MacFarquhar 1974).⁵⁷ Mao is thought to have first introduced this slogan on a banner that he gave to the China Research Institute of Traditional Operas (*Xiqu Yanjiuyuan*), a governmental agency dedicated to the revision, composition and study of dramatic repertoire (Zhou 2002, 155; Qin 1998, 150). According to Goldman, Mao offered this slogan as a response

⁵⁷ The first part of this slogan, “let one hundred flowers bloom,” later became identified with the Hundred Flowers Campaign of 1957 during which intellectuals were encouraged to freely express their views about the government.

to a dispute within the institute over the performance of traditional Peking opera repertoire. Some members of the group thought that the traditional works should be transmitted and performed “uncritically” while others thought they should be “totally rejected” (Goldman, 42). Mao’s slogan offered a middle position between the two extremes, and indicated to the disputing factions that the traditional operas could be performed, “but with discrimination, which signified that they were to be rewritten and made ideologically acceptable” (Goldman, 43).

Tanci performers embraced Mao’s slogan, and interpreted it as a call to revise traditional stories. This view can be seen in Zhou Liang’s explanation of how the first two words in this slogan, “*tui chen*,” related to revision efforts in *tanci*:

“*Chen*” means “old” (*jiu*), old things of the past are all old, and also can be called “traditional” (*chuantong*). Traditional (stories) have both good and bad elements, so you need to reform (them). The word “*tui*” can be explained as “push away” (*tui kai*), “push off” (*tui zhao*), or “push over” (*tui fan*), or it also can be explained as “support” (*tui zong*), “promote” (*tuidong*), (or) “push forward” (*tuijin*). Regarding the old traditional repertoire, you need to make realistic and practical analysis to promote and support the democratic elements; and you want to push away, push off, and push over the bad, feudalistic elements. This is correct.
(Zhou 2002, 166)

In other words, Zhou’s interpretation of “*tui chen*” went beyond a simple call for revision. He viewed Mao’s slogan also as instructing artists how to revise, by removing the “bad elements” and promoting the “good elements.” Zhou’s analysis is significant because it illustrates the extent to which political slogans were studied and interpreted in order to gain artistic insight. Although political slogans were not official Party directives, they carried a certain political authority. Slogans such as this were significant because they were considered to be indications of Party sentiment, and thought to concisely express “the political line of the moment” (Domenach 1951, 267).

4.2.2 “Three Reformations”

The following year, in May of 1952, Zhou Enlai issued the “Three Reformations” (*San Gai*) directive aimed at stimulating reform in the dramatic arts. The first reform was “change the plays” (*gai xi*). It called for the elimination of “feudal poisonous content” from traditional plays, including “any kind of brutal, terrifying, obscene, servile, humiliating, and nationalistic elements” (Chen, 133). The second reform was “change the people” (*gai ren*); it encouraged artists to “reform their ideology and improve their political and professional standing” (Chen, 133). The third reform, “change the system” (*gai zhi*), called for change in the “old, unfair systems” of performance groups (Chen, 133). Following this directive, the Bureau of Theater Reform issued a series of announcements, in which twenty-six traditional plays were banned, including works that were also performed in Peking and Shanghai opera (Qin 1998, 153).

Following the “Three Reformations” directive, performers of regional opera traditions also began revising their repertoire (Chen, 133; Ferguson 1980, 113). Chen describes the changes that occurred in the regional opera of Hunan province, Flower Drum Song:

According to the regulations, all plays of Flower Drum Song that existed before 1949 came under scrutiny of local party leaders and all artists were asked to change the content of plays-deleting anything superstitious, eradicating obscene lyrics and suggestive details in performance, purifying the stage image-and to abolish the long-standing “ugly, vulgar” acting style. (Chen, 133)

Other common editing decisions of that time included the removal of “reactionary” dialogue and sung sections, sections showing a person as religious, and “any section showing a popular hero in a humiliating position” (Mackerras 1975, 167). In addition, plots were altered to show monks and other people considered to be reactionary in a bad light and to bring out the courage of the hero more sharply (Mackerras 1975, 167). Similarly in *tanci*, shortly following Zhou’s directive, artists formed teams, and began revising traditional works.

4.2.3 Chen Yun

During the 1950s and early 1960s, it was fairly common for high-ranking members of the Communist Party to publicly state their opinions regarding art and music. Due to the focus on the reformation of traditional art forms during this time, some officials also freely gave their own suggestions for how to reform music and drama. In *tanci*, the high-ranking Party leader and economic planner Chen Yun frequently shared his opinions regarding the revision of traditional repertoire. Between 1958 and 1964, Chen, who was a member of the Central Party Politburo and self-professed *tanci* fan, gave a number of talks for the performers of the Shanghai and Suzhou Pingtan Troupes. He also wrote letters to troupe leaders, and shared his opinions about the revision of *tanci* with the wider arts community including high-ranking government officials.

In his communication with artists and government leaders, Chen frequently called for the revision of traditional repertoire, and particularly the removal of story material considered to be “anti-revolutionary” at that time. In a talk given to Shanghai arts leaders⁵⁸ on November 25, 1959, he suggested that artists stop performing “poisonous” (*dusu*) works; he also instructed them to delete “the worst areas” (*zui tuchu de huai de*) before revising them chapter-by-chapter (CY, 2-3). Later, in September of 1961, Chen urged members of the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe and leaders of the Drama Division of the Shanghai Radio Station to remove “pornographic” (*seqing*) material from their repertoire:

The pornographic content from the repertoire was very profitable in the past. Even today, there are people who like that, but it is very harmful; it is not less harmful than spreading feudalistic ideals. Therefore, all this flirting and pornographic (material) cannot remain. Even if the people want it, you still cannot retain (it). On this point (we) definitely should not yield. (CY, 63)

⁵⁸ Chen gave this talk to leaders of the Shanghai Cultural Bureau (*Shanghai Wenhua bu*), Shanghai Pingtan Troupe (*Shanghai Pingtantuan*), and Drama Division of the Shanghai Radio Station (*Shanghai Guangbo diantai xiquzu*) (CY, 2).

Following this, in a talk given before high-ranking officials in the Literature and Art Office of the Central Propaganda Department (*Zhonggong Zhongyang Xuanchuanbu Wenyichu*) in February of 1961, Chen again called for the removal of “pornographic” material from traditional stories, as well as anything considered “counter-revolutionary” (*fandong*), “superstitious” (*mixin*), or “too complicated and boring” (*fansuo rongchang*) (CY, 50).

In addition to his general advice and opinions, Chen also gave suggestions for the revision of specific stories. For example, he addressed the revision of the traditional story *Pearl Pagoda* on two different occasions. First, in a talk he gave for the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe, officials from the Shanghai and Suzhou Cultural Bureau, and the Drama Division of the Shanghai Radio Station on February 7, 1960, he advised performers to revise this important traditional story, and encouraged those taking part in the revision process to resolve disputes amongst themselves rather than airing the disputes publicly in the newspaper (CY, 36). Later, in a letter addressed to Wu Zongxi of the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe, Chen critiqued a recent revision of the work by the artists Zhu Xueling and Bai Yingfang by pointing out several “unreasonable” changes the artists made to the story’s plot (CY, 36, 45). In addition to *Pearl Pagoda*, Chen also gave specific suggestions for the revision of *Jade Dragonfly*. His comments on this work will be explored in the following section.

Chen’s public suggestions and opinions regarding *tanci* revision were very significant at the time. In a 2006 interview, Zhou Liang stated that while political leaders often influenced *tanci* performers’ creative efforts during the 1950s and 60s, they often viewed Chen’s comments with authority not because of his high official ranking, but rather due to his personal love of the art form. As Zhou explained, “We thought (Chen Yun’s) advice was correct because he was not in charge of literature and art. We were able to accept it. He had a large influence on the

development of Suzhou *tanci*” (Zhou 2006). In other words, according to Zhou, *tanci* performers were able to accept Chen’s comments because he was not directly involved with the creation of official cultural policy. However, as will be highlighted in Chapters 5 and 6, Chen’s comments to performers often consisted of a mix of political and artistic advice. As a result, performers faced the challenge of sorting out these mixed messages of the well-educated fan and politician.

4.3 “CUTTING THE TAIL” OF FEUDALISM

The scrutiny of traditional performance repertoire that embodied the revision projects of the late 1950s through early 60s was rooted in an earlier protest movement, which within *tanci* was referred to as Cut the Tail (*Zhan Weiba*). During this movement (1951-1952), performers voluntarily stopped performing certain traditional stories that were thought to contain politically inappropriate material such as polygamy and pornography. Their aim was to “cut the tail” of feudalism in traditional repertoire (Zhou 2006). The “inappropriate” material isolated in the stories often was the same material that drew attention during the later revision projects.

According to Zhou, the origins of the Cut the Tail Movement can be traced back to a forum held for Suzhou drama workers (*Suzhou xiqu gongzuozhe*) in March of 1951. During this meeting, an attendee suggested that performers stop performing “pornographic” (*huangse*) and “superstitious” (*mixin*) content (Zhou 2002, 166). Several months later, on June 25, the Shanghai performer Liu Tianyun along with eight other artists publicly declared their intention to stop performing the traditional story *Dropped Gold Fan* (*Luo Jin Shan*) (Zhou 2006; 2002, 166).

Other performers followed their example in November of that same year, vowing to gradually stop performing all traditional works (Zhou 2002, 166).

Two months later, on January 1st, 1952, twelve performers from Suzhou and Shanghai formalized their protest in a document that later became known as the “Resolution Statement” (*Juexin Shu*).⁵⁹ In this statement, the performers not only declared their intention to stop performing “all feudal works,” they also justified their decision by stating that their thoughts had been reformed by Mao Zedong, and that from this point on, they would only perform new works that “served the people” (*wei renmin fuwu*). Zhou Liang states that a total of 113 performers voiced their support of this document (2002, 167). On April 19, 1952, still more artists declared their intention to stop performing traditional stories including *The Case Tried by Lord Peng* (*Peng Gong An*) and *The Qianlong Emperor Travels to the Yangtze River Delta* (*Qianlong Xia Jiangnan*) (Zhou 2002, 167).

The above timeline provides only a partial view of this protest movement. On one hand, it reveals that a large number of performers from Shanghai and Suzhou joined the protest of traditional repertoire between 1951 and 1952. Yet, it does not tell us why they participated, or more importantly, who refused to participate and their intentions for doing so. One possible reason why some performers supported the protest is that they truly wanted to distance themselves from the old repertoire, and instead associate themselves with new works that were more closely tied to contemporary ideology. This intention is expressed in an article printed in the *Xinmin Evening News* on December 15, 1951, just weeks before the *Resolution Statement*

⁵⁹ There is some dispute concerning the exact number of performers who signed this resolution, as well as exactly when it was signed. Fan states that in October of 1951, thirty-five artists signed the Resolution Statement (Fan 1992, 120).

was penned. Here, the author Su Weidao articulates his displeasure with artists who continue to perform “old” works:

Artists are setting deadlines to get rid of their old stories, and are trying to come up with new stories. However, I still see a lot of names of old stories hanging outside of story houses and I think that the progress is too slow. So I hope that the artists will try to put the thinking of “serving the people” (*wei renmin fuwu*) into action.
(Su 1951)

However, in a recently published article by Tang Gengliang, a colleague of Jiang’s from the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe, a new perspective was revealed. According to Tang, he along with eight other Shanghai artists declared their intention to protest traditional repertoire on June 25, 1951 after public outcry to a radio performance of *The Qianlong Emperor Travels to the Yangtze River Delta*. Tang described his reaction when he heard that the traditional story had been pulled from the privately owned Oriental Radio Station:

We were all shocked. We felt that the story was a very sensitive topic. Even though *The Qianlong Emperor Travels to the Yangtze River Delta* was not on the officially forbidden list, the radio station pulled the plug due to the pressure from the audience. Based on this event, we felt that the life of traditional works was not going to be long.
(Tang 2006)

Tang explained that the story faced opposition due to the fact that the Qianlong emperor and, in general, the Qing dynasty was considered “anti-revolutionary” at the time (Tang 2006). As Tang further explained, “There was the thinking at the time that the emperor was the head of the landowners, the Qing Dynasty represented ethnic invasion, and Qianlong was the emperor of the Manchu people. These things were all doubly anti-revolutionary. How could we perform such?” (Tang 2006).

In addition to this particular story, the group identified similar potential “problems” in other commonly performed traditional repertoire including *Romance of the Three Smiles* (*San Xiao*), *Ten Beautiful Women* (*Shi Mei Tu*), and *Pearl Pagoda* (*Zhenzhu Ta*). These works were

deemed problematic due to containing polygamy in the story line. This was seen as a direct contradiction to the Marriage Law of 1950, which eliminated such arranged marriages. The group also isolated *Jade Dragonfly* as containing pornography (Tang 2006). This work will be discussed in further detail in the following section.

Based on these findings, the artists decided to formulate a public protest of all traditional repertoire. As Tang explains:

Rather than having the audience toss them out, we would get rid of them ourselves. At least, we would get a good reputation for “self-revolution” (*ziwo geming*). This also created the condition for the formation of the troupe. Jiang also said, “If we can band together, and only perform new works, it would not be a problem to at least get a second class income.” We all thought that his argument was reasonable, so we drafted and signed “The Declaration of Cutting Tail” (*zhan weiba xuanyan*) overnight and sent it to the Culture Bureau as well as to the media. It was just considered a move with the time. (Tang 2006)

As illustrated through Tang’s narrative, this group was under significant political pressure to protest the traditional repertoire. If they took initiative to protest these works, they could possibly gain a good political reputation, something that was very important for these artists trained before the communist takeover in 1949. However, if they did not initiate such a protest and continued to perform the old stories, they could face possible political attack and criticism similar to what they had witnessed after performing *The Qianlong Emperor Travels to the Yangtze River Delta*.

Tang’s narrative is important because it sheds light on the multiple and complex motivations behind the self-imposed ban of traditional repertoire during the early 1950s. While artists might have been concerned with the content of some of these traditional works, the above narrative shows that they also had to worry about protecting their political reputation and economic well being as professional artists employed by the State. Such complex motivations

later shaped the revision process of some of these traditional works during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

4.4 THE REVISION OF *JADE DRAGONFLY*

By the end of 1952, the Cut the Tail Movement had come to a close, and artists began to again perform traditional stories. Several artists from the two most prestigious performance troupes in the region, the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe and Suzhou Pingtan Troupe, also began to revise some well-known older stories. One major project undertaken during the late 1950s was the revision of the well-known story *Jade Dragonfly* (Zhou 2006).

Even today, *Jade Dragonfly* is recognized amongst performers and fans as one of the most important stories in the traditional repertoire. The version most often performed dates back to the late 18th and early 19th centuries of the Qing dynasty when the eminent Suzhou artist Chen Ouquan created the *Jade Dragonfly* story for *tanci* performance (Wu 1996, 147-148). Chen's version, which was first published in 1836, is considered an adaptation of a story that had circulated in China for centuries earlier in different genres (Benson 1996, 53). The story is believed to have appeared during the mid-1600s as a *huaben*, or vernacular short story, written by Feng Menglong, which was entitled *He Daqing Feels Regret Over His Mandarin Duck Sash* (*He Daqing yihen yuanyang tao*) (Benson 1996, 53). Since Chen's time, hundreds of *tanci* artists have performed *Jade Dragonfly*. When revision began during the late 1950s, six generations of artists had already performed the story.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ See Wu 1996 for a list of artists who have performed *Jade Dragonfly* (376).

In this section, I examine the revisions made to *Jade Dragonfly*, particularly in its adaptation as the Middle-length Story *Fighting for the Son in the Reception Hall* (*Tingtang Douzi*). Through comparison of published versions of the revised text and musical analysis, I study changes made to both the story's plot and ballad music, and highlight the various artistic and political forces that shaped the revision of this work. I preface this discussion with an overview of the story's plot, the extant performance scripts, and the revisers.

4.4.1 Story Plot

Jade Dragonfly consists of two distinct, yet intertwined story lines about members of two prominent families of Suzhou, the Jin and Shen families. The prologue begins with the tale of the young master Jin who was orphaned at the age of three and raised by the butler, Wang. When the story opens, Jin, now a young man of sixteen, has recently passed the imperial examination and become engaged to Miss Zhang (see figures 10 and 11 below). Still a young man, Jin cares little for studying despite the efforts of his pious new wife Zhang to encourage him in this effort. As a result of this disagreement, the two quarrel.



Figure 10: Young Master Jin (Zhou 1986, 5)



Figure 11: Jin's wife, Miss Zhang (Zhou 1986, 6)



Figure 12: Jin's lover, Zhi Zhen (Zhou 1986, 7)

One day, Jin travels with his friend Shen Junqing of the Shen household to view a play at his family home in Wang Village. Tutors Wenxuan and Shenfang accompany the young men. While at the performance, Jin and Shen meet two nuns from An Convent, the older nun Pu Zhuan and her beautiful young disciple Zhi Zhen (see figure 12). Jin immediately falls in love with Zhi. The following day, Jin travels alone to An Convent to visit Zhi. This is the last time he is seen by his friend Shen and Tutor Wenxuan.

When he arrives at the convent, Jin asks Zhi to give him a tour, to which she agrees. During this tour, he makes numerous allusions to sex through racy puns and suggestive comments. Such comments are captured in Zhou Yuquan's performance script (1986). For example, during the tour, Zhi shows Jin a statue of a laughing Buddha, and he asks the young nun why the figure is laughing (Zhou 1986, 33-34). Zhi answers him, but Jin is unsatisfied by her answer, and in return provides his own reason for the laughter by alluding to the years Zhi is "wasting" living as a chaste nun:

He only laughs at you—so foolish.
This young, and already tonsured;
A middle-aged return to secular life—
Will regrettably be too late.

(Benson 1996, 63)

As Benson points out, Jin's comments to Zhi are even more suggestive in an earlier version of the story, *The Entire Book of Jade Dragonfly (Yu Qingting Quanzhuan)*.⁶¹ In this version, Jin suggests that the laughing, big-bellied Buddha is pregnant, and warns Zhi that even though her attire resembles men's clothing, one day she too will get pregnant (Benson 1996, 66). Following this tour, Jin stays at An Convent and proceeds to have numerous sexual encounters with Zhi, though Zhou's 1986 version only briefly alludes to these events. As a result of their relations, Zhi becomes pregnant, while Jin's health declines as a direct result of his un-satiable desire.

In the meantime, Jin's friend Shen returns to Suzhou alone, and informs Miss Zhang that he has lost her husband. Zhang is greatly saddened by this news and returns to her mother's home to be consoled. Seeking to avoid questioning by the grief-stricken Zhang, Tutor Wenxuan also flees the Jin household. Shortly after, Shen too leaves his home in order to purchase jewelry and look for his friend in the city of Xiangyang. While traveling by Dragon Mountain, Shen is attacked by the Robber Lu. Tutor Shenfang, who has been traveling with Shen, mistakenly thinks that his master has been beaten to death, and flees the brutal scene. At that instant, Robber Lu recognizes Shen as someone who once helped him in the past, and he decides to nurse the injured man back to health. While recovering at Robber Lu's house, Shen discovers a cave full of silver that is guarded by a magical being (*caitong*). Jun takes the silver back to his house in Suzhou, buries the treasures in his garden, and marks the spot with his wife's golden hair pick.

⁶¹Yang 1938.

Meanwhile at An Convent, Jin has since died and been buried. Prior to his passing, he instructs the nun Zhi to take the child once it is born to the Jin household. The child is to be accompanied with items that will serve as proof of the child's blood ties to the Jin family including a jade dragonfly ornament belonging to Jin, and a poem written on a piece of his bloodied clothing. After Zhi gives birth to a son, she charges an old woman with the responsibility of taking the baby and requested items to the Jin household. However, on her way, the old woman becomes frightened, and abandons the child by a bridge. The owner of a tofu store, Ju, discovers the baby, and takes him home to raise. However, not long after this, fire destroys Ju's store, and the man has a mental breakdown. As a result, Ju's wife decides to sell the baby to Mr. Xu, a local county commissioner without any children. Mr. Xu and his wife treasure the child and name him Yuanzai. When Mr. Xu finishes his term in office, he returns with his wife and adopted son to his hometown in Shandong province.

Back at the Shen household, Tutor Shenfang discovers the golden hair pick, belonging to the Shen's wife, Luo, in the garden. Shen's sister-in-law, seeking to gain a more powerful influence in the household, takes advantage of this situation, and accuses the young tutor of having an affair with Luo. Fearing for her life, Luo sends her own mother and son to live with Jin's wife, the widow Zhang. Tutor Shenfang is exiled from Suzhou, and sent to work in the nearby city of Changzhou. Shen, who has since become an official, hears about the accusation against his wife when he runs into his tutor in Changzhou. After hearing this news, Shen returns home, digs up his silver treasure, and redeems his family name.⁶² This ends the tale of the Shen family.

⁶² This tale of Shen and his family is often referred to as *Tale of the Golden Hair Pick (Jin Chai Ji)* (Wu 1996, 80).

Years later, Mr. Xu is appointed as mayor of Suzhou, and he, Mrs. Xu and Yuanzai move back to the city. While in office, famine strikes, and Mr. Xu makes the decision to open up the city's stockpile of grain as an attempt to relieve suffering. Mr. Xu's decision results in a financial deficit for the city, and, as a result, he appeals to the wealthy Jin family for a loan. When Mr. Xu goes to meet the widow Zhang, he takes his son Yuanzai, now a boy of eight years. When Zhang sees the boy, she is astonished at his resemblance to her late husband Jin, and asks Mr. Xu if she may take Yuanzai as her godson. Mr. Xu agrees to this request, and as a result, the Xu family moves into the Jin family compound.

Eight years later, the widow Zhang attends a boat race held to celebrate the Dragon Boat Festival (*Duanwu Jie*). While at the race, she bumps into the sister of Jun, the tofu store owner. Zhang notices that the woman is holding a fan adorned with a jade dragonfly that resembles an item once owned by her late husband, and inquires about the history of the ornament. The woman tells Zhang how she acquired the piece, and also shows the widow the bloodied piece of clothing and poem that accompanied it. Moments later, Yuanzai arrives to view the competition with his godmother. The widow Zhang shows the three items to Yuanzai, and from these items, he discovers the truth about his birth parents.

Following this discovery, Yuanzai travels to the An Convent to meet his birth mother, the nun Zhi. After this reunion, Yuanzai returns to the Jin household and shares his news with his godmother, the widow Zhang. Zhang is initially angry about Yuanzai's reunion, and makes threats to destroy the convent and sue the nuns. However, in private, her handmaiden Fan explains that such an action would alienate Yuanzai from the Jin family. As a result, Zhang retracts her threats. Following this, Zhang's father intervenes and urges his daughter to invite Zhi to stay as a guest at their house as such an action would also provide Yuanzai with an

incentive to stay at their home. The widow Zhang agrees to this suggestion, and immediately sends for Zhi. She also requests that the Xu couple come to their quarters to “discuss family business” (*tan jiachang*). Yuanzai and Zhang’s handmaiden, Fan, also attend the meeting.

The “family chat” quickly escalates into a fight over the custody of Yuanzai after Zhang’s father reveals the newfound truth about the boy’s birth parents and of his recent reunion with birth mother Zhi to the Xu couple. Both the Zhang father and daughter and the Xu couple appeal to Yuanzai, each trying to sway his decision towards choosing their own family’s surname. With much difficulty, he eventually chooses the Jin family name. This decision greatly angers Mr. Xu, and he declares his intention to beat his adopted son to death for his unfilial behavior. The widow Zhang, her father, and Mrs. Xu all attempt to intervene on Yuanzai’s behalf and persuade Mr. Xu against the beating.

Finally, Mrs. Xu agrees to carry out the beating with her husband on the condition that it is done lightly. However, when they are about to strike Yuanzai, they discover that he has since fainted on the floor. Immediately, Mr. Xu’s temper begins to cool, and the Zhang father and daughter decide to offer a compromise: Yuanzai still must take the Jin family name; however, since the Xu couple has no future heirs, Yuanzai’s first child will take the Xu family name while his second will take the Jin name. The compromise is accepted, and the Xu couple continues to live at the Jin compound. The nun Zhi arrives from the An Convent, and she also moves in with the Jin family.

4.4.2 Revised versions

During the late 1950s, *Jade Dragonfly* was revised into two shortened versions of the story. In 1957, Chen Lingxi of the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe adapted the second to last chapter of the

story into an independent chapter-length story, *Recognizing Mother at the Convent* (*An Tang Ren Mu*; *Recognizing*, hereafter). Two years later, in 1959, Chen and performer Jiang Yuequan revised the final chapter of *Jade Dragonfly* to be performed as a medium-length story, *Fighting for the Son in the Reception Hall* (*Ting Tang Dou Zi*; *Fighting*, hereafter). In all, this story consisted of three chapters: “Obligating the Son” (*Bizi*), “Fighting for the Son” (*Douzi*), and “Disciplining the Son” (*Shunzi*) (Wu 1996, 94).

Both *Fighting* and *Recognizing* were published in the 1964 compilation *Pingtan Congkan*, which contained other newly revised stories including two other chapter-length stories from *Jade Dragonfly*, *Zhi Zhen Visits Her Son* (*Zhi Zhen Tan Er*) and *Watching the Dragon Boats* (*Kan Longchuan*) (SWC 1964). In addition to these revisions, other chapters from *Jade Dragonfly*, including *Wenxuan Gloriously Returns* (*Wen Xuan Rong Gui*) and *Three Searches of the An Convent* (*San Suo An Tang*), were revised either as independent chapters or medium-length stories. However, unlike the chapters published in *Pingtan Congkan*, these other revisions were not published (Wu 1996, 80).

Even today, *Recognizing* and *Fighting* are the most well known and commonly performed of the *Jade Dragonfly* revisions. They are significant because both focus solely on the storyline of the Jin family. By eliminating the storyline of the Shen family, the revisers were able to make the plots of *Recognizing* and *Fighting* considerably less complicated than the original *Jade Dragonfly* story, which switches back and forth between tales of the Shen and Jin families. *Recognizing* and *Fighting* are also significant because they are based primarily on material from the final two chapters of the *Jade Dragonfly* story. *Recognizing* focuses primarily on Yuanzai’s quest to find and meet his birth mother Zhi, while *Fighting* focuses on the conflict between the Zhang father and daughter and the Xu couple. Although both of these scenes are

important, by focusing on the final chapters, the revisers also were able to avoid questionable scenes during the first half of the story, particularly when the young master Jin flirts with the nun Zhi at the An Convent. As will be further illustrated below, these decisions stemmed from the revisers' desire to create a more politically correct image of the *Jade Dragonfly* story during the late 1950s.

4.4.3 Revisers

As mentioned above, two main people were responsible for the revision of *Jade Dragonfly* into the new shortened versions, Chen Lingxi (1902-1983) and Jiang Yuequan (1917-2001). Although originally from the southern province of Guangdong, Chen's personal interest in *tanci* led him from his previous job as a newspaper editor to writing ballad texts as a professional composer for the Shanghai troupe during the 1950s and 1960s (see figure 13 below). His first composition was *White Hair Girl (Ba Maonü)*, which he adapted as an Opening Ballad for a radio performance by Shanghai performers Jiang Yuequan and Yang Zhenyan in 1949 (Ni, 143).

During the 1950s and 60s, it is estimated that Chen wrote over two hundred Opening Ballads. One of his most well known ballads, *The First Spring of the 1960s (Liushi Niandai Di Yi Chun)*, was popularized in 1960 when performed by the female performer Xu Lixian (Wu 1996, 142). In addition, Chen wrote new Middle-length Stories and adapted many traditional stories into abbreviated versions including *Dropped Han Coin (Luo Hanqian)*, *The Martyr Liu Hulan (Liu Hulan)*, *The Hero Lin Chong (Lin Chong)*, and *White Tiger Forest (Bai Hulin)* (Wu

1996, 142). In terms of the *Jade Dragonfly* revisions, Chen was solely responsible for the creation of *Recognizing*, while he collaborated with Jiang Yuequan to write *Fighting*.⁶³

Jiang was a prominent artist from the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe who was well versed with the *Jade Dragonfly* story due to his vast experience performing the work (see figure 14). Jiang first learned the work through his apprenticeship with the Suzhou performer Zhang Yunting during the early 1930s (SPT 2006, 3). He later studied the work again with Zhou Yuquan, a performer whose musical style deeply influenced Jiang's development of his own Jiang Tune (*Jiang Diao*) in the 1940s (SPT 2006, 3). When he joined the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe in 1951, Jiang began performing many new Middle-length Stories including *We Certainly Must Fix the Huai River* (*Yiding yao ba Huaihe Xiuhao*), *Naval Hero* (*Haishang Yingxiong*), *The Hero Wang Xiaohe* (*Wang Xiao He*), *Family* (*Jia*), *The Hero Lin Chong*, *The Martyr Liu Hulan*, *On the Nanjing Road* (*Nanjing Lushang*), *White Tiger Forest*, and *Wang Zuo Breaks His Arm* (*Wang Zuo Duan Bi*) (Wu 1996, 183). He also continued to perform traditional repertoire during this time, and even helped revise several of these works including *Jade Dragonfly* and *Legend of the White Snake* (Wu 1996, 183).

⁶³ In addition to his work on *Jade Dragonfly*, Chen additionally helped revise the traditional full-length story *Tale of the White Snake* (*Bai She Zhuan*) (Wu 1996, 142).

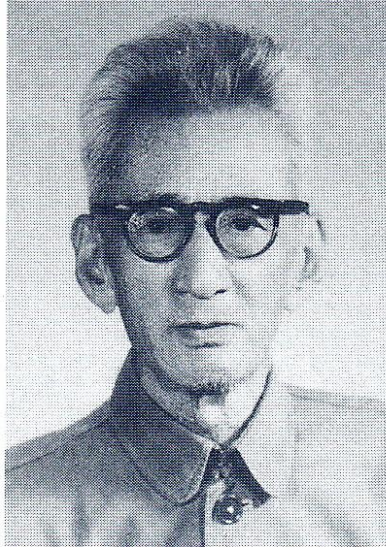


Figure 13: Chen Lingxi, pictured in the late 1970s (Zhou 2002, 38)



Figure 14: Jiang Yuequan, pictured in the 1980s (SPT 2006, 8)

4.4.4 Deleting politically “unsuitable” content

One common change made during the revision of traditional repertoire was the deletion of politically unacceptable material, and especially anything thought to be “pornographic” (*seqing*) and “superstitious” (*mixin*) in nature. Not only was this type of material looked down upon in

society in general, political leaders also called for its removal from artistic works at different points throughout the 1950s and 1960s. One example of this is the Bureau of Theatre Reform's 1950 resolution, which called for a ban on a number of traditional plays including those that contained superstitious ideas and depicted adultery.⁶⁴ In addition, the Party leader Chen Yun specifically encouraged performers from the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe to remove pornographic and superstitious sections from *Jade Dragonfly* (CY, 67-68).

Since all extant published versions of the *Jade Dragonfly* story have been carefully revised, it is difficult to measure the exact amount of pornographic and superstitious material removed from the original story. Moreover, since all versions of the story performed today are based on these revisions, they do not reflect the bawdy version of the tale thought to have been told by storytellers of the 1930s.⁶⁵ However, there are several large omissions generally recognized by *tanci* historians and performers.

First, as mentioned earlier, both of the major revisions completed during the late 1950s, *Recognizing* and *Fighting*, focused solely on the second half of the *Jade Dragonfly* story, and as a result, avoided the early part of the story when the young master Jin visits the nun Zhi at the An Convent. As shown in the description of the story plot above, Zhou's 1986 version of *Jade Dragonfly* only hints at the type of racy repartee that might have been exchanged between Jin and the nun Zhi during this scene. The 1938 novel *The Entire Book of Jade Dragonfly*, on the other hand, paints a more vivid picture of Jin's sexual innuendos to Zhi.⁶⁶ However, the real problem with this particular scene, as Wu explained to me in 2006, was not that Jin had sexual

⁶⁴ See Chapter 3.

⁶⁵ See Benson 1996.

⁶⁶ See Yang 1938.

relations with Zhi, but that he had relations with many other nuns before he even met Zhi (Wu 2006). These encounters are not described in Zhou's 1986 version.

Another section of the original story that was revised due to its "pornographic content" was the scene in which Yuanzai travels to the An Convent in order to find his birth mother. In the 1957 revision *Recognizing*, the reviser Chen is said to have deleted inappropriate "flirting" (*tiaoqing*) that occurred between Yuanzai and his birth mother Zhi at the convent, and replaced it with new dialogue (Jiang 1957, 2). Wu confirmed this revision to me during a 2006 interview, explaining that the problem with this part in the original story was that it was "all about flirting" (*dou shi tiaqing*) (Wu 2006). Although this revision cannot be seen when comparing the Chen's text to Zhou's 1986 version, it becomes more obvious when comparing it to the much earlier 1938 version of the story. In the 1938 novel, the nun Zhi recounts her sexual relations with Yuan's birth father Jin, even before she has recognized Yuan as her biological son (Yang 1938, 126-127). However, this description is left entirely out of Chen's later revision.

Other sections were omitted from the larger *Jade Dragonfly* story due to their containing "superstitious material." These include a scene referred to as "drop of blood into the barrel" (*di xue kai gang*) during which Yuanzai's link to the Jin family is divined through conducting a special test involving blood and water, and also a section referred to as "the spirit of Jin Guishen" (*Jin Guishen Xianling*), in which the ghost of Yuanzai's birth father comes back from the dead to visit his son (Wu 1996, 93). However, little other information is known about these omissions, including their whereabouts in the original text.

4.4.5 Changes in plot and character depiction

In addition to deleting politically “unacceptable” sections, the revision of *Jade Dragonfly* also included making significant changes to the story’s plot in order to exaggerate the depictions of certain characters. For example, when Jiang and Chen revised the final chapter, *Fighting*, they changed both the beginning and ending of the story. In the original story, the Zhang father and daughter grant Yuanzai’s request to bring the nun Zhi back to the Jin household based on their belief that such an arrangement would benefit them personally by providing the young man an incentive to remain at their home permanently (Zhou 1986, 526). However, in the revision, the two plot more insidiously against Yuanzai. When Zhi is brought back to the Jin home, the two threaten to take the nun to court if he refuses to adopt the Jin family name (Chen and Jiang, 220). Zhang’s father additionally demands that Yuanzai break all ties with the Xu couple (Chen and Jiang, 221). This conflict between the Zhang father and daughter and Yuanzai immediately precedes the “family chat” with the Xu couple.

The second major change occurs at the end of the story when Mr. Xu raises his arm to beat his son. In the original story, Mr. Xu decides against the beating when he notices that Yuan has fainted on the floor. This sight reminds Mr. Xu of his adopted son’s love for him, and the old man’s temper slowly begins to fade (Zhou 1986, 539). In the revision, Mr. Xu’s attempt to beat his son is thwarted when a flash of white startles and stops him. His temper immediately begins to cool upon discovery of the origin of this color, his beard, which he accidentally grabbed when raising his arm (Chen and Jiang, 245). After this, Mr. Xu realizes that the widow Zhang and her father, in fact, coerced Yuanzai into taking the Jin family name, and that if he had not done so, the nun would have likely died as the direct result of legal action against her (Chen

and Jiang, 246). As a result, Mr. Xu praises the filial character of his son, remarking, “My son has a compassionate heart; he has been filial since he was little” (Chen and Jiang, 247).

The revised story closes with the Xu couple preparing to leave for their home province of Shandong. When they turn to say farewell to Yuanzai, they notice that he has fainted on the ground. When the young man regains consciousness, he realizes that the Xu couple has already left. Later that night, he sneaks out of the Jin household with the nun Zhi to search for them (Chen and Jiang, 247). This sad ending contrasts to the happy ending in the original version, in which the Zhang father and daughter offer a compromise to the Xu couple that was mutually beneficial: the Jin family was given an heir, the Xu family was promised Yuanzai’s first child as heir, and Yuanzai was allowed to live with his birth mother Zhi. The Xu couple agreed to this arrangement, and all parties continue to live together at the Jin household.

These revisions at the beginning and close of the story are significant because they substantially changed the way that the main characters were portrayed. In the original story, neither the Zhang father and daughter nor the Xu couple were depicted as clearly right or wrong in their actions despite the fact that the Zhang father and daughter clearly had a higher social standing than the Xu couple. This characteristic is emphasized through the ending, in which the conflict over Yuanzai was resolved through compromise.

However, in the revision, character depiction became more polarized due to changes made to the story plot. In general, the Zhang father and daughter were depicted as evil, feudal aggressors while the Xu couple, Yuanzai, and nun Zhi were portrayed as weaker, victims of feudal society. This idea is clearly portrayed through the changes made at the end of the story, when Mr. Xu realizes that the Zhang father and daughter have blackmailed Yuanzai into

choosing their family name, and in the process, have also taken advantage of the Xu couple and the nun Zhi.

The revisers, themselves, admitted to exaggerating this type of character portrayal. As Chen explained in the preface to the 1962 edition of *Fighting*, “We intensified the crude measures Zhang father and his daughter took in order to get Yuanzai. We also elevated the beautiful moral character of Mr. Xu who eventually gave up his son” (Chen and Jiang, 219). In a 1959 article, Shanghai Pingtan Troupe leader Wu explained the changes made to the end of the story in terms of this new view of the characters:

We felt that this revision [Yuan’s departure from the Jin household with Zhi] is more closely tied to the theme of the story...if in the original story, Jin left his family to show his resistance [to Zhang], I think that the audience will also be willing and expect Zhi and her son to show the same resistance. (Zuo 1983, 281)

Here, Wu suggested that Yuanzai and Zhi’s departure at the end of the story, in fact, should be viewed as a protest of the evil Zhang character.

The Shanghai media picked up on this different depiction of the characters brought on by the plot changes, and promoted Chen and Jiang’s revision as a critique of the feudal system of the past. In a newspaper article dated March 27, 1959, one columnist depicted the Xu couple and Yuanzai as victims of the “cruel feudal system,” as represented by Zhang’s blackmail scheme:

When Mr. Xu asked Yuan which name he would eventually pick, the conflict within this person was further emphasized. Had he taken the Jin family name, he would be unthankful to the kindness of the Xu couple who had raised him. On the other hand, if he decided to remain in the Xu family, then his birth mother would not be able to return home. At this point, the writer utilized the unique characteristics of *pingtan* art, fully detailed the internal struggle and thought of Yuan, gave this character touching artistic power, and portrayed the all encompassing cruelty of the feudal system on the Xu couple and Yuan.

(Yang 1959)

This interpretation of the story as a critique of the feudal system was later clearly stated in the *Pingtan Dictionary*, “This middle-length story [*Fighting*] revealed that some rich and powerful

families used their status under the feudal law and morals to take advantage of others” (Wu 1996, 94).

4.4.6 Dissenting views

Not everyone agreed with Chen and Jiang’s decision to portray Zhang as a negative character and a symbol of the oppressive feudal elite class and system. Before *Fighting* was written, artists from the Suzhou Pingtan Troupe wrote and performed their own version of the story. In their version, the Suzhou performers depicted all of the characters, including the Zhang widow, as victims of the feudal system. This purpose was reflected in a statement allegedly posted at the door of their 1956 Shanghai performance:

The original story was very sympathetic in describing the tragic experience of these characters. Therefore, (the revision) blames the feudal society for harm it did to the people. On the other hand, is (also) brave to describe the people’s pursuit of freedom and personal liberation, and describing the heroic act of their opposition to the feudal social order. (Ding 1956)

Although the performance script for this 1956 revision no longer exists, several of its changes were noted in a contemporary concert review published in the Shanghai Xinmin Evening News. These included the insertion of a new scene in which the Zhang widow opened up a pawnshop that did not charge its customers interest (Ding 1956). This change was made in order to support the revisers’ interpretation of Zhang as a good character.

At the time, the Suzhou performers’ approach to the Zhang widow, in particular, was considered controversial and provoked much discussion in *tanci* circles. The major critique was that they did not present her as a clearly negative character, and as a result, the story did not adequately critique feudal society. This type of critique can be seen in the quote below:

Our viewpoint is that the arrangement of Zhi and Zhang should be clearly distinct. It should not be very vague, as in the original edition. As it is now, the reviser adopted a reconciliatory viewpoint, and there are no clear negative characters in the story that truly reflects the society at the time. Therefore, it does not reveal the dangerous nature of the feudal system. (Ding 1956)

A few years later, when the Shanghai Troupe had finished their revision of *Fighting*, the two opposing viewpoints still persisted. In an article written in 1959, Wu explained these two positions:

Some people thought that she [Zhang] can be portrayed as a positive character and should be pitied because her husband left her at age sixteen. She is a victim of the feudal marriage system. Everything that she did resulted from this [situation]. But most people think that Zhang is an evil character. Her sadness resulting from her husband's departure is her own doing. She pressured him, along with his father, to take the official examination, thus proving that she supported the feudal system. Everything that she does is the result of selfishness, always to better herself. (Zuo 1983, 279)

Still later, in a talk given to members of the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe in 1962, the high-ranking political official Chen Yun also drew attention to the conflict of opinions regarding the interpretation of Zhang:

The problem is how do you recognize Zhang, do you negate or affirm her, or fundamentally affirm her, and follow the original structure to perform? People's understanding will develop and change, we do not want to be afraid of changing our understanding. In the past two years, I thought that Zhang could totally be opposed. But if you totally oppose Zhang to the point of you don't perform "The Jin Story," this will be difficult for the artists and masses to accept. (CY, 67)

Chen acknowledged the conflict faced by the revisers, though he stopped short of sharing his personal opinion on this particular subject, an atypical response for an official whose personal interest in the art form often led him to give candid artistic advice.

The issue concerning Zhang was of special concern to the Shanghai and Suzhou artists because during the 1950s and 60s, feudalism was commonly viewed as an oppressive system of the past. Since traditional stories like *Jade Dragonfly* often centered on members of the feudal

elite, such as Zhang, failing to incorporate a strong critique of this class could leave the story and its revisers open to political attack. On the other hand, by including such a critique, storytellers could justify their performance of these old stories that were written about feudal society.

The disagreement between the Suzhou and Shanghai performers' revisions also reveals the deep political concerns inherent in the revision process. Their revisions were unavoidably politically symbolic. As a result, the two groups competed with each other to develop a version that would provide the strongest critique of feudal society. The competition was especially fierce because *Jade Dragonfly* was such a well-respected story in *tanci* circles, and because the personal stakes for revision were high. By revising a traditional story like *Jade Dragonfly* into a truly "revolutionary work," the performers could possibly gain higher social status as professional artists in "New China." On the other hand, failing to assign a new political interpretation to the old story could potentially leave the revisers open to political attack and jeopardize their job security as State employed artists.

4.4.7 New musical approach

The revision process also, at times, consisted of making changes to story's ballads. During the creation of *Fighting*, Chen and Jiang introduced changes to the text and musical performance of the prominent ballad *Fighting for the Son (Douzi)* from *Jade Dragonfly*. This ballad is considered to be one of the most important sung portions of the work due to its location in the story. The character Mr. Xu sings this ballad during the "family chat" scene, immediately after he hears of Yuanzai's decision to adopt the Jin family name.

In the ballad, Mr. Xu expresses sadness and anger over his adopted son's decision to change his name. He is specifically angered about Yuan's decision to keep the poem concerning

his family heritage and his meeting with birth mother Zhi a secret. Mr. Xu repeatedly declares his intention to beat Yuanzai to death for his lack of filial piety. Each time he declares his intention, either the widow Zhang, her father, or Yuanzai interrupt him, and attempt to dissuade him from the beating. By the end of the ballad, Mr. Xu is still resolved to beat Yuanzai, though his tone has shifted slightly from anger to sadness over the loss of his beloved son. Below, is a translation of the ballad's text from Chen and Jiang's 1962 published version of the text (Chen and Jiang, 237-241).

Fighting for the Son

Mr. Xu: [spoken] You un-filial animal!

[sung]

- 1 Mr. Xu could not stop his eyes from filling with tears,
- 2 Suddenly his heart was filled with anger.

Yuanzai: [spoken] Father!

Mr. Xu: [sung]

- 3 You are just beginning to succeed but your heart has already changed,
- 4 You take advantage of the poor, "kiss up" to the rich, and ignore your parents.
- 5 I think that you are among the very few un-filial sons in the world,
- 6 Today I will beat you to death in the living room.

Yuanzai: [spoken] Father, (I) deserve a beating

Mr. Xu: [sung]

- 7 My anger can only be resolved if I can kill the beast,
- 8 I am willing to give up my life for this.

[spoken] He raises the stick, and prepares to hit Yuan on the head.⁶⁷

Zhang's father: [spoken] Hold on! He grabs the stick and says "Do not even think about beating him here. This is the Jin household and Yuanzai belongs to the Jin family. You have no right to beat (him)."

⁶⁷ In *tanci*, it is common for performers to switch back and forth between speaking and singing in the 1st person and 3rd person point-of-views.

[to Mr. Xu] Mr., don't be rude. It is very reasonable that Yuanzai wants to pick up his real last name. Why do you want to beat him?

Mr. Xu: [spoken] You are making me even madder than before. I raised him for sixteen years. Don't I have the right to beat him? Even though this beast is not mine, my kindness in raising him has been endless like the rivers. Don't I have the right to beat him today?

[sung]

9 Although I am not the birth parent of this beast,
10 The gift of raising you up has been endless like the rivers.
11 Why can't I beat him today (?)

Widow Zhang: [spoken] Alright, you may beat him, but you must have a reason.

[to self] If he did something wrong, then you naturally have the reason to blame him or beat him. But I don't know what your reason is today.

Mr. Xu: [spoken] You are not letting me beat him, and are asking me for a reason. I want to beat him so obviously I have a reason, and I must do this today!

[sung]

12 I beat him because he has committed the crime of not respecting the parents.
13 There are no elders in his eyes,
14 So proud to do whatever he wants.

Widow Zhang: [spoken] Doing whatever he wants, and having no respect for elders, how is this?

Mr. Xu: [sung]

15 Even though your stepmother ordered him to explain the poem,
16 Why didn't you discuss this with the parents first?
17 Even though you knew the meaning of the poem,
18 Why didn't you tell the details to your parents?
19 Even though you were going to meet your birth mother at the convent,
20 Why didn't you tell us first?
21 Although you met your birth mother in the convent,
22 Why did you conceal the truth from us?
23 Why did you set up this tricky scheme here?
24 Why did you lie to us by telling us to come for a chat?
25 How did a family chat become the "Hongmen banquet"?⁶⁸
26 Why did you treat your parents like Han Liu Bang?
27 Why do you want to kill us?

⁶⁸ Here Mr. Xu refers to a scene in the historical epic *Three Kingdoms* during which the Prince of Han, Liu Bang, is invited to the "Hongmen banquet" unaware of another guest's plans to assassinate him.

[spoken] Beast, nice calculation.

Widow Zhang: [spoken] Oh, that hits the heart. Old man, your complaints are extreme. Blaming Yuanzai, even including me in this, and this thing has already happened. Please do not be mad.

Mr. Xu: [sung]

28 Although he is still young he has lost his conscience completely,
29 He looks like an animal with a human face;
30 Today I ask you should I not beat the beast (?)

Mr. Xu: [spoken] Sir, can't I beat him?

Widow Zhang: [spoken, to self] It sounds like you have plenty of reasons. (I) cannot argue with you. I am going to let you beat him. Even though Yuanzai says that his last name is Jin, in his heart he still belongs to you. Well, go ahead, beat him. Show him who really loves him. When you do that, I will come to save him, and let him break the bond with you while wholeheartedly becoming a member of the Jin family.

[to Mr. Xu] If you must do this, I will not stop you, but I hope that you don't overdo it. That would be my advice.

Mr. Xu: [spoken, wryly smiling] Huh? So I can beat him?

Widow Zhang: [spoken] Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Xu: [spoken] Well, if it is ok to beat him, then you have to beat him. I worry about you if I don't see you for half of a day. You say that you want to change your last name to „Jin'? You are getting rid of your parents. You have no conscience.

[turning to Yuanzai] Why do I pity you? Beast, there you go!

Yuanzai: [spoken] Father, I was just trying to save my mother's life. I had no choice. Please wait for me to return to my room, and I will repent and tell you the truth. Maybe you can help me think of ways to save my mom.

[to self] It looks like Father is really mad this time. Let me try to calm him down a little.

[to Mr. Xu] Father, please beat hard. Even if you beat me to death, I have no complaints.

Mr. Xu: [spoken] You are still pretending. You figured out the meaning of the poem and went to find your mother at the convent, but you didn't tell us. We are seventy-three years old this year, and won't live for long. You had to make us lose face in public and cut off relationships with us.

[to Yuanzai] Beast, here you go!

[sung]

31 Mr. Xu was holding a stick and filled with anger,
32 Today (it) would be difficult (for me) to forgive an un-filial son like you.
33 I love you like a treasure
34 I treat you like a phoenix
35 although we're not you birth parents,
36 We spend so much energy and time on you.
37 Ever since I lost my job,
38 my future is looking more and more bleak,
39 We cried and cried,
40 our hearts are filled with tears,
41 Have we ever let you suffer any of this.

Mr. Xu: [spoken] We always treated you well, ever since you were little. We just didn't give birth to you. Your clothing was made from one to ten years old. We were very poor. We'd rather go to pawn our own clothing to make nice clothing for you. We'd rather eat one meal a day and never let you go hungry. If we do not mention anything else, how about my teaching you reading? I was sixty-five and every day I taught you until midnight. Now you've passed the test. How did you get there? You didn't naturally have the talent to do this.

[sung]

42 You animal! I am very, very old,
43 It did not matter to me that I was sick and sweat had soaked through my clothes,
44 I still tried to teach you even to the middle of the night.
45 We only hope that you would become successful and we could depend on you,
46 How could we know that we raised a tiger and hurt ourselves.

When revising this ballad, Chen substantially increased the amount of sung text. For instance, in Zhou's version, which was published in 1986 but thought to represent an earlier period of performance,⁶⁹ the ballad is approximately eighteen phrases in length, ending at line 27 in the above example (Zhou 1986, 536-7). However, the 1959 revision is much longer, consisting approximately of forty-six lines of sung text (Chen and Jiang, 237-241). In this version, eighteen lines (lines 28-46) are added at the end of the aria. These new lines are significant because they provide a more sympathetic depiction of Mr. Xu. This can be seen in

⁶⁹ See Appendix A.1

lines 33 through 46 of the ballad's text in which Mr. Xu describes the many personal sacrifices he has made for his son throughout his life. These lines lend to the depiction of Mr. Xu not only as a parent betrayed by an un-filial son, but also as one grieving for the loss of a child.



Figure 15: Jiang Yuequan (left) performing *Fighting for the Son* with Su Shiying (center) and Yan Zhenyan (right) (SPT 2006, 8)

In addition to changes made to the text, Jiang introduced his own revisions to the ballad's music, which he performed according to the Chen Tune (*Chen diao*). As noted in Chapter 2, the Chen Tune was created by Chen Ouquan during the late 19th century, and was later taught to generations of performers (Wu 1996, 131). It is a style often used for portraying elderly male and female characters (*lao sheng*, *lao dan*) due to the fact that it is typically sung in "chest voice." As a result, it has a distinct timbre that has been described as "broad and thick" (Wu 1996, 131). In general, the first phrase, or upper line of the text, of a Chen Tune melody begins on *do* and ends a fourth below on *sol*, while the second phrase, or lower line of the text, usually ends on *re* (Wu 1996, 131; Tsao 1988, 14). In addition, the last word of the lower line is typically

approached by a large downward leap (ZBW, 18). This pattern can be seen in the simplified Chen Tune melody performed in lines 15 and 16 of the revised ballad (see figure below).

upper line

15.ji ran shi mo ji mu ming ta xiang shi ju
(Even though his stepmother ordered him to explain the meaning of the poem.)

lower line

11 16.wei shen ma bu yu die niang gong can xiang?
(Why didn't you discuss this with the parents first?)

Figure 16: Chen Tune example from *Fighting* (lines 15 and 16)

During the creation of *Fighting*, Jiang decided to innovate his version of the Chen Tune in order to more dramatically depict the deep emotions of the revised Mr. Xu character. As he explained during a conference held in 1984, he felt that his Chen Tune of the past was no longer suited for this character:

We adopted the Chen Tune to express Mr. Xu's character. In the past, when I performed the Chen Tune, I focused more on a smooth tone and rich flavor. All the instrumental interludes were the same. Mr. Xu is a 73-year old man who loved his son very much. So when his son suddenly decided to leave him and take on a new last name, he must have been very angry as well as sad. His emotion was very complex so we tried to present him as an old man who had this deep emotional tie with his adopted son of sixteen years. At the same time, we tried to express his anger and agitation because he was taken advantage of.
(SPT 2006, 35)

One of the ways that Jiang aimed to express the deep anger and sadness of Mr. Xu was through manipulating the melody and rhythm of the Chen Tune in order to enhance the dramatic expression of the text. This characteristic can be seen in a section of the ballad that is referred to as *Questioning* (*Wen*) (lines 15-27). This section is the longest sung passage in the ballad that is not interrupted by spoken dialogue. It also can be described as the “angriest” portion of the text, a “rant,” as Xu lists his numerous complaints against his adopted son Yuan. Jiang highlights this

anger in a number of ways. First, he performs both the vocal lines and instrumental interludes in this entire section at a very steady tempo. This contrasts with the first part of the ballad in which the vocal sections are performed with much flexibility in the tempo with only the instrumental interludes performed in strict rhythm. The steadiness of the tempo in *Questioning* helps to draw attention to the serious tone of the sung text.

Secondly, Jiang drastically shortens and simplifies the instrumental interlude patterns that are performed in *Questioning*. Prior to this section, these interludes are not only longer, but also melodically more complex. Below, is an excerpt from the earlier part of the ballad in which the longer approach to the interludes can be seen. The three interlude patterns are marked in parentheses as A, B, and C; pattern A precedes the singing of the upper line (line 5), pattern B interrupts both upper and lower lines (5 and 6), and pattern C is performed between the two lines.

89 A
a.t. rub. 5.xiang shi

99 B (I think that you are amongst the very few unfilial sons in the whole world)
a.t. jun shao you zhe zhong bu xiao zi

108 C B
a.t. rub. 6.wo jin chao a.t.

116 (Today I will beat you to death in the living room)
rub. yao da si ni zai ting tang.

Figure 17: Interludes surrounding lines 5 and 6 of the text (mm.89-123)

As seen in the figure above, each of these interludes range between four and six bars in length, and is characterized by melodically and rhythmically distinct patterns. However, in *Questioning*,

Jiang shortens these interludes to four two-bar motives that are characterized by a very similar rhythm (B, C, D, and E in the figure below).

(Even though his stepmother ordered him to explain the poem,)

15. ji ran shi mo ji _____ mu _____ ming ta xiang_

9 _____ shi _____ ju _____ 16. wei shen ma bu yu_

(Why didn't you discuss this with the parents first?)

17 _____ die _____ niang gong can xiang?

(Even though you knew the meaning of the poem,)

25 _____ 17. ji ran shi mo xiang ming shi zhong _____ yi_

(Why didn't you tell the details to your parents?)

33 _____ 18. wei shen ma mo bu ba _____ xiang qing

41 _____ bing_ die niang? 19. ji ran shi mo an

(Even though you went to meet your birth mother at the convent,)

49 _____ tang qu ba qin niang _____ ren _____

(Why didn't you tell us first?)

57 _____ 20. wei shen ma mo bu xian_ gao bing er gao

(Although you met your birth mother at the convent,)

64 _____ tang 21. ji ran shi mo an tang ren le

72

qin sheng mu 22.wei shen ma yao ba_wo

80 (Why did you conceal the truth from us?)

men zai gu zhong yang? 23.wei shen ma yao

88 (Why did you set up this tricky scheme here?)

ting tang she xia lao lang ji

96 (Why did you lie to us by telling us to come for a chat?)

24.wei shen mayao pian wo men dao ci

103

tan jia chang? 25.wei shen ma mo tan jia chang

111 (How did a family chat become the "Hongmen banquet"?)

bian le hong men yan

119 (Why did you treat your parents like Han Liubang?)

26.wei shen ma yao ba die niang dang zuo le han liu

126 (Why did you want to kill us ?)

bang? 27.you fu si die

132

niang zai dang chang

Figure 18: Interlude motives in "Questioning"

The difference between these interludes and those performed earlier in the ballad can be clearly seen when comparing patterns B and C in the two sections. As mentioned above, pattern B interrupts both upper and lower lines of sung text while pattern C is performed between the two lines. In the figure below, patterns B-1 and C-1 represent the interludes performed early in the ballad while patterns B-2 and C-2 represent those performed in “Questioning.”



Figure 19: Comparison of B and C interlude patterns

Jiang’s use of abbreviated interludes in this second section is very unusual since most ballads, including those sung according to the Chen Tune, typically employ the longer patterns. The shortened interludes are additionally significant because they serve to bring the lines of the sung text very close together. As a result, this section sounds like an angry rant, or as one listener observed, it sounds as if this section was performed “in one breath” (Guang 1959).

Another example of Jiang’s innovative approach in this section is his use of a repetitive vocal melody in the lower line of the text. In fact, he employs almost the exact melody and rhythm for each lower line of the sung text (See figure 20):



Figure 20: Lower line melody for lines 16, 18, 20, and 24

This repetition in the vocal line mirrors the recurrence of the words “Why did/didn’t you...” (*weishenme yao/bu yao*) in the sung text, as Mr. Xu confronts the un-filial behavior of Yuanzai.⁷⁰ This repetition is discontinued in lines 26 and 27, which also marks the end of *Questioning*. Such use of repetition is unusual since ballad melodies are generally unique, varied slightly according to the speech tones of the text (Tsao 1998, 262).⁷¹

Jiang’s musical innovations in this middle section of the ballad illustrate his efforts to enhance the dramatic expression of the text through manipulating elements of his Chen Tune, particularly through shortening instrumental interludes and incorporating repetition in the vocal melody. His innovations are significant because they were intended to draw dramatic attention to the angry emotions of the revised Mr. Xu character, a character whose anger and sadness stemmed from his betrayal by the feudal elite Zhang father and daughter.

Jiang employed this general approach, making major changes to a tune for the purpose of emotional expression, in many other ballads he performed during the 1950s and 1960s. Although he had already established himself during the 1940s as an artist who experimented with *tanci* musical style, first through his slowing down and embellishing of the Zhou Tune and later through the creation of his own Jiang Tune, the musical approaches he employed after 1949 were different. During the 1950s and 1960s, Jiang more boldly experimented with *tanci* musical structure, and exhibited a new, greater interest in engaging ballad texts through the manipulation of ballad music.

⁷⁰ Although the upper lines of the ballad text contain a similar recurrence of words (“Even if”), this repetition is not mirrored in the vocal melody.

⁷¹ As Tsao notes, “Contrasts in speech tone-high, middle, low, medium-high, medium-low- provide a framework for the choice of pitches in singing” (1998, 262).

4.5 ARTISTIC AUTONOMY AND POLITICAL COERCION

This chapter has explored some of the characteristics that defined the relationship between artistic freedom and political control during the 1950s and 1960s as seen through the revision of traditional repertoire. The example of *Jade Dragonfly* has illustrated that politics played both a direct and indirect role in the revision process. First, the political leader Chen Yun directly influenced the revision trend through his numerous communications with artists, troupe leadership, and other high-ranking politicians. Because Chen was a well-respected fan of the art form and because he was viewed as an authoritative Party figure, his comments and advice were taken very seriously. However, the content of Chen's advice as examined reveals that while he offered much general advice and encouragement, he left final artistic decisions in the hands of the performers.

Secondly, performers' revision efforts were indirectly influenced through directives and political slogans originally intended for the dramatic arts community, such as the 1951 slogan "weed through the old to bring forth the new" and the "Three Reformations" directive of 1952. Although these official promulgations were not specifically directed towards *tanci*, performers interpreted and applied them to their art form. The artists' decision to self-censor can be understood as a protective measure, enacted to protect themselves from potential political attack.

These indirect and direct means by which the State influenced *tanci* creative activity during the 1950s and 1960s can be thought of in terms of the "war of position and the "war of manoeuvre," two strategies for achieving hegemony outlined by Gramsci in his Prison Notebooks.⁷² Gramsci thought of the "war of position" as a long, drawn out "culture war" in which dominant ideology is asserted through institutions of civil society, or culture (Gramsci

⁷² See Gramsci 1971.

1971, 234). In contrast, he conceived of the “war of manoeuvre” as a rapid, direct attack in which dominance is asserted by taking advantage of an opportune moment (Gramsci 1971, 238). Although Gramsci used these terms to describe ways in which socialist revolutionaries could overthrow dominant capitalist hegemony, I use them here to distinguish the different means by which the Chinese State was able to control *tanci* creative activity during the 1950s and 1960s.

As seen through the example of *Jade Dragonfly*, Chen and Jiang responded to these direct and indirect State influences by revising the text of the traditional story so that it conveyed a new, politically correct message, one that was in line with the dominant State ideology. In doing so, it can be argued that these performers articulated their support of, or consent to, State ideology, in this case a critique of the oppressive nature of feudal society. Although the State did not directly coerce Chen and Jiang into making these revisions, their actions can be understood as stemming from other coercive elements in society, such as the directives and slogans listed above.

Chen and Jiang’s revision of the *Jade Dragonfly* text illustrates another important characteristic of the State’s relationship with artists during this period: *tanci* performers were allowed artistic freedom during the revision process as long as their changes did not conflict with the official Party line. For example, Chen and Jiang’s changes to the end of *Jade Dragonfly* were not contested because they were made in order to support a new politicized interpretation of the story, a critique of the feudal class. However, critiques arose when artistic changes were seen as challenging the official viewpoint such as in the dispute over the Suzhou troupe’s decision to represent the Zhang widow as a good character.

Holm also recognizes this correlation between political compliance and artistic freedom. He explains that Party “control” of the arts during the 1950s and 1960s was in some sense a “misnomer” due to the fact that the CCP allowed performers some decision-making power:

It was already evident that the system of Party „control’ was far from total. After all, no system of control over human beings yet devised has ever been “absolute,” strictly speaking, has ever reduced people completely and irremediable to the level of automata. We were concerned, then, with a system which was more or less efficient, more or less explicit, which operated with a certain level of voluntary compliance and with generality while leaving the final choices- especially in artistic creation- in the hands of those being directed. (Holm 1991, 3)

In other words, the Party did not intend to control every aspect of artistic production, but left artists the freedom to make decisions based on their assumption that the performers would comply with Party policies and ideals. As will be emphasized in the following chapters, *tanci* performers’ artistic autonomy during this period went hand in hand with their compliance with certain un-negotiable political ideals.

Another artistic response to the State’s coercive influences can be seen in Jiang’s composition of new music for the ballad *Fighting*. Unlike the process of revising the text, Jiang did not face pressure to change the music of this prominent ballad. This was because during this time period ballad music did not draw the same type of political scrutiny as the story’s text. However, Jiang chose to adopt innovative musical approaches in order to highlight the emotional expression of the revised text. As a result, Jiang’s musical approach can be understood as an articulation of his artistic agency, rather than an automatic compliant response to political coercion.

Jiang’s decision to innovate musically can be explained by several factors. First, musical innovation, itself, was an established convention of *tanci*. As mentioned earlier, this ideal that came into being during the 1920s when performers in the growing city of Shanghai

vied for top performance venues, including radio air time, and strove to remain artistically competitive amongst their peers. However, as mentioned earlier, Jiang's innovations to *Fighting* were unlike those of the past, bolder in their approach to melody, rhythm, and musical structure.

Secondly, the political-social atmosphere of the 1950s and 1960s encouraged Jiang to innovate. While such bold musical innovations might have been looked down upon during previous decades, they were accepted and celebrated during the late 1950s, a time during which the Party called for the production of "newness" in the arts. As mentioned in Chapter 3, this idea was initially represented in the 1951 slogan "weed through the old to bring forth the new," but later pervaded the performing at large, stimulating the composition of new stories and plays. Since Jiang was predisposed to innovating ballad music, it was natural for him to continue this trend, albeit on a much bolder scale, under the changed political climate of the 1950s and 1960s.

The idea that political climates have the potential to inspire creative activity, contrasts with what Tung has observed about Chinese playwrights during the 1950s and 60s:

For the playwright, there was the conflict between his instincts and professional desire to be an artist and his awareness of being a revolutionary whose foremost task is political. Politics demands popularization of art for utilitarian purposes, but an artist dreams of creative autonomy and aesthetic excellence which in reality must be free from imposed political requirements. (Tung, 4)

According to Tung, creative autonomy and aesthetic excellence are ideals that cannot be attained when artists also face political requirements. However, as seen through the example of *Fighting*, during the 1950s and 1960s, *tanci* performers did not require autonomy from political requirements in order to innovate musically. In fact, the political demands placed on their texts actually facilitated and encouraged the composition of new music.

5.0 THE POLITICS OF COMPOSING NEW STORIES

Between 1949 and 1964, large numbers of new stories were composed in *tanci*. These works included those written in the full-length format of the past and others that were much shorter in length. Some of these stories were entirely new compositions while many others were adapted from pre-existing sources, such as novels, plays, and movies. Some of the new stories were set in ancient China while others maintained a contemporary focus. Despite this diversity in length and subject matter, the new stories shared a similar political focus. They were intended to communicate the political ideology of the Communist Party and propagate Socialist values.

This chapter examines the politics of story composition during the 1950s and 1960s, and questions the role of the artists' autonomy in this highly politicized process. Through the example of *We Certainly Must Fix the Huai River* (*Yiding Yao Ba Huai He Xiu Hao*) (*Huai River*, hereafter), which is recognized by many as the first Middle-length Story, I examine the heavy role of politics in the composition process. I also study the role of politics as well as artistic agency in the composition of new ballad music, particularly as seen through *Staying for the New Year* (*Liu Guo Nian*), a prominent ballad from *Huai River*. This discussion is preceded by an overview of the different types of new stories composed, and a brief examination of two important political factors that shaped story composition during this period.

5.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF NEW STORIES

Three different types of stories were composed during 1949-1964 period: new Full-length Stories, Middle-length Stories (*zhongpian*), and Short-length Stories (*duanpian*).⁷³ While the full-length format was familiar to artists who had performed traditional repertoire for years, the Middle-length and Short-length Stories were new formats specifically developed to meet the changing needs of the times. This section outlines the main characteristics of the new stories, and discusses some of the more prominent works composed during this period.

5.1.1 New Full-length Stories

New Full-length Stories were composed throughout the 1950s-1960s, though performers were especially focused on composing these types of works during the years following the Cut the Tail Movement (1951-1952) and the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960). Since Full-length Stories had been pushed aside in favor of new, shorter works during both movements, artists enthusiastically returned to composing the longer repertoire after the movements came to a close. In all, an estimated ninety-four new Full-length Stories are thought to have been composed during this period (Zhou 2002, 39).

Most of the new Full-length Stories were not original compositions but rather adapted from a number of pre-existing works, especially novels, movies, and regional operas. Operas, in particular, were considered to be good for adapting to *tanci* since, like the story repertoire

⁷³ The Party official Chen Yun developed his own terminology to distinguish this new repertoire developed from the pre-existing stories, which he called “first category works” (*yi lei shu*). Chen referred to new stories Full-length Stories as “second category works” (*er lei shu*), and the new Middle and Short-length Stories cumulatively as “third category works” (*san lei shu*) (Zhou 1996, 124).

performed prior to 1949, many were set in ancient times, featured spoken dialogue, and contained much sung text (Zhou 2002, 38). However, some criticized these play adaptations, saying that the sections that were performed from the third person point-of-view were too weak, and that the stories did not contain enough description and details (Zhou 2002, 129). Others thought that the new stories adapted from plays were too short and “not *pingtan* enough” (*pingtanhua hai bu guo*) (Zhou 2002, 39). One of the largest differences between the newly written and old Full-length Stories was that many of the newer works were much shorter than the stories written prior to 1949. For example, *The Song of the Youth* (*Qing Chun Zhi Ge*), composed in 1964, is only fifteen chapters in length, only half as long as many of the works written prior to 1949.

The newly composed Full-length Stories shared two main themes. First, about half were set in imperial times and carried a theme of “righting the wrongs of feudal society.” In these works, a typical story plot consisted of a low ranking official seeking just punishment for crimes committed by evil, yet wealthy individuals or spouses gone astray. For example, in the 1956 *Wang Kui Breaks His Promise to Guiyin* (*Wang Kui Fu Guiyin*), Wang abandons his wife and famous courtesan Ao Guiyin after he successfully passes the official examination and is offered, instead, the hand of a high-ranking official’s daughter. In the meantime, another scholar, Liu, befriends Gui, and later avenges the prostitutes’ honor by killing Wang (Wu 1996, 68). Another example of this type of story plot is the 1955 *The Just Official He Wenxiu* (*He Wenxiu*), in which the main character He is wrongly accused of killing the maid of a local wealthy man, Zhang, who in fact committed the murder in attempt to cover up another crime he committed against He’s wife. After nearly being exiled, He turns his life around by becoming an official, and eventually serves justice upon Zhang (Wu 1996, 83).

Other new Full-length Stories were set in more contemporary times, recounting the adventures and persecution of those involved with the underground communist movement. For example, the 1958 *Fighting in the Heart of the Enemy* (*Zhandou Zai Diren Xinzang*) tells the tale of Liu, who struggles to obtain the espionage plan of the Nationalist army (Wu 199, 89). Another story, *Red Rock* (*Hong Yan*), composed in 1964, tells the tale of three underground members of the Communist Party who are captured by the Nationalist army and tortured before they successfully break out of prison right before the fall of the Nationalist army base of Chongqing.⁷⁴

5.1.2 Middle-length and Short-length Stories

In addition to new Full-length Stories, stories of shorter lengths were composed. Beginning in the early 1950s, Middle-length Stories were written. These works were three to four chapters in length and required approximately three hours to perform (Wu 1996, 42). Since these stories often contained many spoken sections, *pinghua* artists often performed them in conjunction with *tanci* artists (Wu 1996, 42). Even more abbreviated works called Short-length Stories were also composed during this time. These works typically only consisted of one chapter in length, and could be performed within the time span of one hour (Wu 1996, 42). Like their middle-length counterparts, Short-length Stories contained both spoken sections and sung ballads.

In addition to the performance duration, the Middle and Short-length Stories differed from Full-length Stories in other ways as well. First, the plots of the shorter stories progressed more quickly than those of the longer stories. As Zhou explained, due to the shorter lengths, the plots of the Middle and Short-length Stories proceeded immediately into conflict, suspense, and

⁷⁴ See Appendix A.2 for a list of new Full-length Stories composed during the 1950s and 1960s.

then pushed towards the climax (Zhou 2002, 43). This approach contrasted to the much slower pace in which the plot unfolded and developed in the Full-length Stories composed prior to 1949. The Middle-length Story also differed from the Full-length Stories in regards to the number of performers required on stage. One or two artists typically performed Full-length Stories, each responsible for several character roles at a time. However, five to eight performers were frequently required for Middle-length Stories, each chapter being performed by teams of two to three artists at a time. The larger number was required because artists generally performed only one character role in these stories, as in plays (Zhou 2000, 43).

Middle and Short-length works were especially popular during the early 1950s when many artists temporarily stopped performing Full-length Stories during the Cut the Tail Movement, and again during the late 1950s, when artists turned to the short-length works to achieve high production goals set during the Great Leap Forward. The new forms were considered attractive options during this time not only because the shorter length encouraged quick composition, but also because they were viewed as apt vehicles for spreading political messages. This idea is conveyed in a 1951 newspaper article entitled “The Length Problem of New *Pingtán*” (*Xin Pingtan de Changduan Wenti*) as the author, Hen Yun, explains the political and practical purpose of Short-length stories:

Due to the reform of new *pingtan* since the liberation that enables the storytelling to meet the demand of politics and propaganda, *pingtan* acts as a way of educating the people. This situation makes Short-length Stories appropriate. They meet the requirement of the current situation and also are easier to write.

(Hen, 1951)

Despite the fact that many Middle and Short-length Stories were composed during this period, scholars often find it difficult to estimate an approximate total number. This is because many of the new stories were quickly composed and performed only once or twice before the

score was either lost or destroyed (Zhou 2006). However, a few of these works were preserved through publication. Some stories appeared in short compilations such as *Performing New Stories* (*Shuo Xin Shu*), a three-part edition published during the mid-1960s that featured newly composed works (SWC 1965). The newspaper column *New Pingtan*, from the *Xinmin Evening News*, also routinely featured newly composed Short-length Stories during the early 1950s.

Like the newly written Full-length Stories, many Middle-length Stories told tales of justice served upon the wicked during imperial times. One bold example of this is the 1956 *The Spring Tour of the Eighth Yang Sister* (*Yang Ba Jie You Chun*). In this story the emperor, under the advise of an evil official, attempts to take the eighth Yang sister by force, after her mother refuses to give the girl to him in marriage. When the Yang sister defends herself from the royal guard and takes the evil official's son captive, the emperor decides to prosecute the girl's mother for resisting imperial orders. The emperor abandons his prosecution only after the eighth sister leads an army to attack him (Wu 1996, 91). Other examples of stories with this theme include *The Reunion of Liu Qiao* (*Liu Qiao Tuan Yuan*), *Tale of the Tiger Hunt* (*Liu Hu Ji*), *Falsely Accused Shu E* (*Shu E Yuan*), and *White-haired Girl* (*Bai Mao Nü*).⁷⁵

Many Middle-length Stories were also written about model Communist citizens and famous martyrs of the early Communist movement. For example, *The Martyr Liu Hulan* (*Liu Hulan*) tells the tale of the young girl Liu who is killed after refusing to surrender to the Nationalist Army, while *The Martyr Dr. Norman Bethune* (*Bai Qiu'En Daifu*) is about the Canadian doctor who died while performing battlefield surgeries for the Communist army (Wu 1996, 96, 97). Another work, *Jiangnan Spring Tide* (*Jiangnan Chunhu*), focuses on the efforts

⁷⁵ See Appendix A.3 for a list of Middle-length Stories composed during the 1950s and 1960s.

of underground Communists Gu and Zhong who sabotage the Nationalist army's plans to destroy a military shipyard (Wu 1996, 97).

"Models and martyrs" were commonly used as subjects for new stories due to their idealization in Chinese society. Nor only was the emulation of heroes emphasized in Confucian education, the use of models also figured prominently in Mao Zedong thought (Sheridan, 47). As Landsberger notes,

"He [Mao] was convinced that everybody constantly had to be made aware of what was correct behaviour, and what conduct was deemed unacceptable... According to Mao, when an ordinary person is confronted with a model of ideal behaviour, he will feel a desire to remake himself" (Landsberger 1998).

As a result, these figures were then depicted and idealized through various modes of cultural expression, such as propaganda posters, novels, plays, and new stories.

Like Full-length and Middle-length Stories, Short-length Stories were also written on themes of "models and martyrs." One example of this type of story is "*Iron Man*" *Wang* (*Wang Tieren*), which tells the tale of Wang Jingxi, a worker on the oil fields who perseveres for hours in cold mud despite an injured leg. As the result of his dedication, he gains the nickname "Iron Man" (Wu 1996, 111). Another Short-length Story based on the theme of "models and martyrs" is *The Corner of the Passenger Car* (*Chexiang Yi Jiao*), which focuses on the model soldier Lei Feng who gets off the train one stop early to help a pregnant woman return home (Wu 1996, 112).

However, the Short-length Stories differed from the longer stories in that many overtly aimed to educate listeners about the ideals of Socialist society. For example, the story *Mistake In, Mistake Out* (*Cuo Jin Cuo Chu*) provides a lesson in social ethics through the story of Zhang, a woman who is happy to discover that she received an extra five dollars back in change when she purchases some meat. Zhang later realizes the selfishness of her behavior and returns the

money to the butcher (Wu 1996, 110). In another work, *Xuguang and Wuweizhai Restaurants* (*Xu Guang yu Wuweizhai*), the model worker Song instructs two lazy restaurant workers about work ethics in New China (Wu 1996, 110). Other examples of stories composed with an educational focus include *Five Acres of Land* (*Wu Mu Di*), *The Meeting on the Road* (*Lu Yu*), *Visiting the Daughter* (*Tannu*), *Eight Eggs, One Kilogram* (*Bage Jidan Yi Jin*), and *Old Man Meng* (*Meng Laotou*).⁷⁶

The combination of the political focus, contemporary content and shorter duration of the new works appealed to many during the 1950s and 60s. Zhou claims that these characteristics attracted new audience members to the art form, including those who otherwise would have not listened to *tanci* (Zhou 1997, 126-127; 2002, 222). In fact, some felt so strongly about these shorter forms that they claimed that they should dominate *tanci* repertoire. This sentiment is expressed in a common saying of the time, “Middle and Short-length Stories should form the main part of *pingtan*” (*pingtan yao yi zhong, duanpian wei zhu*) (Zhou 1997, 128). As Zhou notes, this perspective was so domineering at some points during this period that those who opposed it were criticized as opposing serving the workers, farmers, soldiers, literature, and art direction of the Party (Zhou 1997, 128).

However, looking back on the period, scholars such as Zhou and Wu have criticized the newly composed works, saying that they lacked artistic quality due to the fact that they were composed so quickly. As Zhou states of this period in composition, “Although the composers and performers had good intentions, felt political responsibility and were also very enthusiastic and had a sincere attitude, it was a waste of time and energy” (Zhou 2002, 41). Although Zhou’s

⁷⁶ See Appendix A.4 for a list of Short-length Stories composed during the 1950s and 1960s.

comment represents a more extreme viewpoint, it highlights a general feeling shared by many performers of the time, that many of the new works contributed little artistically to *tanci*.

5.1.3 New approach to story composition

In writing these new stories, performers also employed a new approach to story composition. As noted in Chapter 2, prior to 1949, individual artists either composed new stories or adapted pre-existing stories for *tanci* performance. Some of the more successful artists sought additional help in refining their stories from the literati class who were also *tanci* aficionados (Zhou 2002, 201). However, after 1949, performers began composing collectively, usually in small groups of two to three artists. This collective approach was especially employed for composing new Full-length and Middle-length Stories while Short-length Stories were often composed individually. The collective approach to composition, which was also popular in creative writing at the time, not only facilitated quick composition, it also provided artists with an environment that encouraged collaboration on artistic and political ideas.

In addition, the larger performance troupes began recruiting individuals to assist in the massive composition efforts. The Shanghai Pingtan Troupe employed Chen Lingxi and Ma Zhongyin during the early 1950s to compose new works. Chen, who also was active in the revision of traditional works, also composed approximately twenty Middle-length Stories, including *Dropped Han Coin*, *The Martyr Liu Hulan* and *The Hero Lin Chong* (Wu 1996, 142). Ma also composed a number of Middle-length Stories including *The Song of the Youth* (Wu 1996, 144). The Suzhou Pingtan Troupe employed Wuxi native Qiu Shaopeng to compose new works beginning in 1952. Self taught in the art form, Qiu was prolific in his compositional output, writing new stories including the Full-length Story *The Square Pearl* (Fang Zhenzhu),

Middle-length Stories such as *Spring Breeze Blows on the Nuoming River* (*Feng Chui Dao Nuoming He*) and *Falsely Accused Shu E* and two Short-length Stories, *A Cry on the Train* and *One Meal of Rice* (*Yi Dun Fan*) (Wu 1996, 145).

5.2 POLITICAL FACTORS

5.2.1 “Bring forth the new”

The composition of new stories during the 1950s through 60s cannot be linked to any one official directive or political slogan. Rather, this effort was spurred on by a number of official statements about drama that can be traced back to the early years of the PRC. As mentioned in Chapter 4, during the spring of 1951 Mao articulated the phrase “weed through the old to bring forth the new.” This slogan served two purposes: it instructed performers to begin revising, or “weeding through,” their traditional repertoire, and secondly, it called for the composition, or “bringing forth” of new repertoire.

Soon after, on May 5, 1951, the Party gave its first official pronouncement on drama in “The Directive Concerning Drama Reform.” As with Mao’s 1951 slogan, this directive stressed a dual focus on revising old repertoire as well as developing new. Below, is an excerpt of the directive as translated by Chin:

The people’s drama is an important weapon to educate the broad masses through democratic spirit and patriotism. Our country has a very rich heritage of drama which has been closely connected with the people. It is extremely important to inherit, enrich and glorify it. Because some parts of this heritage was used by the feudal ruling class to anesthetize and poison the people, it is to the best interest of the nation and the people to distinguish the good from the bad, reform and develop this heritage on a new basis. (Chin, 101)

This directive illustrates the deep political significance of the Party's call for composition. Under Chinese Communism drama was given a new purpose, to "educate the broad masses" about the ideology of the Communist Party. As a result, when performers were instructed to compose "new" works, it was understood that these works were to uphold and project the new political ideology of the Party.

As in the dramatic arts, *tanci* artists clearly understood the political component required of the new compositions. For example, in the first page to his 1957 introductory book, Shanghai Pingtan Troupe leader Wu Zongxi linked Mao's slogan to the composition trend, and also stressed the intended political focus of the stories in *tanci*:

After the revolution, under the slogan "One Hundred Flowers Bloom, Weed out the Old to Bring Forth the New" as put forth by the Central [Communist] Party and Mao Zedong, *pingtan* [performers] began to write lots of new compositions, they also created lots of new forms that spread propaganda to the workers and served the people. (Wu 1957, 1)

Later, Wu explained that the word "new" in Mao's slogan in fact referred to "new revolutionary thoughts," as opposed to "old thoughts" as represented by the first half of the phrase (WZX 1983, 178).

In addition to Wu, others recognized this concept of "new *tanci*," or composing new stories with a strong political focus. In fact, as seen in titles printed in the biweekly "New Pingtan" column, this concept pervaded *tanci* during the early 1950s. Over half of the articles printed in this column during 1951 were either texts of newly composed works, mainly Short-length Stories and Opening Ballads, or short essays related to the topic of composing new works. This focus can be seen in the titles of articles printed in the column on August 14, 1951: *The Great Revolutionary Army: New Opening Ballad Number One* (*Baoda Jiefang Jun: Xinbian Kaipian Zhi yi*), *Taking Care of the Family of the Dead Soldiers: New Opening Ballad Number*

Two (You Fu Liejun Xu: Xinbian Kaipian Zhier), and *The New Achievements of the World of Suzhou Pingtan (Suzhou Pingtanjie de Xin Chengjiu)* (XMB, 8/14/51).

5.2.2 Chen Yun's influence

While political slogans and official directives were instrumental in motivating story composition during the early 1950s, the high-ranking political official Chen Yun was especially influential later in the decade. During the late 1950s through early 1960s, Chen actively encouraged artists to compose new stories, especially those that could be used for political purposes. For example, in a talk delivered to leaders from the Art and Literature Section of the Central Government's Propaganda Department (*Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu wenyi qu*) on February 14, 1961, Chen stressed the composition of new works based on "socialist political life" in order to develop the educational use of the narrative arts (CY, 50). Also, during a earlier meeting with the Shanghai Department of Culture, Shanghai Pingtan Troupe and Drama Department of the Shanghai Radio Station, Chen stated that the new compositions would not only enhance "leadership and political thinking," but that they would also "promote the reformation of artists' thoughts, and enhance the ideological and artistic quality of the repertoire" (CY, 1).

One of the ways that Chen stressed the composition of new works was through referencing the slogan from the Great Leap Forward "walking on two legs" (*liang tui jiao zuo lu*). He used this slogan in his talks to performers and arts leaders in order to stress the dual importance of Full-length and Middle-length Story repertoire.⁷⁷ For instance, in a talk with the

⁷⁷ In addition to old and new stories, Chen also used the slogan to stress the dual importance of historical and contemporary stories, as well as works performed in Suzhou dialect and those performed in Mandarin.

Suzhou Cultural Bureau and performers from the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe and Jiangsu Provincial Troupe, Chen stated:

Artists must work hard to create new works to reflect the new age. I always applaud for the new compositions, even they are just a little bit good. I do not oppose the old (works), but I want (you) to add a few new ones, “walk on two legs.”
(CY, 29)

Chen’s use of this slogan is significant because it is yet another instance of how his artistic advice for performers always contained a political dimension.

In addition to encouraging the composition of new stories in general, Chen also offered specific advice to artists, particularly as they created new Middle-length Stories from pre-existing plays and novels. For instance, he encouraged Shanghai performers to omit sections of novels and plays when adapting them, but also to incorporate additional description and third person narrative (CY, 29-30). In another talk to members of the Jiangsu Provincial Narrative Art Work Association (*Jiangsushen Quyi Gongzuozhe Xiehui*), he suggested that when creating new Full-length Stories from novels written about early revolutionary struggles, not to include too depressing of an ending. Conversely, he suggested letting the “good guys win” (*haoren shenli*) once in a while (CY, 32). However, even during these talks that focused on art, Chen was careful to remind the performers to be “precise in terms of politics” (CY, 32). This can be interpreted in terms of the Party leader encouraging the performers to remember their political responsibility as artists in post-1949 China as well as a reminder to artists protect themselves from potential political attack.

5.3 COMPOSING *WE CERTAINLY MUST FIX THE HUAI RIVER*

In November of 1951, the Shanghai People's Pingtan Work Troupe (*Shanghai Renmin Pingtan Gongzuotuan*)⁷⁸ traveled to the banks of the Huai River to assist in relief and dam construction efforts following a devastating flood. Upon returning to Shanghai, the performers collaborated to write a new story based on their experiences, *We Certainly Must Fix the Huai River* (*Huai River*, hereafter). *Huai River* differed radically from other story repertoire. It was much shorter than stories performed before 1949, its story was based on a contemporary event, and it featured innovative musical material. Why did the Shanghai performers get involved with dam construction at the Huai River banks and what, after their return from the project, prompted them to take these new directions in composition?

5.3.1 Thought reform at the Huai River Valley

The artists' trip to the Huai region and their resultant story composition, *Huai River*, were closely tied to the Thought Reform Campaign of 1951. Mao Zedong launched this movement with the goal of "ideologically reforming" the thoughts of intellectuals, including teachers, students, writers, and artists, so that their expertise could be better employed for the democratization and industrialization of the country (Meisner, 86). In the universities, professors and students were urged to form groups for studying communist ideology (Lifton, 246). Thought reform for many musicians, writers, and actors took the form of trips to the countryside where they learned about the lives of the peasants and workers through manual labor (Melvin, 194).

⁷⁸ Today, the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe.

On November 22, 1951, only one day after its initial formation, all eighteen members of the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe joined the Shanghai City Literature and Art World Harness the Huai River Work Team (*Shanghaishi Weinyijie Zhihuai Gongzuodui*) (Shen 2006).⁷⁹ In addition to the Shanghai troupe, the Huai River work team was comprised of some eighty-six visual artists, musicians, and writers, all from Shanghai. Their purpose was to travel to the Huai River Valley Basin, a region that had been devastated by flooding the previous summer, and help in various capacities to the massive construction efforts of the Banqiao and Shimantan dams (Dai, 28; Wu 2006).

In all, the group spent three months and twenty days in the Huai region (Wu 2006). Since most lacked experience with heavy labor, the performers did not contribute significantly to the actual construction efforts. During an interview in September of 2006, Wu Zongxi, who was the troupe leader at the time, explained the predicament the performers' faced when confronted with manual labor:

What were (we) to do? (We) didn't know. Because we had never gone to the countryside before, (we) didn't know how to do anything. And the (work at the) Huai River work area wasn't your usual type of labor; you had to carry very heavy loads. (Wu 2006)

As a result, the performers served as a kind of support staff to the workers, helping with miscellaneous tasks such as mending clothing and washing bedding (Zuo 1954, 1). In addition, they taught classes in singing, dancing, storytelling, and reading, and broadcasted the news (Wu 1997, 6). On occasion, some of the artists also performed, such as Liu Tianyun and Xie Shuqin

⁷⁹ The initial members of the troupe included Liu Tianyun, Jiang Yuequan, Zhang Jianting, Chen Xi'an, Zhang Jianguo, Wang Boying, Xie Shuqing, Zhou Yunrei, Zhu Huizhen, Xu Xueyue, Yao Yingmei, Tang Genglian, Zhang Hongsheng, Wu Jianqiu, Yao Shengjiang, Han Shiliang, Chen Hongxia, and Cheng Hongye (Zhou 2002, 82).

who performed excerpts from the Short-length Story *Little Erhei Marries* (*Xiao Erhei Jiehun*) (Shen 2006).

Although the performers were depicted as “voluntarily” joining the work team, news articles written after the group returned clearly linked their participation with the Thought Reform Campaign of 1951. For example, in one article published in the prominent *Revolution Daily News* (*Jiefang Ribao*) on July 12, 1952, troupe leader Wu listed various examples of the performers’ successful thought reform including “overcoming personal individualism, becoming educated about class, and developing respect for the peasants, soldiers, and workers” (Wu 1997, 8).

In another article published later that year in the *Shanghai Wenhui Newspaper* (*Wenhui Bao*), Wu emphasized the emotional dimension of their experience as yet additional proof of the performers’ successful thought reform:

Through the three months and twenty days, the way that the performers thought had changed. They recognized their shortcomings through intense internal struggle. Many lost sleep, some cried many times. And through the help from the leadership and from each other, we have discovered the root of our pain, and have produced the determination to conquer our old way of thinking. (Wu 1997, 7)

Although the Thought Reform Campaign of 1951 had ended the year prior, such “proof” of the reformation process was likely thought to be necessary in order to improve the political image of artists who had enjoyed much financial success before 1949. In other words, if these artists were not clearly portrayed as having successfully undergone thought reform, they might run the risk of being associated with the feudal system of the past, something that could have seriously impacted their careers as artists in the new PRC.

5.3.2 New directions in story composition

Like many stories that followed in its example, *Huai River* differed from stories of the past, in terms of its contemporary subject matter, ballad music, and how it was performed. This section explores the distinguishing features of *Huai River*, and also how politics shaped the creative decisions made during the composition process.

5.3.2.1 Contemporary story content

Like many of the new stories composed after it, *Huai River* features a very contemporary subject matter. The story is set in the basin of the Huai River Valley only slightly earlier than the artists' own visit to the region. The dam construction projects at that locale are described through the perspective of Zhao Gaishan, a young farmer who voluntarily leaves his family to work on the dam projects. The story focuses on Zhao's many experiences at the sites, and particularly two instances when he puts the construction projects ahead of his own plans and safety. In one instance, Zhao volunteers to stay on the work site during the Chinese New Year holiday instead of returning home to be married as originally planned. Later, he uses his own body to block a breach in a dirt dam caused by flooding; his efforts thereby save the construction effort (Zuo 1954, 2).

Like many other newly composed stories, *Huai River* depicted its main character, Zhao, as a "model hero." He was based on a real person whom the Shanghai performers met in the region who, like the character in the story, chose to continue working on the dams through the Chinese New Year holiday. However, other circumstances surrounding Zhao's life were fictionally created in order to highlight the themes of self-sacrifice for the greater good of society and devotion to the country. In the preface to the performance script, Wu clearly stated the

propagandistic purpose behind the main character, “Zhao Gaishan is a model who represents the new peasants who love the country and who devote themselves to its construction. Their courageous stories encourage and educate us” (Zuo 1954, 2).

Why did the performers choose such a contemporary subject matter for their story? According to troupe leader Wu, the performers were emotionally motivated to create a new story after they returned to Shanghai. As explained in the preface to the 1954 edition:

Although this [their trip to the Huai River] was only for a little over three months, they [the performers] experienced and were moved by much during this time. They experienced an unstoppable urge to create, to incorporate the working people into their performances. After returning to Shanghai, they continuously praised the people and experiences they had, but this did not satisfy them. They felt, from their experiences, they must introduce these stories through *pingtan* to many more people. Therefore they decided to compose a work based on the “Harnessing the Huai River”⁸⁰ project. (Zuo 1954, 2)

Wu reiterated this idea of emotion inspiring their creation of *Huai River* during a 2006 interview:

After they saw [the Huai River construction efforts], they were very moved (*hen gandong*). They realized that their life in the past was too good. Also, they realized that in the past the types of the stories that they told were all about domestic issues and about kings and generals. This [their Huai River experience] was something that really moved people. Why didn’t they tell stories like this? This is why we spread their message. It was from this situation that after we returned, there were a group of artists who could also sing. They had a creative desire. They actually wanted to write the story, unlike some people today writing stories for the sake of writing. They were moved to write it. (Wu 2006)

Although Wu maintains that the performers were genuinely emotionally moved to write *Huai River*, it is important not to overlook the distinct political circumstances of the early 1950s. When the performers had returned to Shanghai in 1952, two politically inspired movements had just come to a close: the Thought Reform Campaign of 1951 and the 1951 Cut the Tail Movement. While some performers might have returned to traditional repertoire in 1952, the

⁸⁰ “Harnessing the Huai River” (*Zhi Huai*) was a slogan associated with the dam construction projects of the early 1950s.

attack on the old stories during the self-imposed Cut the Tail movement was likely still “fresh” in many minds. By 1952, the performers also would have been familiar with Mao’s 1951 call to “weed through the old to bring forth the new” and the Party’s first call for reform and new development in drama through the Directive on Drama Reform of 1951. As a result, it is not surprising that the artists “decided” to compose a new story based on a high profile, contemporary event with deep political significance.

5.3.2.2 A politicized title

When writing this story, the Shanghai performers selected a title that would clearly reference its contemporary subject matter and also resonate with the politics of that time. They chose the political slogan “we certainly must fix the Huai River” (*women yiding yao ba Huaihe xiuhao*), which was used by Mao in 1952 to draw workers to join the massive Huai River construction efforts. In addition to serving the practical purpose of calling large numbers of people to aid in dam construction, Mao’s call carried political significance. As Shui Fu notes, during this and other similar campaigns, political leaders equated “harnessing the rivers” with development of the country, a task that required citizens to “demonstrate their ‘positive support’ and ‘political enthusiasm’ for the projects” (18).

Although Mao’s slogan was considered long and wordy by *tanci* standards, the performers chose it for distinct political reasons. Their reasons are explained in the preface to the 1954 edition of the story:

Although we know that such a name to us is more like a name of a novel or even like a title of a news report, it appears too long. But if we were to find a title that can push forward the force created by these wonderful events from these characters and also express our unending thankfulness to the Party and Chairman Mao. We feel there is nothing more appropriate than to use this great slogan for a title.
(Zuo 1954, 3)

The above statement reveals the dual purpose of the title: it not only invoked the political atmosphere of the massive dam construction efforts, but also directly linked the new story with the Shanghai performers' successful "thought reform" in the Huai region.

5.3.2.3 A new, Middle-Length Story

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of *Huai River* when it was performed in 1952 was its short performance duration, four hours in all due to its length of four chapters (or episodes). Although this was not the first story of this length to be written, *Huai River* later became well known as the first Middle-length Story.⁸¹ As noted earlier, Middle-length Stories differed greatly with longer Full-length Stories that had dominated *tanci* performance up to this point. Why did performers choose to write such a drastically shorter story?

According to Wu, the Shanghai performers did not intend to write *Huai River* as a Middle-length Story, but were forced to do so after they encountered difficulties trying to write a longer version. In a 2006 interview he simply stated, "They couldn't write a long story, so they decided to write a shorter one. That's how the Middle-length Story came to be" (Wu 2006). However, when the story was first performed, Wu linked the new, shortened story with the political atmosphere of the time. In an article published on April 7, 1952 in *Wenhui News*, he declared, "At last, we must point out the breakthrough of the middle-length form. Old *pingtan* is usually entertainment for the class of people who have time and money. In order to represent the new reality, we must make changes" (Wu 1997, 4). Here, Wu carefully distinguished Middle-length Stories from "old *pingtan*," or traditional repertoire enjoyed by "the class of

⁸¹ While Shanghai Pingtan Troupe leader Wu Zongxi claims that *Huai River* was the first Middle-length Story, Zhou Liang, who was connected with the Suzhou Pingtan Troupe, claims that other works, including the four-chapter story *The Luohan Coin* (*Luohan Qian*) preceded it in the use of the four-chapter format.

people with time and money.” The “breakthrough” of the Middle-length format was the fact that these stories that could be heard in full during one evening’s performance and thus did not require a surplus of either wealth or time.

Wu stressed this characteristic of the Middle-length Stories again in the preface to the 1954 performance script: “Since the performance of *Huai River*, many letters from the workers concur that they do not have time to listen to Full-length Stories. The Middle-length format provided a completed story, therefore, they asked us to perform more works like that” (Wu 1954, 5). In all, it is estimated that 70% of those in attendance at the over 250 performances were industry workers, a class of society celebrated during this early period of Chinese communism (Wu 1954, 3). By portraying *Huai River* as “a story for the workers,” the political significance of the work was increased.

5.3.2.4 Collective approach to composing and performing

Like many of the other new stories composed during the 1950s and 60s, *Huai River* was created collectively. However, it differed from other new works in that all eighteen members of the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe participated in the composition process. In 2006, Wu described to me how their writing process began, “...after the whole group returned from the construction site, based on some experiences at the time, we collected the original materials and after several group discussions, we set an outline” (Wu 2006). Although he did not go into details about the actual process, Wu claimed that the whole group worked together to compose the entire story with only small sections delegated to individuals (Wu 2006; 1954, 4).

The collective approach was only abandoned later when the second chapter was deemed politically unsuitable and in need of revision prior to publication in 1954. The second chapter originally featured a story about a businessman, “capitalist,” who tried to sabotage a construction

project on the Huai banks by doing “sub-standard” work (Zuo 1954, 4). This part of the plot was originally written in order to reflect the “five antis” (*wu fan*) political movement of 1952, a campaign that urged people to oppose bribery, tax evasion, theft of state economic secrets, cheating on government contracts, and theft of state assets (Tang 1988, 13; Meisner 85-7). According to Wu, the performers thought it was necessary to change this part of the story when they were preparing the published script since that particular political movement had already passed, and the plot was believed to no longer be politically relevant (Wu 1954, 4). As a result, performer Yao Yingmei rewrote the chapter, and instead introduced a different character, a “non-progressive” peasant worker, who after missing much work is convinced by his team leader, a “progressive thinker,” to become actively involved in the construction (Tang 1988, 13).

Collective story composition held both artistic and political implications for the performers. First, it required performers with differing artistic viewpoints and various levels of experience to work together. This approach also necessitated that the eighteen Shanghai performers agree on one political interpretation or view for the story. As Tung explains, in the dramatic arts, this approach had an oppressive effect on the playwright’s individuality during the 1950s:

One practice oppressive of a playwright’s individuality has been collective writing of a play. Collectivism in creative writing has been a unique phenomenon in post-1949 drama, a phenomenon which again demonstrates the Party’s particular concern with and close scrutiny of the socio-political influence of drama. Collective writing of a play exercises a mutual check on an individual’s private views and unconscious revelations which may be unacceptable to the Party, and at the same time, collective playwriting also means collective responsibility. (Tung, 10)

According to Tung, the collective approach was one way that the Party could control and monitor the creation of new plays. However, as seen in Chapter 4, the State did not keep very close tabs on activities in *tanci*. Due to this fact, it is very likely that the *tanci* performers

voluntarily joined the *Huai River* composition team. Yet, Tung raises several important points about the nature of collective composition. First, as in drama, dissenting voices were likely kept silent if they were believed to be unacceptable to the group. Secondly, collective composition in *tanci* meant collective responsibility. If any one aspect of the story was found to be politically unsuitable, it was less likely that an individual would be singled out and faulted for it. In other words, collective composition was personally less risky than individual composition.

In addition to composing as a group, the Shanghai artists also performed as a group. In all, a total of eleven *tanci* and *pinghua* artists performed the work. They collaborated in groups of three and four to perform single chapters of the story. *Tanci* artists Liu Tianyun, Cheng Xi'an, and Xu Xueyue performed the first chapter while *tanci* artists Yao Yingmei, Yang Deling, Zhang Jianting, and *pinghua* artist Wu Zi'an performed the second chapter. *Tanci* artists Jiang Yuequan and Yang Zhenxiong, and *pinghua* artist Zhang Hongsheng performed the third chapter, while *tanci* artists Liu Tianyun, Zhu Huizhen, Cheng Xi'an, and Cheng Hongxia performed the final chapter. Subsequently composed Middle-length Stories modeled their performance approach after *Huai River* team though most employed much small groups, usually between five and eight, performers.

The collective approach to performing, though, did not carry the same political significance as collective composition. In fact, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, it was a practical response to a change in approach to character depiction. In most Full-length Stories, one or two artists performed a number of characters roles, each claiming several roles. However, in many of the Middle-length Stories, character roles were assigned one per artist as in dramatic plays. As a result, each chapter of a particular Middle-length Story required three to four artists for performance.

5.3.3 New directions in ballad music: the Fast Jiang Tune

Huai River also was distinguished from other stories composed during the 1950s in regards to its music. Specifically, one Shanghai artist, Jiang Yuequan, innovated his own performance style, the Jiang Tune (*Jiang diao*) in order to enhance the dramatic depiction of the text in *Staying for the New Year* (*Liu Guo Nian*) (*New Year*, hereafter), a ballad sung by the main character Zhao at the climax of the *Huai River* story. In the ballad, which immediately precedes the fourth and final chapter, Zhao struggles to decide if he will return home for the Chinese New Year holiday and be married as he had previously planned, or if he will stay and work on constructing the dams as now requested by his project leaders. By the end of thirteen short lines of sung text, Zhao has made his decision to stay and work on the dams (see text below).

Staying for the New Year

- 1 The officer gave his order,
 - 2 We must stay here through the New Year to complete this mission.

 - 3 Because of this rule, I should stay at this construction site,
 - 4 But it is only a few days until my wedding day.

 - 5 Moreover, marriage after all is for life,
 - 6 I cannot again change the date and delay the wedding.

 - 7 I suddenly remember the electrician Jiang Atu,
 - 8 In order to complete the reservoir before the flood
 - 9 He cast the word “life” aside.

 - 10 If he can give his life for the project,
 - 11 why do I have to leave for marriage?

 - 12 Thinking of this, I feel ashamed,⁸²
 - 13 Hearing that sound, of people signing up one after another.
- (Zuo 1954, 65)

⁸² After singing this line, Jiang describes (through spoken narration) the internal struggle Zhao faces as he hears other workers volunteer to stay and work. Following this spoken description, Jiang concludes the aria with the final line (sung).

Jiang performed this aria in the Jiang Tune, a musical performance style that he developed during the 1940s based on his teacher Zhou Yuquan's Zhou Tune (*Zhou diao*) and musical characteristics from northern narrative traditions and Peking opera (Zuo 1983). The Jiang Tune is characterized by a precise approach to pronunciation and a relatively high vocal range. The Jiang Tune was considered innovative at the time of its creation because Jiang performed its high pitches in “chest voice” (*ben shan*) rather than falsetto (*jia shan*), as typical in other singing styles performed at the time. Due to this characteristic, the Jiang Tune has often been employed for singing the roles of young men such as in the ballads, *Lin Chong's Night Visit to the Tavern* (*Lin Chong jiudian yetan*) and *The Courtesan Du Shiniang* (*Du Shiniang*) (Tsao 1988, 15).

One of the most recognizable features of the Jiang Tune is its distinctive instrumental interlude. Below is an example of the interlude melody as played on the *sanxian*.



Figure 21: Jiang Tune instrumental interlude, *sanxian* melody

The Jiang Tune is also known for its use of stylized ornamentation in the vocal melody. One example of this is shown in the motif below, which is often sung at the close of a lower line phrase.

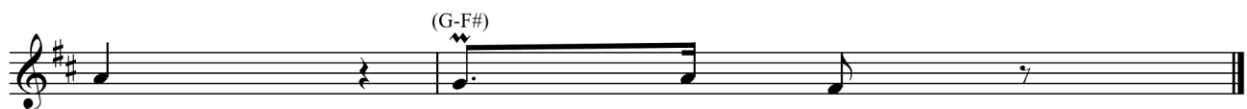


Figure 22: Characteristic Jiang Tune vocal embellishment

In 1952, when Jiang performed *New Year*, though, his tune sounded different. This is largely due to his decision to perform the ballad at a significantly faster tempo than he had done before. In general, Jiang performed *New Year* between 98 and 107 BPM, much faster than the

tempo at which he had performed his tune before, generally between 68 and 72 BPM. As a result of this change, Jiang named this new style the Fast Jiang Tune (*kuai Jiang diao*), and, in turn, referred to the older performance style as his Slow Jiang Tune (*man Jiang diao*).

The Fast Jiang Tune was not merely distinguished by its speed. When Jiang incorporated the faster tempo, he was forced to make other changes to his performance style as well. For instance, Jiang simplified the intricate patterns of the Slow Jiang Tune's instrumental interludes so that they could be performed at the new, faster speed. This simplification can be seen when comparing the *sanxian* part from the first phrases of *New Year* and *Swimming Back to the Base*, a contemporary-themed ballad performed in the Slow Jiang Tune style.



Figure 23: Example of Slow Jiang Tune interlude pattern, *sanxian* part from the first phrase of *Swimming*



Figure 24: Example of Fast Jiang Tune interlude pattern, *sanxian* part from first phrase of *New Year*

As seen above, Jiang adds more 32nd note plucking in the Slow Jiang Tune example (Figure 23) than in the Fast Jiang Tune example (Figure 24). This difference is especially noticeable in the second interlude pattern (B), which is performed during the first line of sung text. Though the melody of the two patterns is very similar, Jiang incorporates additional rhythmic complexity in the slower example (see Figure 21, mm.15-17). Although this might appear to be a subtle difference in the transcriptions above, in performance, the difference in plucking patterns is noticeable.

In addition to simplifying the rhythmic patterns of the instrumental interludes, Jiang also simplified the vocal melody in his Fast Jiang Tune by reducing the number of ornamentations, or embellishments. This characteristic can be seen when comparing the vocal melody from the first phrases of *New Year* and *Swimming Back to the Base*.

(The strong waves and rushing wind are out of control)

1.feng ji — lang — gao — bu — yu — ren —

(I'm covered with bruises and cannot walk)

7 2.bian ti — li shang — bu neng — xing —

(G-F#)

Figure 25: Example of a Slow Jiang Tune vocal melody, excerpt from the first phrase of *Swimming*

(The officer gave his order)

1.zhi dao yuan lai — zhuan yan —

(We must stay here through the New Year to complete this task)

7 2.wei — le — ren — wu — yao liu — guo — nian —

rit. (G-F#)

Figure 26: Example of a Fast Jiang Tune vocal melody, excerpt from the first phrase of *New Year*

Although the above examples are brief, they are representative of the different approaches to vocal ornamentation in the Slow and Fast Jiang Tunes. In general, the Slow Jiang Tune example contains more ornamentation, particularly trilling between the pitches *mi* and *re* (Figure 25, mm. 2, 5, and 10) and also between *mi* and *sol* (Figure 25, mm. 4 and 8). While this type of ornamentation can be seen on occasion in the *New Year* example (Figure 26, mm. 4 and 10), it is incorporated less frequently. As a result, the vocal melody in *New Year* (Figure 26) sounds less embellished and also more straightforward than the Slow Jiang Tune example (Figure 25).

Why did Jiang make these changes to his performance style? Like other artistic decisions made during the creation of *Huai River*, Jiang's decision to employ a faster tempo in *New Year* was closely tied to the political atmosphere of the time, and particularly the Thought Reform campaign of 1951. During the "Pingtan Art Conference" held in 1978, Jiang explained the reasons behind his new musical approach:

How could I use the steady and controlled slow Jiang tune of the past to express his (Zhao's) thoughts? Because I joined the Huai River struggle and received education and practice, I realized that using the old singing method of the past for Zhao was not good. I wanted to think of a way to make my singing style faster to go along with the rhythm of the current era. (SPT 2006, 16)

Jiang later described what he meant by the "rhythm of the current era" by referring back to some of the things that he witnessed at the banks of the Huai River, "For example, a big dam, tens of thousands of peasant workers, the working of the machine that pounds the steel beams into the ground one after another, all these things represent the exciting modern rhythm" (SPT 2006, 16). In summary, Jiang performed his Jiang Tune at a new faster tempo in order to enhance the dramatic depiction of the text, and invoke images of the Huai construction projects.

These quotes illustrate Jiang's political motivation for increasing the speed of his Jiang Tune: it was "proof" of his successful thought reform. By distancing his musical performance in *New Year* from his "old singing method," he also distanced himself his past as a highly successful artist prior to 1949. Moreover, by creating a new faster version of his signature performance style, he could establish a new identity for himself as a revolutionary artist in New China.

5.4 CREATIVE EXPRESSION AND COERCION

This chapter has examined the relationship between artistic freedom and political control as seen through the compositional trend in *tanci* between 1949 and 1964. As explored above, many of the new stories that were composed during this period were designed to support and promote the ideology of the Communist Party through contemporary subject matters, such as stories that focused on the lives of Communist model citizens and martyrs. Even works set in imperial times or based on classic novels had clear political agendas, expressed through tales of low-class citizens achieving justice after being wronged by the unjust feudal system and ruling class.

Although the State did not specifically instruct the artists how to write these stories, they influenced the general direction of *tanci* repertoire composition indirectly through political slogans and directives issued to the drama community. These slogans and directives encouraged performers in the dramatic arts to develop new repertoire, especially plays that would serve a new purpose of educating the people. As noted in the previous chapter, *tanci* performers adopted this new political direction both as a protective measure, and in order to keep current with the shifting political winds.

In the case of *Huai River*, the tense political atmosphere of the early 1950s, resulting from the Thought Reform Campaign of 1951 and the Cut the Tail Movement, 1951-1952, also shaped the artists' creative decisions. The Shanghai artists traveled to the Huai River Valley for the purpose of having their "thoughts reformed." When they returned, Full-length Stories and others set in feudal times could no longer be performed due to the self-imposed Cut the Tail Movement in *tanci*. The combination of these two events created a coercive environment that offered the Shanghai performers limited artistic license in their composition of *Huai River*.

As a result, the performers responded by composing a new story that supported contemporary politics and current trends in the dramatic arts. Their story was based on their recent experiences at the Huai River, incorporating Mao's slogan as a title and featuring a model worker as the main character. The performers also distanced themselves from the traditional story repertoire that was being protested at the time by developing a new shorter performance format and composing the work as a group rather than writing it independently.

When viewed within the framework of hegemony, the performers' creative decisions taken in *Huai River* can be interpreted in terms of their support of, or consent to, the dominant State ideology. While not directly forced to write this particular story, the performers were indirectly influenced, or coerced, by many political aspects in society. Raymond Williams explains this phenomenon, noting that individuals end up consenting to hegemony because the ideas of the dominant class become very real to them:

It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. It is, that is to say, in the strongest sense a culture, but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes. (Williams 1977, 110)

In other words, the ideas of the dominant society become so ingrained in culture that subordinates are unable to escape them. For the Shanghai performers, they were unable to escape the coercive culture of the early 1950s, and as a result, had no choice but to compose a politically symbolic work like *Huai River*.

As with the composition of the story's text, the artist Jiang Yuequan chose to support State ideology, and particularly the dam construction project, through musical changes he made in the ballad *New Year*. However, unlike many of the decisions made in regards to the text, Jiang was not under the same type of pressure to make musical changes. As seen in Chapter 4, ballad music did not draw political scrutiny as did story texts. Because of this, artists were relatively free to compose ballad music as they saw fit. As a result, Jiang decided to innovate his musical style by increasing the speed of his Jiang Tune and simplifying its rhythm and melody. Following performance of the work, Jiang intentionally gave his musical innovations political significance by placing them within the context of his thought reform experience at the Huai River.

Jiang's musical experimentation in *New Year* reveals that even during politically oppressive times, music becomes a potential site for creative expression. His choice to innovate musically and then contextualize his innovations within a larger political framework can additionally be viewed as articulations of his artistic agency, or power as an artist. As Lau recognizes, even in a coercive political environments, individuals are not "passive and powerless," but rather have the ability to choose *how* they will respond to the State's political agenda (1996, 127). This concept of agency is important because suggests a shift in power dynamics from the State to the artist. This idea, as it pertains to musical innovation in *tanci*, will be further explored in Chapter 6.

6.0 COMPOSING REVOLUTIONARY BALLADS

In 1958 at the onset of the Great Leap Forward, Shanghai performers composed two new ballads that drew the attention of *tanci* fans and political leaders alike, *New Mulan Song* (*Xin Mulan Ci*)⁸³ and *Butterfly Loves the Flower* (*Die Lian Hua*). *New Mulan Song* was based on a Qing dynasty Opening Ballad about the ancient female warrior Hua Mulan, while *Butterfly Loves the Flower* was a ballad rendition of Mao Zedong's poem about two martyrs of the early Communist struggle. Despite their differing subject matter, the two works were similar in their bold, innovative approaches to musical composition. In this chapter, I explore the dynamics of political control and artistic freedom in the creation and performance of these two ballads. I examine the bold musical innovations taken by their composers and the role of political leaders in stimulating revisions in these works.

6.1 “WHO SAID WOMEN ARE NOT STRONG?” : THE CREATION OF A *NEW* OPENING BALLAD

6.1.1 Politics and the Opening Ballad in China

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Opening Ballad has traditionally functioned as the opening number to the main storytelling performance. In addition to alerting the audience that the main

⁸³ Ethnomusicologist Tsao Pen-Yeh translates this title as “New Poem about Mulan” (1988, 19).

story will begin soon, the ballads allowed the performers a chance to warm up their voices, tune their instruments, and test the acoustics of the performance venue. These ballads, at times, were also seen as ways to appease certain audience members who were especially drawn to *tanci* music, since most story performances contained more spoken sections than ballads (Xia 1962, III).

However, during the early 1930s, artists began performing Opening Ballads on the radio, outside the traditional story house settings. The ballads sung on the radio usually did not precede a spoken storytelling performance, but rather were sung as independent musical numbers. As a result of this new function, these ballads gained the title “independent opening ballad” (*duli kaipian*). Due to the short length of the ballads as well as the high popularity of *tanci* during this period, Opening Ballads soon became employed for two new purposes: advertising consumer goods and spreading government propaganda. On one hand, texts of new ballads urged Shanghai consumers, particularly women, to buy commercial goods such as furs and perfume. However, other ballad texts aimed to educate the public about the Nationalist government’s New Life Movement (Benson 1996, 134, 143). The texts of many of these ballads were then published for the public in journals such as *Broadcasting Weekly* (*Guangbo Zhoubo*) (Benson 1996, 148).

Opening Ballads were again used to convey political messages after 1949, when many new ballads texts encouraged listeners to support the actions and ideals of the Communist Party. This focus can be seen in a brief survey of the titles and song texts of opening ballads published in the bi-weekly “New Pingtan” column of the Shanghai *Xinmin Evening News* during the early 1950s. For example, the ballad *Thoughts on National Day* attests to the good life in China under the Communist Party, and expresses support for the Chinese army’s fight against the Americans in the Korean War (XMB 2/10/51). Another ballad, *The Old Peasant Bravely Catches the Spy*,

tells the story of a peasant who catches a spy; the storyteller then urges the listening audience to be on the lookout for spies. In *The People's Revolutionary Army*, the ballad's text urges the public to take care of the soldiers as they serve the people (XMB 5/10/51 and 8/3/51).⁸⁴

As in the previous decade, these new Opening Ballads were composed, performed, and published rapidly throughout the 1950s and 60s due to their short length, typically ranging between ten and fifteen lines of text. This trend in composition became accelerated during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960) when performers were encouraged to reach high production quotas through composing large numbers of these ballads. In a 2006 interview with Wu Zongxi, he described the circumstances surrounding ballad composition during this period, "Every one of us had to write (stories). They required everyone to write...We would look in the newspaper, and if there was something going on somewhere, we would write an Opening Ballad" (Wu 2006).

During the late 1950s through early 1960s, Communist Party leader Chen Yun actively encouraged the creation of new Opening Ballads. As with his interest in the revision of traditional repertoire and the composition of new stories, Chen's personal interest in Opening Ballads led him to share his opinions with performers on a number of occasions. For example, on November 25, 1958, Chen instructed members of the Shanghai Culture Bureau (*Shanghai Wenhua Bu*), Shanghai Pingtan Troupe, and the Drama Group of the Shanghai People's Radio Station (*Shanghai Renmin Guangbo Diantai Xiquzu*) to publish a compilation of new Opening Ballads every year (CY, 2). Chen reiterated this point in other talks addressed to Shanghai and Suzhou performers throughout the early 1960s, at one point urging them to try to publish twenty new Opening Ballads each year, and later settling on a reduced number of ten new ballads per

⁸⁴ See Appendix A.5 for a list of Opening Ballads composed during the 1950s and 1960s.

year (CY, 12). In accordance with Chen's advice, the Shanghai performers published several compilations of Opening Ballads during this period including the 1958 and 1962 *Compilation of Opening Ballads (Kaipian Ji)*.⁸⁵ Both the 1958 and 1962 compilations contained the texts to both newly composed and revised traditional Opening Ballads.

Soon after the new ballads began to be composed, criticisms arose regarding the artistic quality of these new works. One critique, as aired in an article published on August 8, 1951 in the *Xinmin Evening News*, was that the new ballads were not suitable to be sung in the Suzhou dialect because they did not follow the rhyming conventions used in traditional Opening Ballads (XMB 8/28/51). Troupe leader Wu Zongxi cited another problem with ballads composed specifically during the Great Leap Forward, the lack of "memorable melody":

During the Great Leap Forward, the artistic quality was very poor. They only wanted you to spread propaganda...Some [Opening Ballads] when sung were considered failures. Some were just sung one time. The people did not really like listening to these. Also, the transmission of opening ballads had a 'melody' (*qudiaao*) problem...If the melody was not good to listen to, then it would be listened to once and then forgotten!
(Wu 2006)

However, during the late 1950s through early 1960s, Shanghai performers composed a collection of new Opening Ballads that were considered artistic successes including *New Mulan Song*, *Commune Members are All Like Sunflowers (Sheyun Dou Shi Xiang Yanhua)*, *(We) All Depend on the Good Leadership of the Party (Women Kao Dang De Hao Lingdao)*, and *Horses Drinks from the Wu River (Yin Ma Wujiang He)*. Like other ballads composed during this period, the texts of these ballads contained political themes. However, these ballads differed from many others due to the innovative approach to musical composition employed by Shanghai artist Xu Lixian. Xu was especially recognized for adding musical drama to her Li Tune to

⁸⁵ Wu Zongxi served as the main editor for these projects (Xia 1958 and Xia 1962).

match the drama in the ballad's text. *New Mulan Poem* was the first ballad in which Xu adopted this approach; she later repeated it in many subsequent ballad compositions.

6.1.2 Composing *New Mulan Song*

The composition of *New Mulan Song* can be attributed to two individuals, Wu Zongxi (b. 1925) and Xu Lixian (1928-1985). As mentioned in Chapter 1, Wu was appointed to his position of “leader” (*lingdao*) within the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe in 1952. His responsibilities included the overseeing of performances as well as composition and revision projects of the troupe. However, in addition to his official duties, Wu was personally interested in the composition of new works, particularly due to his extensive background in the field of literature. When Wu began working with the Shanghai Pingtan Troupe in 1952, he collaborated with artists on many projects, including the composition of the ballad *New Mulan Song*. Though, since Wu was not trained in the art form, he did not perform these works.

At the time of the ballad's composition, Xu was a promising young artist of the Shanghai Troupe. As a young girl, she had studied *tanci* with the prominent teacher Qian Jinzhang of the prestigious Suzhou Universal Abundance Guild (Wu 1996, 195).⁸⁶ She began her professional career at the age of eleven when she performed the Full-length Stories *The Wei Cloak* (*Wei Pao*) and *Fate of Tears and Laughter* (*Ti Xiao Yinyuan*) in Suzhou teahouses (Wu 1996, 195). However, after 1949, Xu's life radically changed. Her teacher Qian was arrested, and Xu reclaimed her original surname to avoid further association with him. A few years later, in 1953, Xu was recruited to join the newly established Shanghai Pingtan Troupe.

⁸⁶ At this time, Xu was known as “Qian Lixian” due to the convention of an apprentice adopting his of her teacher's surname.



Figure 27: Wu Zongxi, pictured in 2004 (Wu 2004, ii)



Figure 28: Xu Lixian in performance, pictured during the late 1950s (Zhou 2002, 108)

In 1958, Wu asked the young Xu to help him compose a new Opening Ballad based on the Qing dynasty ballad *Hua Mulan*. He would write the ballad's text while Xu would compose the music. As he explained to me in 2006, he was inspired to write a new version of the ballad after hearing Xu's performance of the older work.

One day I heard Xu Lixian at the radio station singing *Hua Mulan*. When I heard it, I thought, “The way she sings it has a little bit of the *Hua Mulan* taste, but the sung text is not good enough.” So I said to her, “This *Hua Mulan* that you sing, originally there was an ancient poem called *The Ballad of Mulan*. You can take the sentences from *The Ballad of Mulan* and write them into *Hua Mulan*. Your current text is not good enough. As a result, she said, “Then, you help me write the text.” I helped her take the original *The Ballad of Mulan Prose* and adapt it to the *pingtan* Opening Ballad (*Hua Mulan*.) (Wu 2006)

Both sources that Wu mentions, the poem *The Ballad of Mulan* and the Qing dynasty ballad *Hua Mulan*, tell the story of the semi-historical female warrior Mulan of the Northern Wei dynasty (386-534).⁸⁷ According to legend, Mulan, upon hearing of the emperor’s orders for her elderly father to join the army in battle, secretly disguises herself as a male soldier and leaves her family in order to take his place among the troops. After twelve years and many successes in battle, she finally returns home to her family, and amid much celebration of her return, reveals her true female identity to her fellow soldiers. The poem *The Ballad of Mulan* is thought to date as far back as the Northern Dynasties (386-550), though, its authorship is unknown (Li, 83). The Opening Ballad *Hua Mulan*, on the other hand, was composed during the Qing dynasty by the *tanci* performer Ma Rufei,⁸⁸ the creator of the Ma Tune (*Ma diao*) performance style.

To create the new text, Wu drew heavily from the two older texts, *The Ballad of Mulan* and *Hua Mulan*.⁸⁹ As a result, he newly composed only several lines including the opening phrase (lines 1 and 2), the section describing Mulan’s battle adventures (lines 14-22) and the closing line (line 47, see text below).

New Mulan Song

[Section 1] *moderate tempo*
1 The busy loon sounds day and night,

⁸⁷ See Appendix B for translations of these texts.

⁸⁸ Ma is thought to have lived and performed from about 1850 to 1875 (Wu 1996, 148-9).

⁸⁹ The lines taken from the poem can be identified by their length, five-syllables each, in the Chinese translation.

2 Full of gloomy anxious thoughts, Mu-lan sighs deeply.

3 The Khan is starting a war with China,
4 Our Emperor has sent ten orders to enlist troops.
5 Each bears my father's name,
6 Father is too old to fight a battle.

7 He does not have a grown-up son,
8 Mu-lan does not have an older brother,
9 What do I have to be a girl?

[Section 2] *moderately fast*

10 She gets a whip from the eastern market, a horse from the western market,
11 Mu-lan wishes to change her dress into her father's war-robe.

12 Climbing the mountains and crossing the rivers,
13 Mu-lan goes to the long journey in place of her father with spirits high.

14 I hear the early morning sound of the rushing Yellow River,
15 And cross the long dark river at night.

16 The drums shake the mountains,
17 The wind rips through the war-flags.

18 Like wind and thunder, Mu-lan fights the invaders,
19 Galloping on horseback, with long spear in hand.

20 A million miles of frontier is left behind,
21 Her shimmering war-robe is stained with blood.

22 Victory finally comes ten years later,
23 The Emperor sits in the Great Hall.

24 A dozen times, he summons Mu-lan,
25 And gives her plenty of rewards,
26 But Mu-lan does not wish to be a general.

27 She wishes to have the fastest horse,
28 Send me home as early as possible.

[Section 3] *fast*

29 When father and mother hear of Mu-lan's return,
30 They come to greet the heroine,
31 When sister hears about Mu-lan's return,
32 She hurriedly puts on her makeup,
33 When little brother hear of Mu-lan's return,

34 He cheers and jumps up and down,
 35 With a sharpened knife he chases the pig and goat,
 36 Happiness beams on the faces of the whole family.

 37 Opening my east-side door,
 38 Sitting on the west-side bed,
 39 taking off the war-robe,
 40 putting on my old dress,
 41 combing my hair,
 42 And putting on a yellow flower,
 43 Smiling, I walk out to meet my company of soldiers,
 44 The whole company is startled.

 45 For ten years,
 46 We did not know that the general was a girl,
 47 Who said that a girl is not strong?
 (Tsao 1988, 83-124)

One of the most significant changes Wu made to his version of the Mulan ballad was the addition of the last line of the ballad. Here, Wu did not use text from either of his original sources, but instead chose to write a completely new last line. In *The Ballad of Mulan*, the ancient poem ends with a rhyme that stresses the blurred gender identity of Mulan due to her disguise:

“The he-hare’s feet go hop and skip,
 the she-hare’s eyes are muddled and fuddled,
 Two hares running side by side close to the ground,
 How can they tell if I am he or she.”
 (Frankel 1976, 70)

In his translation of the poem, Hans Frankel explained the meaning of this rhyme, “What is said about the male hare also applies to the female, and vice versa: when both are running fast, neither of them can see clearly whether the other is a male or a female, and the same goes for soldiers busily fighting a war” (Frankel, 72). The Qing dynasty ballad *Hua Mulan* ends with a different line, one that stresses the courage and filial piety in Mulan’s decision to take her

father's place through the line, "Mulan has the greatest courage and filial piety in the world" (*Mulan xiao yong shi wu shuang*) (Xia 1997, 136).

In *New Mulan Song*, Wu emphasized yet a third aspect of the heroine's character through the line: "Who said women are not strong?" (*Shei shuo nu er bu gang qiang*) (Xia 1997, 136). Although this revision might seem minor, Wu's choice of text is very significant. First, he does not use the word "filial piety" (or "*xiao*"), a word that was avoided in *tanci* after 1949 due to the de-emphasis of Confucian values under Communism. By avoiding this word, Wu made a clear break from the ballad's 19th century predecessor as well as traditional stories in general, many of which portrayed female protagonists as filial daughters.⁹⁰ When I asked Wu about his decision to revise this last line, he simply stated, "At that time, 'filial piety' (*xiao*) was considered 'traditional.' Filial piety was not good" (Wu 2006).

Secondly, Wu chose to depict Mulan as a strong heroine, a quality that resonated with the new, revolutionary view of women and their role in society after 1949. Especially during the Great Leap Forward, women were encouraged to work outside of the home in order to achieve the high quotas set in industry and agriculture. According to Yao, there was 14% increase in female laborers in industries throughout China between 1958 and 1959 (167). In urban areas, women were encouraged to join small neighborhood industries while in rural areas women worked in commune-run industries, water conservancy, and construction projects (Yao, 167).⁹¹

⁹⁰ For example, the female protagonist Cheng Cui'e from the traditional story *Pearl Pagoda* was considered controversial during the 1950s and 60s since she was often portrayed as a filial daughter.

⁹¹ This image of women working in industry and agriculture was again emphasized in the years immediately preceding the Cultural Revolution. As Nimrod Baranovitch notes, "superwoman-like" and "masculine" images of the "Iron Girls" (*tie guniang*) depicted women doing traditionally male work, such as repairing electricity lines and drilling for oil. The images supported Mao's famous slogan: "women can do whatever men can do" (2003, 108).

Wu's revision also is significant when compared to other artistic representations of Mulan in the dramatic arts. Throughout the years, playwrights have created their own unique interpretations of the Mulan character conveyed through dialogue and dramatic action at the end of the play. As Li has shown, the late Ming writer and painter Xu Wei wrote a *zaju* play based on the Mulan legend (85). At the end of Xu's version, Mulan returns home, changes out of her battle clothing, and then gets married as her father has previously arranged. As a result, Mulan is represented as a filial and chaste daughter. Li notes that Mulan "comfortably fits herself into the space prescribed by the Confucian gender system" (86).

A contrasting example is the renowned Peking opera performer Mei Langfang's depiction of Mulan as a "patriot and a voice for women's equal rights" in the play *Mulan Joins the Army (Mulan Congjun)* (1917) (Li, 85). Near the end of this play, Mei, speaking through Mulan, encourages women to "become the same as men" in order to combat the foreign imperialism (Li, 87). Li describes Mei as speaking with a "modern consciousness of sexual equality, but within the limit of the national" (87).

By stressing Mulan's strength at the end of the ballad, Wu linked both this ancient heroine and his new text to contemporary society. As a result, he created a new representation of Mulan, one in which the heroine was presented as a strong and courageous woman of "New China" rather than a virtuous Confucian woman from the "old society" as in the earlier ballad *Hua Mulan*. By doing so, Wu's version resonated with the gender roles of the contemporary time period, and appeared distinct and distanced from the Qing dynasty ballad.

6.1.3 Xu Lixian's new musical approach

While Wu contributed predominantly to the creation of the text, most of the actual musical content of *New Mulan Song* stemmed from his collaborator Xu. Many within the *tanci* community see Xu's musical approach in this ballad as innovative, a departure from traditional *tanci* style and from her own celebrated signature melody, the Li Tune (*Li diao*). As some have pointed out, with her performance of *New Mulan Song*, Xu's style changed from sounding "sad" and "weak" to "high-spirited" and "strong" (Wu 1996, 134).⁹² Moreover, some have gone as far as to say that Xu's performance of *New Mulan Song* expressed the exact opposite emotion as her old Li Tune (Wu 1996, 134).

Xu is thought to have first developed her Li Tune while performing the Middle-length Story *The Luohan Coin* (*Luo Hanqian*) in 1953 (Zhou 2002, 206). At this time, Xu's Li Tune was considered a "breakthrough" in *tanci* musical style due to the artists' decision to incorporate the 4th and 7th scale degrees, pitches commonly avoided in other performance styles. Xu's Li Tune also was considered innovative due to her frequent use of upward and downward sliding pitches, which were thought to particularly suit the female singing voice (Xia, 90). During the early to mid-1950s, Xu used her Li Tune primarily for performing ballads sung by tragic female characters such as the courtesans Du Shiniang in *Du Shiniang* and Ao Guiyin in *Wang Kui Breaks His Promise to Guiyin* (Wu 1996, 134). In both stories, the female protagonist

⁹² Wu additionally described Li's new style as sounding "open, free, strong, firm, and happy" (Wu 1996, 134).

commits suicide after being betrayed by her true love.⁹³ However, in order to portray the heroic female warrior Mulan, Xu made significant changes to her tune.

First, Xu decided to accompany herself on *sanxian* rather than *pipa*, as she had done in the past. During the 1950s, female artists typically played the *pipa* while male lead performers performed on the *sanxian*. As Wu Zongxi explained to me in 2006, Xu switched to *sanxian* because its rougher tone quality enabled her to more aptly depict the strength of Mulan through musical timbre, “Her thought was to bring out the strength in Hua Mulan and she decided that *pipa* was too ‘soft’ [*ruan*] but the *sanxian* could bring out the strength. And so she played it (*sanxian*) herself” (Wu 2006).⁹⁴

Xu also incorporated new accompaniment instruments including a bell (*ling*), which is played throughout the third section of the ballad, beginning at the end of line 30, “They come to greet the heroine.” According to Wu, the bell was incorporated in order to emphasize the happiness of Mulan’s return home (Wu 2006).⁹⁵ This instrument had not been used before in *tanci* performance. In a later performance, Wu and Xu additionally two *pipas*, a bass plucked *ruan*, and the two-stringed bowed *erhu* (Xia 1997, 138). She also employed a male vocal ensemble (sung by the instrumentalists) during the final section of the ballad to perform the text in which Mulan’s friends express their surprise after seeing her for the first time dressed as a woman (lines 44-46). As with the additional accompaniment instruments, incorporating this vocal ensemble was a new idea in *tanci*.

⁹³ In the first example, Du Shiniang’s true love sells her, unbeknownst to her, to a boat merchant. In the second story, Wang Kui breaks his engagement with Ao after passing the official examination in order to marry another (Wu 1996, 134).

⁹⁴ Wu also mentioned that Xu decided to play *sanxian* because it enabled her to incorporate some hand motions (Xia 1997, 138).

⁹⁵ Wu Zongxi claims that the idea to use the bell, in fact, originated from him.

In addition to her choice of accompaniment instruments, Xu approached the structure of the ballad in a new way. Instead of performing the ballad in one particular style, she divided the work into three musically distinct sections according to the three sections of the text: Mulan at home (lines 1-9), Mulan in battle (lines 10-28), and Mulan's return home (lines 29-47). She separated these sections with accompaniment music that differed from the interludes performed elsewhere in the ballad, serving as transitions to bridge the distinct sections. The first transition is performed between the first and second sections of the ballad (mm.84-93; see figure below).

(Why do I have to be a girl?)

9.wo zi hen___chai___huan shi nu___lang

84

acc. ♩=132

90 (She gets a whip from the Eastern market, a horse from the Western market)

10.dong shi chang bian xi shi___ma,

Figure 29: Transition between sections 1 and 2 of *New Mulan Song*

This interlude serves as a transition between two parts of the story: Mulan's discovery of the imperial order at home and Mulan's battle adventures. It also bridges two musically distinct sections. The first section is characterized by a consistent medium-fast tempo and medium loud dynamic level. The consistency of Xu's tempo in this first section is emphasized by instrumental interludes that separate each sung line, which as discussed in Chapter 2, is very typical usage in *tanci* ballads. The second section contrasts the consistency of the first through the use of heavy fluctuation in the tempo and large dynamic contrasts. This section is also performed at a tempo that is twice as fast as the first. The first instrumental transition (mm. 83-93) serves to connect the slower first section to the faster second section through the use of an accelerando.

The second transition occurs between the second and third sections of the ballad (mm. 306-315; see figure below).

Figure 30: Second transition, between sections 2 and 3 of *New Mulan Song*

Like the first transition, this interlude bridges two different parts of the text, Mulan's battle career and her return home. It also links the music of the second section, marked by numerous changes in tempo and dynamics, with the music of the third section, performed at a steady, fast tempo and medium loud dynamic level.

Another musical innovation introduced by Xu in this ballad was the use of bold tempo changes and dynamic contrasts in order to emphasize certain key words or phrases in the text. Although this concept has been widely adopted in other musical forms such as Western Art music, the idea was generally not stressed in *tanci*, where artists performed their signature tune for a variety of sung texts, and only incorporated subtle changes, usually to pitch only, to fit the tonal requirements of the text. Xu incorporated this approach to dynamics and tempo in the second section of the ballad, which describes Mulan's battle adventures.

One example of this technique can be seen in line 11. Here, she performs the first half of the line "Mulan wishes to change her dress" at a *forte* dynamic level followed by the phrase "into her father's war-robe," which she performs at a suddenly quieter dynamic level and slower

tempo. This contrast draws attention to the magnitude of Mulan's decision to take her father's place in the army.

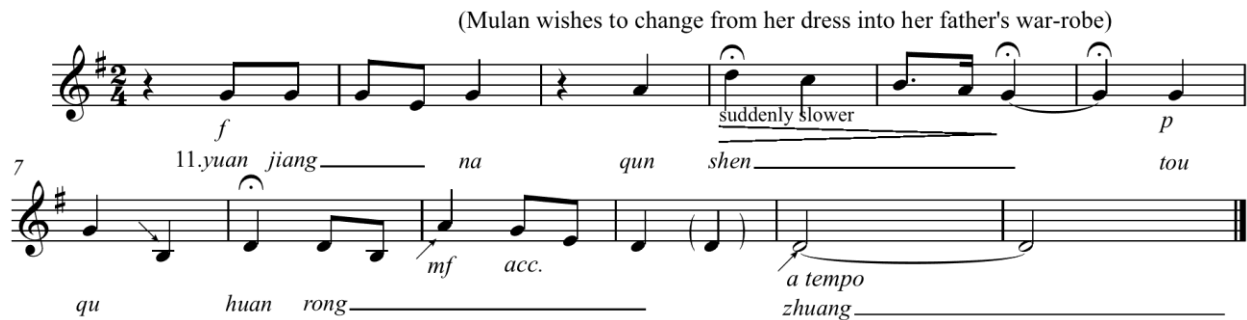


Figure 31: Line 11 in section 2 of *New Mulan Song*

During this sudden dynamic contrast, the instrumental accompaniment drops out so that the quietly sung text can be clearly heard. The use of sudden dynamic contrast to emphasize key words in the text can also be heard during the singing of lines 14, 21, 26, and 28.

Another instance where Xu created drama in the musical material to match the drama of the text is in line 12.

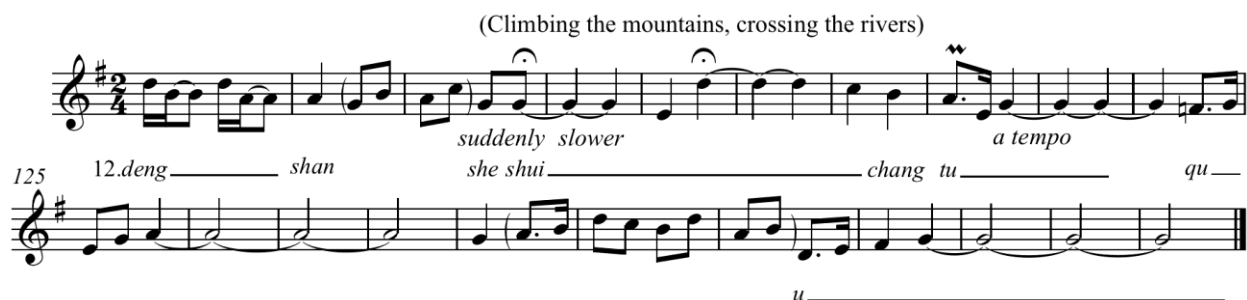


Figure 32: line 12 in section 2 of *New Mulan Song*

The text, “Climbing the mountains, crossing the rivers,” describes the vast lands Mulan sees during her wartime travels. Xu musically depicts the vastness of the lands through the use of long, extended notes, particularly on the words “rivers” (*shui*) and “travel” (*qu*). This is the only line in the ballad that contains notes that are held to this length. Later, in line 14, Xu uses a quiet dynamic level and low vocal register to depict the quiet atmosphere of the Yellow River during the early morning.

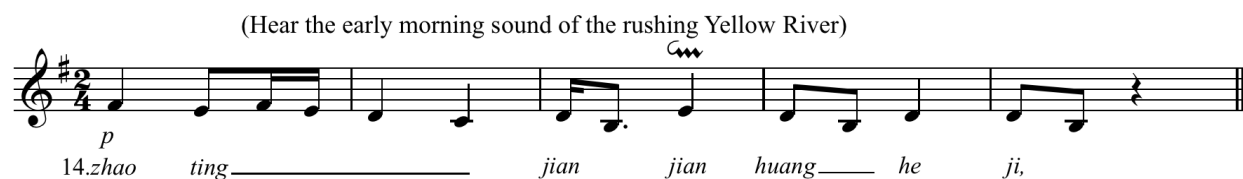


Figure 33: line 14 in section 2 of *New Mulan Song*

Why did Xu choose to take these new musical approaches? Although Xu rarely commented on her musical style, like so many artists during this time, she valued musical innovation. She reportedly once said, “The thing that [I] am most afraid of when developing a singing style (*liupai*) is not moving forward; I must continue to innovate and make breakthroughs” (Pan, 118). Her personal belief in innovation became expressed through her musical approach in *New Mulan Song* as well as many other new Opening Ballads composed during the early 1960s. Her approach was especially significant in *New Mulan Song* because she helped to create a new musical identity for the revised ballad text. In doing this, she broke with past musical conventions that stressed predictable structures and subtlety in dynamic and tempo changes. As one scholar explained the significance of Xu’s approach in the ballad, “(she) broke away from the old approach to rhythm and tempo” (SYX, 22).

6.1.4 Official input and the revision of *New Mulan Song*

Despite Wu and Xu’s efforts to distance the text and music of *New Mulan Song* from *tanci* past and to create a new contemporary identity for the ballad, the work faced critique from high-ranking Communist Party officials. In 1959, Xu performed the ballad for Premier Zhou Enlai, widely considered to be one of the most influential men during this 1949-1976 period of PRC history. Following her performance, Zhou approached Xu and told her that she performed a line from the second section, “Ten years has gone by before we reach victory” (line 22), too fast. Wu

paraphrased Zhou's critique, stating, "Hua Mulan is a woman from the age of feudalism, taking her father's place [in the army] was an incredible thing. Fighting in the army for ten years was really not easy. How much suffering and difficulty there was" (Wu 1997, 224).

At a later performance, several un-named leaders in art and literature circles also critiqued the ballad, and voiced in particular their belief that the ballad included too little about Mulan's military life. They also suggested that a few sentences be added to amend this problem (Wu 1997, 232). Initially, Wu had taken several lines from the original *The Ballad of Mulan* poem and edited them into four lines (lines 14, 15, 20, and 21), the text of which paints a general picture of Mulan's battle experiences. Lines 14 and 15 allude to the vast lands Mulan has seen through battle while lines 20 and 21 depict Mulan as recently returned from battle. However, following the arts leaders suggestions, Wu wrote four new lines (16-19) that not only described Mulan's battle adventures, but also specifically depicted Mulan as a warrior in battle (Tsao 1988, 100-102). This image is especially captured in lines 18 and 19, "Like wind and thunder, Mulan fights the invaders, Galloping on horseback, with long spear in hand." The addition of these lines was significant because the Qing dynasty ballad text contained no such direct reference to Mulan in battle.⁹⁶

Xu composed a new vocal melody and accompaniment part to complement these four lines of additional text. One significant musical addition was a percussive *pipa* technique incorporated after the phrase "the sound of the battle drum" in order to musically depict the sound of the battle drum. This technique consisted of a slap on the face of the instrument followed by vigorous strumming. In the figure below, two x's mark the slapping technique (m. 171 in the figure below) while three diagonal slash marks through the stem of the half note mark

⁹⁶ In the Qing dynasty ballad, only one line of the text generally references Mulan's battle adventures. [See Appendix B.2]

the vigorous strumming (mm.172-174). According to Wu, this technique “completely accomplished the (officials’) requirement to increase the feeling of battle” (Wu 1997, 224).

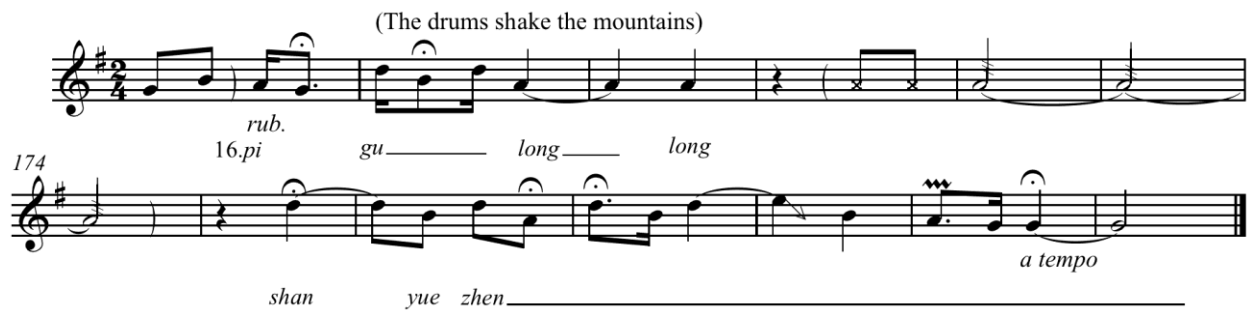


Figure 34: New *pipa* technique in line 16 of *New Mulan Song*

As seen above, both Zhou and the un-named cultural officials were concerned with the depiction of Mulan’s military career (section 2) rather than other parts of the heroine’s story, such as her return home. Their interest can be interpreted as a desire to see Mulan’s image as a female warrior strengthened rather than other representations, such as Mulan the dutiful daughter. The political leaders likely would have favored this “warrior” image over others due to its resonance with the national struggle for high production in industry and agriculture during the Great Leap Forward.

6.2 BUTTERFLY LOVES THE FLOWER: CREATING A *TANCI* RENDITION OF MAO’S POEM

While Wu and Xu collaborated to create *New Mulan Song*, another Shanghai performer, Zhao Kaisheng, composed a musical score for one of Mao Zedong’s poems, *Butterfly Loves the Flower* (*Butterfly*, hereafter).⁹⁷ At the time, Zhao’s composition was considered vastly innovative in its approach to vocal melody and instrument accompaniment due to the composer’s decision

⁹⁷ This poem is also known as *Reply to Li Shuyi* (*Da Li Shuyi*). *Butterfly Loves the Flower* is actually the name of the metrical form to which the poem should be sung.

to break with the conventions of “tune” (*diao*) and “interlude” (*guomen*) as typically employed in *tanci* music. When the young artist Yu Hongxian performed the work for high-ranking political leaders in May of 1959, the ballad drew immediate public attention, and soon became recognized throughout the country.

In this section, I provide a musical analysis of *Butterfly*, point out instances of Zhao’s musical innovation, and consider the relationship between the innovations and contemporary politics. Following this, I analyze conversations between Zhou Enlai and Yu Hongxian, as recalled by the artist. I investigate the impact of these exchanges on the ballad and also on the professional career of the artist, Yu. I preface these discussions with a brief overview of Mao’s poetry published in the late 1950s and mid-1960s.

6.2.1 Mao’s poem *Butterfly Loves the Flower*

In February of 1957, eighteen poems written by Mao appeared for the first time in the inaugural issue of the periodical *Poetry (Shikan)* (MacDougall 1997, 264).⁹⁸ The poems were written in the classical *ci* form,⁹⁹ a type of poetry that is thought to date as far back as the later Tang dynasty (Ng, 61). According to Hans Frankel, early *ci* were sung, but over time the melodies were forgotten. Despite this fact, *ci* poetry continued to be written following the tonal and rhyme patterns of the original melodies and bearing the name of the original song (Frankel, 216). Mao

⁹⁸ *Poetry* was published monthly during the years 1957-1964 (MacDougall 1997, 264).

⁹⁹ Bonnie MacDougall translates *ci* as “Lyric style of the song” (MacDougall 1997, 266).

followed this convention in his 1957 collection of *ci* poems by noting the designated poetic form before his own title.¹⁰⁰

Mao wrote *Butterfly Loves the Flower* on May 11, 1957 as a reply to Li Shuyi,¹⁰¹ the wife of his longtime friend Liu Zhixin. Li had originally written to Mao earlier in 1957, and sent him a poem she had composed in remembrance of her late husband Liu (Yu 2006).¹⁰² Mao was reportedly so moved by Li's poem that he sent a reply to her in the form of a poem he composed about Liu as well as his second wife Yang Kaihui. Both Liu and Yang were killed by the Nationalist Army during the early 1930s, and as a result, were considered martyrs in the early Communist "revolutionary struggle" (MacDougall 1997, 267).

Butterfly Loves the Flower

[Section 1]

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | I lost my proud Poplar and you your Willow, |
| 2 | Poplar and Willow soar to the Ninth Heaven. |
| | |
| 3 | Wu Gang, asked what he can give, |
| 4 | Serves them a laurel brew. |

[Section 2]

- | | |
|---|---|
| 5 | The lonely moon goddess spreads her ample sleeves |
| 6 | To dance for these loyal souls in infinite space. |

[Section 3]

- | | |
|---|---|
| 7 | Earth suddenly reports the tiger subdued, |
| 8 | Tears of joy pour forth falling as mighty rain. |
- (Foreign Languages Press 1976)

¹⁰⁰ Other poems that appeared in this publication include "Changsha," "Plum Blossoms" (*You Mei*), "16 Syllable Lyric" (*Shi Liu Zi*), "Swimming" (*You Yong*), and "Long March" (*Chang Zheng*) (Tay 1970).

¹⁰¹ Li also was a good friend of Mao's second wife Yang Kaihui (Yu 2006).

¹⁰² Li is thought to have originally composed this poem in 1933, following Liu's death (Zhang, 6).

In this poem, the character for “poplar” (*yang*) refers to Mao’s second wife Yang Kaihui while the character for “willow” (*liu*) refers to Li’s husband Liu Zhixin. Yang and Liu fly to the moon where they meet Chang E and Wu Gang, figures from the famous Chinese legend associated with Mid-Autumn Festival. Here, the two heavenly beings entertain their guests; Wu Gang serves them a drink while Chang E dances. In line 7, the tone of the poem changes due to Mao’s reference to the Communist army’s “subduing” of the Nationalist’s army (the “tiger”). In the final line of text, tears of joy that pour down on earth. The source of these tears is allegedly the heaven-bound Liu and Yang. Bonnie MacDougall interprets the poem as an ode to all the martyred couples of the Chinese Communist revolution, “...the poem begins: one husband and one wife stand for all the martyred couples of the long years of civil strife. It finishes on a triumphal note as the couple in heaven witness the defeat of the enemy” (MacDougall 1997, 267).

6.2.2 Composing ballad music for *Butterfly Loves the Flower*

One year following the initial publication of Mao’s poetry, Zhao Kaisheng (b. 1936) decided to adapt *Butterfly* for *tanci* performance. Although originally from Changshu, a town north of Shanghai, Zhao began studying the art form in Shanghai with the famous performer Zhou Yunrei at the young age of fourteen. At sixteen, Zhao began his professional career by performing the traditional story *Pearl Pagoda* with Yao Yicheng (Wu 1996, 202). In the late 1950s, Zhao became involved with composing several new, contemporary works including *Butterfly Loves the Flower* (1958) and the Full-length Story *Song of the Youth* (*Qingchun Zhi Ge*) (1959). Both works attracted attention from the press and Party officials, such as Chen Yun, due to their high-profile and political subject matters.

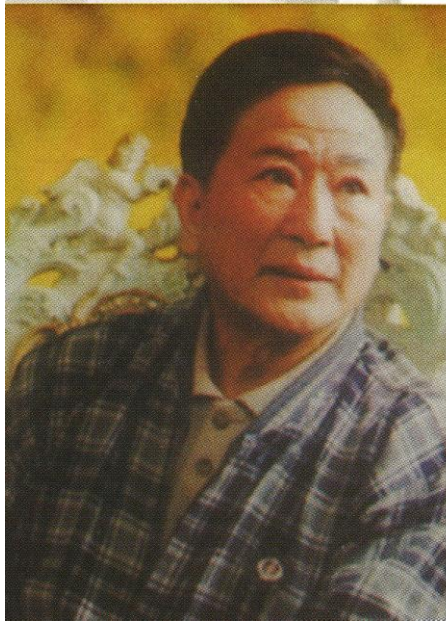


Figure 35: Zhao Kaisheng, pictured in 2004 (ZW 2004)

In his musical adaptation of *Butterfly*, Zhao approached the vocal melody in a way that differed greatly from past practice in *tanci*. First, he composed the melody based on a number of different tunes, instead of one tune as typically was practiced in the past (Yu 2006). In a 2004 interview, Zhao described his composition process, including the different tunes that he chose, and how he combined them:

Starting with the first line, I used the Jiang Tune as the base along with the singing method of the Li Tune. I sang this until the line “Poplar and Willow soar to the Ninth Heaven” where (I thought that) a slow melody tempo was not suitable, so I used a fast paced Shen Tune and Xie Tune (to sing this line). When Wu Gang appears, I imagined him as a pretty rugged worker, so I used the Chen Tune to produce a rich sound. I think this is right for depicting Wu Gang.
(Huang 2004)

As seen in the text above, Zhao believed that using a composite of musical tunes would enable him to better express specific words in the ballad’s text.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ In addition to employing several tunes, Zhao also claimed to have incorporated musical sources from outside of *tanci* including popular song and Peking Opera (Huang 2004).

Zhao also approached other musical aspects uniquely, avoiding the stylized melodic and rhythmic patterns that typified ballad singing in favor of sharp contrasts of pitch, dynamic levels, and tempo. These contrasts can especially be seen through a comparison of the second (lines 5 and 6) and third (lines 7 and 8) sections of the poem (see figure below).¹⁰⁴

Section 2

(The lonely Chang E waves her long sleeve,)

5. Ji mo Chang E shu guang

8 (She dances through the heavens for the loyal souls,)

6. Wang li chang kong qie wei zhong gui wu

15 ah ah

Transition

Section 3

22 *p* *acc.* *ff*

7. hu bao

28 (Suddenly, there was a report of a hidden tiger among the people,)

p *f* *mf*

ren jian zeng ceng fu hu 8. Lei

34 (Tears fly suddenly like a downpour,)

mf *f* *mf*

fei dun zuo qing pen yu

38 *f*

yu

Figure 36: Lines 5-8 of *Butterfly Loves the Flower*

As seen in the transcription above, the vocal range of the second section is, in general, much lower than the third section. The second section actually contains the lowest note of the piece, B-flat below middle 'C' (m.2), while the third section contains the highest note, A-flat

¹⁰⁴ See Appendix D.4 for an entire transcription of the ballad.

above the staff (m.39). Also, the second section is, in general, more subdued than the third section due to its *legato* texture, *andante* tempo (eighth note= 65 BPM), and moderately loud dynamic level. In contrast, the third section is much more animated (marked by staccatos and trills), with a fluctuating tempo, and performed at a dynamic level that ranges between loud and very loud. Such strong contrasts in dynamic level, tempo, and texture were seldom heard in *tanci* music performed prior to this, since, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, subtlety characterized ballads performed in the style of one tune only.

In addition to the vocal melody, Zhao also adopted an innovative approach to the instrumental accompaniment of *Butterfly*. As in Xu's arrangement of *New Mulan Song*, Zhao chose to employ a small ensemble, which included *pipa*, *sanxian*, *ruan* (bass plucked lute), *erhu* (two-stringed fiddle), *ling* (bells), and *gu* (drum). Later, the *guzheng* (zither), *yangqin* (hammer dulcimer), and additional *erhu* were added to this ensemble. According to Yu Hongxian who later performed the work, the large ensemble was believed to facilitate emotional expression better than the traditional instrumentation of *pipa* and *sanxian* (2006). For example, she explained that the addition of bells and drum in the second stanza helped create the image of the heavenly being Chang E dancing (Yu 2006). However, the artists also viewed the larger ensemble as carrying political significance. As Yu explained, "Adding this many instruments, at that time we thought it was very revolutionary. The older generation was only accustomed to *pipa* and *sanxian* because they thought that is what *pingtan* is" (2006).

In addition to the instrumentation, Zhao also took a new approach in composing the accompaniment music. In particular, he avoided the typical melodic and rhythmic patterns played during the instrumental interludes. Instead, he treated the accompaniment performed

between the lines as transitions between distinct sections of the poem.¹⁰⁵ For example, the accompaniment played between lines 4 and 5 of the text (mm. 35-40) serves as a transition from the moderato tempo of the first stanza to the slower andante tempo of the second stanza (see figure below).

Figure 37 shows a musical score for the transition between lines 4 and 5 of the poem "Butterfly Loves the Flower". The score is written in 4/4 time and key of B-flat major. It consists of two staves. The first staff begins at measure 35 with a tempo marking of 128. The lyrics for this section are: "4. Wu Gang brought out the sweet-smelling osmanthus wine, (Wu Gang brought out the sweet-smelling osmanthus wine,)". The melody is a simple, flowing line. The second staff begins at measure 40 with a tempo marking of 100. The lyrics for this section are: "5. Ji mo Chang E waves her long sleeve, (The lonely Chang E waves her long sleeve,)". The melody is more complex, with a "rit." (ritardando) marking at the end of the staff. The overall effect is a transition from a faster tempo to a slower one.

Figure 37: Instrument transition between lines 4 and 5 of *Butterfly Loves the Flower*

This instrumental portion separating lines 6 and 7 functions similarly. This interlude (mm. 59-64) transitions from the much quieter and lyrical melody of the second stanza to the much louder and animated third stanza (see figure below).

¹⁰⁵ The instrumental part between lines 2 and 3 is an exception. This part functions more like a traditional interlude.

(She dances through the heavens for the loyal souls,)

6.Wang li ——— chang ——— kong ——— qie wei —zhong gui wu ———

52

ah ——— ah ———

59

p *acc.*

64

(Suddenly, there was a report of a hidden tiger among the people,)

ff *p*

7.hu bao ——— ren ——— jian zeng —ceng fu hu

Figure 38: Instrument transition between lines 6 and 7 of *Butterfly Loves the Flower*

What motivated Zhao to take such a bold departure from traditional *tanci* musical style? Several years after he composed *Butterfly*, news reports politicized Zhao’s musical innovations in the work, portraying his unique compositional approach as stemming from a desire to “break free” from the confines of traditional *tanci* melody conventions. One 1961 article stated that Zhao chose an innovative approach to vocal melody after several unsuccessful attempts using traditional *tanci* tunes, particularly the Jiang and Xie Tunes (Zhu 1961). According to the article, it was only after Zhao studied Mao’s 1942 Yenan Talks that he “understood that copying and imitating in literature is a worthless way to do things, so his thoughts were open and he decided to break away from *pingtan* melodies and rearrange them according to his own understanding” (Zhu 1961).

In a 2004 interview, Zhao confirmed the stance taken in the 1961 article, stating that he intentionally broke with *tanci* music conventions and that Mao thought had played a role in his decision. Here, he explained that Mao’s phrase “whoever doesn’t accept criticism completely is the least worthy cultural worker” (*meiyou piping jieshou shi zui meiyou chixi de wenyi gongzuo*

de) inspired him to adopt an unconventional approach to ballad music. As Zhao described his approach in the ballad, “I broke all of the singing style (*liupai*) melodies. I did not care about them” (Huang 2004). As seen through the above quotes, considered the old approach to composing ballad music inappropriate for Mao’s poem, and as a result, broke with established musical conventions to create a bold, new sound thought to better match the revolutionary spirit of the poem and era.

6.2.3 Meeting Zhou Enlai

In May of 1959, Shanghai performer Yu Hongxian (b. 1939) performed *Butterfly* for several highly ranked leaders of the Chinese Communist Party including Chen Yi,¹⁰⁶ Chen Yun, and Zhou Enlai. This high-profile performance not only played a pivotal role in Yu’s subsequent performances of the work, but also stimulated the career of the young performer (Yu 2006). Yu, who was originally from Hangzhou in nearby Zhejiang province, began studying the art form with Zui Nisheng in 1952 (Yu, B). Two years later, when she was seventeen, Yu began performing the traditional story *Pair of Pearled Phoenixes* (*Shuang Zhu Feng*) in Shanghai story houses (Yu, B). In 1958, she joined the Red Flag Pingtan Troupe (*Hong Qi Pingtantuan*), and the following year, Yu transferred to the Shanghai Changzheng Pingtan Troupe (*Shanghai Changzheng Pingtantuan*). It was not until 1960, after Yu’s first performance of *Butterfly*, that she was recruited to join the prestigious Shanghai City Pingtan Troupe. Following this during the early 1960s, Yu became well known for performing *tanci* renditions of Mao poems, called

¹⁰⁶ Chen Yi was the Mayor of Shanghai. He also served as the Foreign Minister of the PRC after 1958.

Mao Zedong Poem Ballads (*Mao Zedong Shici*) including *Butterfly*, *Plum Blossoms (You Mei)* and *Sixteen Syllable Prose (Shiliuzi Sanshou)*.



Figure 39: Yu Hongxian, pictured in 2004 (Wang 2004, vi)

As Yu explained to me during a 2006 interview, it was not merely the attendance of these high-ranking officials at the 1959 concert that most impacted Yu, but particularly her conversation with Zhou Enlai following the concert:

It was May of 1959, in the conference room at the Jingjiang Hotel, and all the Central Party leaders were having a conference in Shanghai. Every time these Central (Party) leaders came to Shanghai for a conference, *pingshan* always was a requested performance. They liked *pingshan*, especially Chen Yun. He brought Chen Yi. These old leaders all came to hear *pingshan*. It just so happened that in 1958, we created *Butterfly Loves the Flower* so they decided to include it in this performance. They told me that I have to perform it well for all these important people. Chen Yun had heard our performance before, and we knew him, but it was the first time we performed for Zhou Enlai. And we were very excited....I was put first on the program. Our troupe leader had a lot of confidence in me to put me as the opening piece. (He said) "I'll have you sing first to leave a good impression." But Premier Zhou was still in a meeting. We began at 7:15 pm, and (at that time) Zhou Enlai had still not arrived. Chen Yun heard it [*Butterfly*] first and was very impressed... Later, Chen Yun told Zhou Enlai that *pingshan* had this work, *Butterfly Loves the Flower*, so the troupe leader told us not to leave and to

perform this work again at the end of the concert. So we stayed until the end. We were very excited.
(Yu 2006)

After the performance, Zhou approached Yu, and complimented the young artist on her performance. He also talked to her about the history and meaning of the poem, and offered some artistic criticism as well. Specifically, Zhou expressed concern with Yu's artistic interpretation of the last line of text: "Tears of joy pour forth falling as mighty rain." He said that the "falling tears" should be interpreted as happy rather than sad. As Yu explained:

It [the weeping] is happiness because it results from the overturning of the "three big mountains,"¹⁰⁷ and the overturning of the Jiang family dynasty to establish a new country. When they [Liu and Yang] saw the celebration on Tiananmen Square with the red flags and people, and Chairman Mao announced the establishment of the People's Republic of China, this news went up to the moon palace, where these martyrs saw this exciting event. They were also very excited and happy, [and said] "We were not able to accomplish the goal, but our comrades have accomplished it. How can we not be excited and happy?"
(Yu 2006)

Following this explanation, Zhou suggested that Yu omit a stylized hand gesture that she had performed to illustrate this last line of text, the wiping of tears from her eyes. Yu described why she had originally incorporated this gesture:

I thought that if you're crying, you would need to make this movement and I thought it was beautiful. But that was a simplistic understanding. He [Zhou Enlai] said not to make this movement because it was a very proud emotion. "You have already expressed emotion in your voice but you just need to get rid of this movement. Next time when I come, I will come hear this again." And he said, "I'll watch to see if you make this movement again."
(Yu 2006)

¹⁰⁷ The "three big mountains" (*san zuo da shan*) refers to the three "oppressive elements" of feudalistic society.

In addition to commenting on the final line of text, Zhou also suggested that Yu try to sound more “cool and objective” when performing the first line, “I lost my proud Poplar and you your Willow” (Yu 2006).¹⁰⁸

To a Western observer, this incident might be interpreted as an instance when a political leader overstepped his area of expertise. However, throughout Chinese history, there has been a close tie between political rule and music. This connection was especially close due to the fact that many emperors were highly educated in the arts.¹⁰⁹ During the 1950s and 60s period, this connection between the arts and politics was intensified when the arts and artists were given a new political purpose under Chinese Communism. As a result, high-ranking politicians such as Zhou Enlai, Mao, and his wife Jiang Qing took an active role in guiding the creative direction of certain Chinese art forms including *tanci*, poetry, and Peking Opera. As Chin explains, “The Chinese Communist elite regard themselves as having a paternal role over the masses” (Chin, 57). In this case, Zhou’s own personal interest in the arts plus his political standing led him to offer artistic advice to Yu.

The meeting with the high profile leader significantly impacted the young performer and her subsequent performances of the work. Yu incorporated the several changes suggested by Zhou in subsequent performances (Yu 2006). She also claimed that Zhou’s comments gave her a new artistic perspective of the work, “After the explanation by the Premier, when I sung it

²⁰¹ The conversation described above is only one instance when Zhou offered artistic advice to Yu. At another point, he encouraged her and other *tanci* performers to adapt other Mao poems for *tanci* performance (Yu 2006). As a result, Yu composed music for two additional poems *Plum Blossom* (Bu Suan Zi: You Mei) and *Three Short Poems* (Shi Liuzi: Ling San Shou). As in the case of *Butterfly*, Zhou gave Yu artistic feedback on her performances of these works (Yu 2006).

¹⁰⁹ For example, see Perris 1983 (12).

again, my understanding was completely different” (Yu 2006).¹¹⁰ Yu, in fact, suggested that her conversation with Zhou was so significant that it served to distinguish her performance of the work from others, stating, “This is the reason why my performance is different from the others. It is because the Premier personally explained the poem to me in detail.” (Yu 2006)

Following the 1959 performance, Yu and *Butterfly* grew in recognition. During the early 1960s, the ballad won a National Art Song of the Masses (*Yishu Qunzhong Gequ*) Competition. Following this, Yu performed *Butterfly* at several prestigious events including the Shanghai Spring Festival Concert. The work was also orchestrated and performed by Yu with the Shanghai Symphony and Choir (Yu 2006). However, performances of the popular ballad ended in 1964 when it is believed that Mao’s wife Jiang Qing’s personal disdain for the poem led her make the public statement, “*Pingtan* is the ‘sound of hopelessness.’ If you listen to it, you will die.” According to Yu, Jiang even prohibited Mao from listening to the artist’s performance of *Butterfly* on one occasion (Yu 2006). This statement coupled with the strong emphasis on contemporary plays at the Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes led to the eventual stopping of all *tanci* performances in 1964. *Butterfly* was not sung again until after the Cultural Revolution when Yu performed it for the 1977 movie “Spring” (*Chuntian*), which celebrated the “springtime” flourishing of the arts after the destruction of the Gang of Four (Yu 2006).

¹¹⁰ It is thought that Zhou’s comments also inspired Zhou Yunrei, who was the teacher of Zhao Kaisheng, to revise the instrumental transition after line four (into Section 2). Zhou Yunrei believed that the original transition was “too simple and straightforward” so he helped Yu and Zhao write a part that he believed was more “beautiful and expressive” (Yu 2006).

6.3 ARTISTIC AGENCY AND POLITICAL CONFORMITY

This chapter has explored the relationship between artistic freedom and political control in ballad composition during the 1950s and 1960s. The ballads *New Mulan Song* and *Butterfly Loves the Flower* differ from the other repertoire examined in this dissertation in that political interference did not factor prominently into the composition process. Rather, it was during the performance that State officials intervened and directly influenced these ballads.

In the case of *New Mulan Song*, Zhou Enlai and other arts leaders encouraged Wu and Xu to make several revisions in order to strengthen the depiction of Mulan as a female warrior. When Yu Hongxian performed *Butterfly Loves the Flower*, Zhou Enlai instructed the young artist to remove a certain hand gesture that indicated sadness. Due to Zhou's high Party ranking, his advice to the *tanci* artists was viewed with political authority. It represented the official viewpoint of the State, and as a result, carried a degree of coercive power. However, as noted earlier, it is possible that Zhou's comments stemmed from a genuine personal interest in the art form, and that he did not intend for them to be interpreted solely in terms of politics.

Despite the leaders' intentions, in both cases, the artists were under the impression that they must comply with the officials' suggestions and make the required changes. As a result, Wu added several new lines depicting Mulan in battle, and Xu wrote new music for this section of text. In the case of *Butterfly Loves the Flower*, Yu Hongxian removed the hand gesture in question, and later embarked on *tanci* adaptations of other Mao poems. In making these changes, the artists' articulated their support for political authority, a support that can be interpreted as their tacit "consent" to the hegemony of the State.

However, the innovative musical approaches taken in the composition of both ballads illustrate a different type of artistic response to the State. In *New Mulan Song*, Xu modified her

old performance style, the Li Tune, through incorporating nontraditional accompaniment instrumentation, matching tempo to the action in the ballad's text, and using dynamic contrast to emphasize the dramatic action in the text. In *Butterfly Loves the Flower*, Zhao developed an altogether new musical approach to ballad composition by breaking with the established conventions of "tune" and "interlude," creating a unique melody based on a number of pre-existing sources, and treating instrumental interludes as transitions between distinct sections of the ballad. Like Xu, Zhao manipulated tempo, dynamics, and even texture to help stress certain dramatic moments of the text.

In both ballads, the composers were intentional about their new musical approaches. They wanted to create new music that differed from music of *tanci* past and that enhanced the dramatic expression of their politically significant texts. Yet, as seen in the previous chapters, neither Xu nor Zhao were specifically instructed by the State to do so. Unlike the actual performance of these ballads, musical composition received little to no official oversight. Xu and Zhao were allowed freedom, or autonomy, in their musical compositions, and as a result, they took bold approaches to the composition of ballad music.

Their individual decisions to compose "new" music can be understood as an expression of their active consent to the official discourse surrounding the arts despite the fact that the performers were relatively free to compose as they saw fit. That is, political coercion seemed to play a relatively minor role in their decision to musically innovate. This raises the question, can these artistic decisions be placed within the framework of hegemony or do they fall outside the bounds of this theory? After all, the artists demonstrated a large degree of agency, or power, through their creative decisions. Sherry Ortner has defined agency as "a form of empowerment, a source and effect of power" (1999, 147).

I propose that Zhao's and Xu's innovative compositional approaches be viewed as "teetering on the edge" of Gramsci's theory. Although through their ballad compositions the performers demonstrated incredible artistic agency, they could not fully escape the coercive political environment in which they composed. Their musical compositions somehow seemed to simultaneously both affirm the State's hegemonic rule, and assert the performers' own power as artists.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This dissertation has explored the relationship between artistic freedom and political control in the stories and ballads of Suzhou *tanci* that were composed, revised, and performed between 1949 and 1964. Through analyzing specific works and the socio-political context surrounding their creation, I have outlined the various means by which the State influenced *tanci* creative activity as well as the performers creative responses to these efforts. From this study, several conclusions may be drawn regarding this relationship between artists and the State.

1. The State influenced creative activity in *tanci* in two general ways: through direct contact between high-ranking Party officials and artists, and indirectly through the socio-political context in which the artists composed. As seen through the revision of *Jade Dragonfly* (Chapter 4) and the composition of the ballads *New Mulan Song* and *Butterfly Loves the Flower* (Chapter 6), the State directly intervened in the creative process at times when high-ranking Party leaders, such as Chen Yun and Zhou Enlai, offered artistic advice and suggestions to performers. Although these officials might have been genuinely interested in *tanci* and well intentioned in their offering of advice, their comments had a coercive effect on the performers due to Chen's and Zhou's high political ranking, and the artists were motivated to comply with the officials' suggestions, resulting in revised ballad texts, music, and performance styles.

In other instances, the State had a more indirect influence on artistic activity, particularly as political forces in the performers' surrounding social environment coerced them into

composing or revising in a way that reflected current politics. This type of indirect influence can be seen in the composition of *Huai River* (Chapter 5), when the tense socio-political atmosphere of the early 1950s necessitated that Shanghai performers' compose a new story based on their recent experiences at the Huai River Basin.

The State also indirectly influenced *tanci* through official directives written for the dramatic arts. Great political attention was given to the dramatic arts throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and in particular Peking opera. Because of this, it was natural for *tanci* performers to look towards trends in composition and revision as they indicated the State's most current attitude towards the performing arts. By mirroring these trends, *tanci* artists could avoid learn from the "mistakes" in drama, and thus avoid political critique such as faced by certain actors and playwrights. Both these direct and indirect political influences served to communicate the dominant political ideology to performers. Because this ideology originated from the State, who also employed the artists, it had a coercive effect on their composition and revision projects.

2. The performers responded to this hegemonic ideology in two general ways. First, they consented to these political influences by composing and revising story text in a way that upheld contemporary politics, in general, and also supported the State's fluctuating policies towards the dramatic arts. For example, as seen through the revision of *Jade Dragonfly* (Chapter 4), the performers responded to official directives by removing all material thought to be politically unsuitable from traditional repertoire, and rewriting the stories as critiques of feudal society. As illustrated in Chapter 5, performers responded to political slogans and trends in the dramatic arts by writing new stories and ballads based on contemporary themes of martyrs and heroes, tales of just punishment for evil members of feudal society, and stories that served to educate listeners about values of the Communist Party.

A second, more nuanced response can be seen through the Shanghai performer's composition of new ballad music. As seen in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, Jiang, Xu, and Zhao composed new music in order to increase the dramatic expression of the new and revised ballad texts. Their decisions to compose this new music can be understood as their “consent” to the ideas of the State, as represented in ballad texts. Yet, there was nothing passive about the artists’ musical compositions. In fact, the artists expressed incredible initiative in their bold compositional style by manipulating pre-existing performance styles, or “tunes,” in ways that had not been attempted prior to 1949. How can these artists’ musical responses be understood in terms of the theoretical framework introduced at the beginning of this study?

In Chapter 1, I suggested that artistic response in *tanci* be considered in terms of points on a continuum, falling between the extremes, or endpoints, of active consent and active dissent. Active consent refers to an active acceptance to the ideas of the State and is related to the process of maintaining hegemony, while active dissent refers to an active refusal of these ideas, and is related to the process of counter-hegemony. Below, I have reconstructed the figure with new graphics to represent the two types of artistic response as seen through this study.

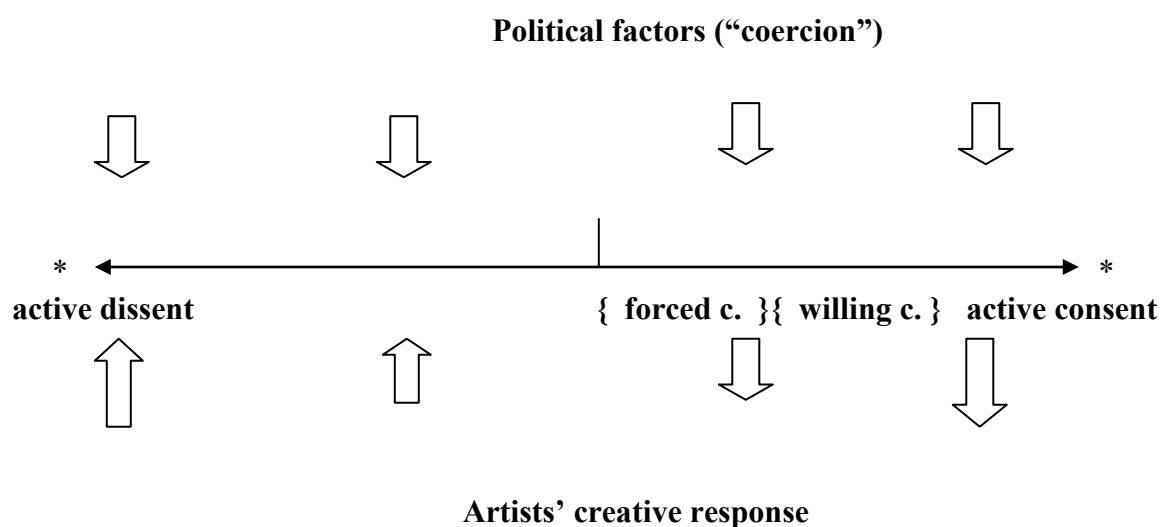


Figure 40: New spectrum of artistic response

In the figure above, I have placed the *tanci* artists' creative responses all on the "consent" side of the spectrum, falling somewhere between the mid-line and the end point of active consent. This is due to the fact that in all instances examined in this study, the performers outwardly conformed to the political factors, and did not reject these ideas in their creative works.

Rather, through their compositions and revisions they articulated varying degrees of consent. As Femia notes of Gramsci's conception of consent, "...assuming that consent refers to a mental disposition, there are weaker and stronger, more passive and more active senses and forms of it" (38). I have coined the terms "forced consent" and "willing consent" to differentiate the varying degrees to which the performers complied with political ideology through their artistic activity.

I use the term "forced consent" to refer to instances when performers were more or less forced to make certain artistic decisions (see "forced c." in the figure above). In this dissertation, there are two types of scenarios that I classify as "forced consent." The first scenario includes instances when artists revised stories or ballads because political leaders had specifically instructed them to do so. As seen in Chapter 6, arts leaders told Xu and Wu to create additional ballad text about Mulan's battle experiences. Due to the higher ranking of the officials, Wu and Xu had no choice but to comply with their instructions. Similarly, when Zhou Enlai told Yu that she should omit a hand gesture used to indicate sadness from her performance of *Butterfly Loves the Flower*, the young artist had no choice but to comply with the Party leader's suggestion. Both Zhou's high political rank as well as his reminder that he would attend her subsequent performances forced Yu to omit the gesture in question.

The second scenario that I classify as "forced consent" includes instances when performers made certain artistic decisions in regards to the text or ballad music because their

surrounding social environment necessitated that they take these steps. As seen in Chapter 5, the politically tense atmosphere of the early 1950s had a coercive effect on the Shanghai performers, and led to a creative environment in which they had no other choice but to compose a politically charged new story based on their recent experiences at the Huai River Basin. However, unlike the scenarios described above, the Shanghai performers were not held directly accountable to political officials for every creative decision they made in the new story. Rather, the details of story and ballad composition were left to the collective group of Shanghai performers.

In both scenarios, coercive measures or environments stimulated the artists' creative decisions, and they made changes out of the fear of being sanctioned. These instances of "forced consent" may also be thought of in terms of Femia's "conformity through coercion," in which one conforms because of the fear of the consequences of non-conformity (38). To account for the differing degrees of "forced-ness," or coercion, as represented in these two types of scenarios, I have placed the term "forced consent" within brackets on the spectrum. By doing this, I recognize that in some instances performers were given more creative freedom while in other situations political coercion played a larger role in creative decisions. Because of this, the term "forced consent" may be thought to represent a range of possible responses, including those not considered in this dissertation.

I use the term "willing consent" to refer to times when performers responded to political factors with more personal initiative, and seemed to willingly make artistic changes (see "willing c." in the figure above). I have classified one basic scenario as "willing consent," when performers independently responded to various political factors in their social environment through the composition of new ballad music based on their own personal ideas. One example of this is when Jiang decided to perform his Jiang Tune at a faster tempo in *Staying for the New*

Year (Chapter 5). He independently made this decision in order to accomplish certain goals of musical expression, to better match the ballad's text and to express the mechanical sounds associated with dam construction. Another example is when Zhao composed a unique melody for *Butterfly Loves the Flower* (Chapter 6), one that was characterized by large contrasts of melody, rhythm, texture and dynamics. He independently made the decision to break with *tanci* conventions of "interlude" and "tune" in order to compose an unconventional and bold melody for the poem written by Mao Zedong.

In both of the examples above, the performers composed new ballad music not because they feared the consequences of non-conformity, but because they seemed to believe that the demands for conformity were legitimate. Femia explains this type of consent in Gramsci's thought as:

...arising from some degree of *conscious attachment* to, or *agreement* with, certain core elements of the society. This type of assenting behaviour, which may or may not relate to a perceived interest, is bound up with the concept of "legitimacy," with a belief that the demands for conformity are more or less justified and proper (38).

Although it is nearly impossible to isolate the many subconscious reasons behind the performers' decision to innovate their musical approach, on the surface, the performers seemed to initiate changes in ballad music based on their own genuine desire to do so.¹¹¹ However, because I realize that some performers, including those not discussed in this dissertation, might have internally been less enthusiastic, or even reluctant, in making musical changes, I have placed the term "willing consent" within brackets on the spectrum above. This is to account for the possible varying degrees of "willingness" that a performer might have experienced.

¹¹¹ This is my personal interpretation based on what is known about the Shanghai performers and their ballad compositions.

In Chapter 6, I described Zhao's and Xu's musical approaches as teetering on the edge of Gramsci's theory of hegemony. On the one hand, they seem to be expressions of the most active type of "willing consent," in which the artist articulates his or her belief that the demands for conformity to the dominant ideology are justified. However, they also may be interpreted as expressions of the artists' agency, in which the artist, rather than the State, becomes the empowered. The spectrum I have created does not attempt to account for this subtlety of artistic response. Future scholarship could amend this figure so that it applies to broader concepts of power and agency as it relates to musical composition.

This study of politics and *tanci* artists' creative activity of the 1950s and 1960s is important because it calls for a more nuanced examination of this notion of "consent" from Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Although scholars agree that there are many "shades" and "degrees" of consent, Gramsci did not clearly specify and identify these nuances in his writings (Femia, 40). This study also introduces the concept of "agency," or empowerment, to Gramsci's theory, which is something the theorist stopped short of engaging in his discussion of consent. My research builds on the work of other ethnomusicologists who have stressed that music is a medium through which artists may be empowered in an otherwise disempowering situations.¹¹²

This study also raises three points of significance to Chinese music scholarship as well as broader studies of music and politics. First, it shows that while the State was very concerned with controlling the political views expressed in story and ballad texts, it appeared to be less interested in controlling the political views as expressed in ballad music. This can be seen in the instances where political officials freely commented on aspects relating to performance of ballad texts, yet refrained from addressing the artists' musical approach. I propose that this particular

¹¹² See Moulin 1994, Wong 1994 and 2004, Lau 1996, and Perullo 2003.

response, or lack of response, did not stem from the State's lack of concern with the political content of *tanci* music. Rather, due to the very nature of music, it was more difficult for the State to isolate the political content of the music, and as a result, they spent little effort in trying to control the musical composition of the ballads.

As ethnomusicologists have shown, musical meaning by nature is less specific than meaning projected by words.¹¹³ A particular musical work may project several meanings at one time. These meanings can change over time, and are open to subjective interpretation by different people, in different places, and in different contexts. As a result, it is more difficult to pinpoint and control political views as expressed solely in music. As Rice has noted of the Communist government's attempt to control music in Bulgaria, "...the meaning of music is too elusive for even the totalitarian states to control" (2001, 35). This "elusive" quality of music may explain why the State appeared to be less interested in controlling the political content of *tanci* ballad music during the 1950s and 1960s; it could not clearly identify it.

Secondly, this study shows that political compliance in story texts, generally afforded performers more artistic freedom. Lau (1995) has also recognized this phenomena in his study of Chinese *dizi* musicians during the 1950s and 60s. In particular, by "superimposing" the Party's rhetoric on the music of their choice, the *dizi* musicians engaged themselves in the political discourse of the State (1995, 138). As a result, their status as musicians within the political hierarchy was validated, their jobs security was guaranteed, and most importantly, they were assured the room to "interpret and express their personal ideas in music" (1995, 138). In other

¹¹³ I do not delve into a discussion of music and meaning here since other ethnomusicologists have written extensively on the topic. See Clayton 2001 and Rice 2001 for more extensive discussions on the topic.

words, the *dizi* musicians chose to place their artistic works within the framework of official discourse in order to gain more artistic freedom.

Like the *dizi* musicians, I believe that some *tanci* artists chose to write and compose in a way that supported official State ideology in order to gain more artistic freedom. This intention can especially be seen in public comments made by Jiang and Zhao where they clearly distinguished their new musical approach from *tanci* music of the past, and instead, linked it to the rhetoric of new communist society. Their public statements not only served to validate their status as revolutionary artists, but also allowed the artists more freedom to compose according to their personal tastes.

Thirdly, this study illustrates instances in which the dominant State ideology not only encouraged artists to innovate, but also created an environment that brought out this characteristic in certain artists that were pre-disposed to innovating ballad music. As stressed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, political slogans such as “push out the old to bring forth the new” encouraged artists to revise old stories and write new stories. Using traditional *tanci* “tunes” as the basis for composing new ballad music was a natural continuation of this process. In addition, a number of artists felt motivated to boldly innovate their musical performance styles due to their aesthetic view that innovation was “good” and “positive.” As Lau has shown in his study of *dizi* musicians, many artists shared this aesthetic view during the 1950s and 1960s due to the Chinese Communist Party’s emphasis of this concept in their attitude towards traditional culture (1991, 181). This political environment, while posing challenges to some artists, created a space for Jiang, Xu, and Zhao, three Shanghai *tanci* artists who were pre-disposed to musical innovation, to experiment with ballad music.

This study only provides a starting point for examining musical innovation in *tanci*. Future research could address the effect of the previous generations' musical innovations on contemporary performance styles, since many of the musical styles created during the 1950s and 1960s are still performed today though much of the repertoire is not. A study with such a contemporary focus would allow for increased dialogue with artists about their personal conceptions of and approaches to musical style, something that is somewhat lacking in this study due to its historical focus. Future studies might also explore the state of stories and ballads that were created and revised during the 1950s and 1960s and are still performed today, such as *Jade Dragonfly* and *New Mulan Song*. How many of these works resemble their post-1949 counterparts and how many have undergone subsequent revisions? If they have been revised, what ideologies or principles have guided their revisions, and how are they viewed amongst contemporary audiences?

As shown above, “revolutionary” music is not a simple by-product of totalitarian political conditions. Rather, it is carefully crafted, imbued with layers of meaning, and shaped by a number of artistic perspectives, personal motivations, and political views. Through musical and socio-cultural analysis, scholars can uncover these layers, and learn about the different perspectives and values that shaped these works. By studying traditional music that has engaged with political rhetoric, including some that has been labeled as “propagandistic” in nature, scholars can gain greater insight into the musical styles, compositional process, and even aesthetic values of a particular period. Ethnomusicologists can serve an important role of bringing artists, or human agents, back into the discussion of politicized art. By doing this, studies of politics and arts avoid simplistic, one-dimensional discussions of power, and instead address the complexities and nuances that characterize power relationships in the arts.

GLOSSARY

<i>Baihua qifang</i>	百花齐放
<i>baishi</i>	拜师
<i>changpian</i>	长篇
<i>changci</i>	唱词
<i>chaguan shuchang</i>	茶馆书场
<i>chalou shuchang</i>	茶楼书场
<i>changduan</i>	唱段
<i>Chang E</i>	嫦娥
<i>Chen diao</i>	陈调
<i>Chen Lingxi</i>	陈灵犀
<i>Chen Ouquan</i>	陈遇乾
<i>Chen Yun</i>	陈云
<i>chuantong shumu</i>	传统书目
<i>da san bu xiao</i>	打三不孝
<i>Dashijie Yule Chang</i>	大世界娱乐场
<i>dandang</i>	单当

<i>diao</i>	调
<i>duanpian</i>	短篇
<i>erhu</i>	二胡
<i>gai xi, gai ren, gai zhi</i>	改戏，改人，改制
<i>Gao Bowen</i>	高博文
<i>gu</i>	鼓
<i>Guangyushe</i>	光俞社
<i>guanzi</i>	关子
<i>guzheng</i>	古筝
<i>huaguxi</i>	花鼓戏
<i>Jiang diao</i>	蒋调
<i>Jiangsushen Quyi Gongzuozhe Xiehui</i>	江苏省曲艺工作者协会
<i>Jiang Yuequan</i>	蒋月泉
<i>Jiefang Ribao</i>	解放日报
<i>Jiang Qing</i>	江青
<i>Jin Guisheng</i>	金贵升
<i>Jin Zhangshi</i>	金张氏
<i>jingju</i>	京剧
<i>kaipian</i>	开篇
<i>laoren tai</i>	老人台

<i>Li diao</i>	丽调
<i>Liangtiao tui zuolu</i>	两条腿走路
<i>liupai</i>	流派
<i>Li Shuyi</i>	李淑一
<i>ling</i>	铃
<i>Liu Zhixin</i>	柳直荀
<i>Ma diao</i>	马调
<i>Ma Rufei</i>	马如飞
<i>Mao Zedong</i>	毛泽东
<i>Mao Zedong shici</i>	毛泽东诗词
<i>pinghua</i>	评话
<i>pingtan</i>	评弹
<i>Pingtán Bowuguan Shuchang</i>	评弹博物馆书场
<i>pipa</i>	琵琶
<i>Puyushe</i>	普裕社
<i>Qing Shuchang</i>	清书场
<i>quyi</i>	曲艺
<i>ruan</i>	阮
<i>Runyushe</i>	润裕社
<i>San Gai</i>	三改

<i>sanxian</i>	三弦
<i>Shanghai Pingtantuan</i>	上海评弹团
<i>Shanghai Renmin Guangbo Dianti Xiquzu</i>	上海人民广播电台戏曲组
<i>Shanghai Renmin Pingtan Gongzuotuan</i>	上海人民评弹工作团
<i>Shanghai Wenhua bu</i>	上海文化部
<i>Shanghaishi Wenyijie Zhihuai Gongzuodui</i>	上海市文艺界制淮工作队
<i>shang shou</i>	上手
<i>shang ju</i>	上句
<i>Shuangdang</i>	双当
<i>shuchang</i>	书场
<i>shuhui</i>	书会
<i>Tang Gengliang</i>	唐耿良
<i>tanci</i>	弹词
<i>tuichen chuxin</i>	推陈出新
<i>wenci</i>	文词
<i>Wu Gang</i>	吴刚
<i>Wu Zongxi</i>	吴宗锡
<i>xia ju</i>	下句
<i>xia shou</i>	下手
<i>Xinmin Yundong</i>	新民运动

<i>Xin Pingtan</i>	新评弹
<i>Xinmin Wanbao</i>	新民晚报
<i>Xiqu Yanjiuyuan</i>	戏曲研究员
<i>Xu Lixian</i>	徐丽仙
<i>Xu Shangzhen</i>	徐上珍
<i>Xu Yuanzai</i>	徐元宰
<i>xuanhui</i>	选回
<i>xuanqu</i>	选曲
<i>xuetou</i>	噱头
<i>yanchuben</i>	演出本
<i>Yang Kaihui</i>	杨开慧
<i>yangqin</i>	洋琴
<i>Yu Hongxian</i>	余红仙
<i>Yu Xiushan</i>	俞秀山
<i>yueju</i>	越剧
<i>zaju</i>	杂剧
<i>Zhao Gaishan</i>	赵盖山
<i>Zhao Kaisheng</i>	赵开生
<i>Zhe Weiba</i>	折尾巴
<i>Zhi Zhen</i>	智贞

<i>Zhonggong Zhongyang Xuanchuanbu Wenyichu</i>	中共中央宣传部文艺处
<i>zhongpian</i>	中篇
<i>Zhou diao</i>	周调
<i>Zhou Enlai</i>	周恩来
<i>Zhou Hong</i>	周红
<i>Zhou Liang</i>	周良
<i>Zhou Yuequan</i>	周月泉
<i>Zhuangyuan tai</i>	状元台
<i>Zuo Xuan</i>	左弦

APPENDIX A

TABLES OF *TANCI* REPERTOIRE

A.1 TRADITIONAL *TANCI* REPERTOIRE

Year/Era	Title
1735-1820	<i>Legend of the White Snake</i> (白蛇传)
1735-1820	<i>Jade Dragonfly</i> (玉蜻蜓)
1796-1820	<i>Romance of the Three Smiles</i> (三笑)
1820-1850	<i>Pair of Gold Ingots</i> (双金锭)
1820-1850	<i>Pair of Pearls</i> (双珍珠)
1850-1861 ¹¹⁴	<i>Pearl Pagoda</i> (珍珠塔)
1850-1861	<i>Nine Bolts of Silk</i> (九丝涤)
1850-1875	<i>Dropped Gold Fan</i> (落金扇)
1850-1875	<i>Pair of Pearled Phoenixes</i> (双珠凤)
1861-1908	<i>Etched Gold Phoenix</i> (描金凤)
1861-1908	<i>Story of the Western Wing</i> (西厢记)
1861-1908 ¹¹⁵	<i>Large Red Envelope</i> (大红袍)
1861-1908	<i>Legend of the Wei Cloak</i> (倭袍传)
Early 20 th century	<i>Legend of the Green Snake</i> (青蛇传)
Early 20 th century	<i>Yang Naiwu and Little Cabbage</i> (杨乃武与小白菜)

¹¹⁴ Zhou claims that this story dates back even earlier to the mid-19th century (1997, 118).

¹¹⁵ Zhou dates this story back to the mid to late 19th century (1997, 118).

1930s	<i>Portrait of the Ten Beauties</i> (十美图)
1930s	<i>Love Reincarnate</i> (再生缘)
1935	<i>Fate in Tears and Laughter</i> (啼笑因缘)

A.2 NEW FULL-LENGTH STORIES COMPOSED BETWEEN 1949 AND 1964

Year	Title	Composer
Early 1950s	<i>The Hero Wu Song</i> (武松)	Yang Zhenxiong
1950	<i>The Hero Lin Chong</i> (林冲)	Cheng Lingxi, Liu Zongyin
1951	<i>Butterfly Lovers</i> (梁祝)	Pan Boying
1952	<i>The Four Jin Shi</i> (四进士)	Long Xueting, Yan Xueting
1952	<i>Tale of the Horse Trade</i> (贩马记)	Xu Yunzhi
1952	<i>Qing Xianglian</i> (秦香莲)	Pan Boying, Cheng Lingxi
1952	<i>The Pair of An Yuan</i> (双按院)	Yao Yingmei
1953	<i>Bai Luoshan</i> (白罗山)	Yan Yiping
1953	<i>Plum Flower Dream</i> (梅花梦)	Pan Boying
1954	<i>The Tale of Traveling to Yue</i> (拜月记)	Liu Zhongyin
1954	<i>The Courtesan Du Shiniang</i> (杜十娘)	Qiu Wen
1955	<i>The Just Official He Wenxiu</i> (何文秀)	Qiu Wen, and Xing Reiting
1956	<i>Wang Kui Breaks His Promise to</i> <i>Guiyin</i> (王魁负桂英)	Liu Tianyun, Qiu Wen
1958	<i>Bitter Plant</i> (苦菜花)	Xie Hanting, Xu Mengdan, You Shuchun, Zhou Zhi'an; Xu Xueyue and Ma Zhongying
1958	<i>The Red Seed</i> (红色的种子)	Zhang Weizhen and Zhang Jianting
1958	<i>Fighting in the Heart of the Enemy</i> (战斗在敌人心脏)	Wang Rusun
1962	<i>The Good Wife Li Shuang Shuang</i> (李双双)	Cao Meijun, Pan Boying, Gao Meiling
1963	<i>Flower of the Battlefield</i> (战地之花)	Hua Shi'ting
1964	<i>The Never Disappearing</i> Radio	Cui Ruojun

	<i>Frequency</i> (永不消失的电波)	
1964	<i>Red Rock</i> (红岩)	Xie Liuqing, Zhang Junmou
1964	<i>Song of the Youth</i> (青春之歌)	Zhao Kaisheng, Shi Wenyan

A.3 NEW MIDDLE-LENGTH STORIES COMPOSED BETWEEN 1949 AND 1964

Year	Title	Composer
1949/50	<i>Liu Qiao's Reunion</i> (刘巧团员)	Pan Boyin
1949	<i>The Luohan Coin</i> (罗汉钱)	Pan Boyin
1952	<i>We Certainly Must Fix the Huai River</i> (一定要把淮河修好)	SH PT Troupe ¹¹⁶
1953	<i>Naval Hero</i> (海上英雄)	Ke Lan, Jiang Yuequan, Zhou Yunrei
1953	<i>The Martyr Liu Hulan</i> (刘胡兰)	Cheng Lingxi
1954	<i>Big Sky Angry Wind</i> (长空怒风)	Tang Gengliang
1954	<i>The Spring Breeze Blows on the Nuoming River</i> (春风吹到诺敏河)	Qiu Xiaopeng, Zhao Huiqing, Wang Ru?
1954	<i>The Store Clerk Sun Fangzhi</i> (孙芳芝)	Qiu Xiaopeng, Ying Wenmei, Zhao Huiqing
1955	<i>Tale of the Tiger Hunt</i> (猎虎记)	Yao Yingmei
1955	<i>The Martyr Wang Xiaohe</i> (王孝和)	SH PT Troupe
1956	<i>Melting Ice, Disappearing Snow</i> (冰化雪消)	Yao Yingmei
1956	<i>County Commissioner Tang Rules on a Murder Trial</i> (唐知县审诰命)	Cheng Lingxi
1956	<i>The Spring Tour of the Eighth Yang Sister</i>	Cheng Lingxi

¹¹⁶ Shanghai Pingtan Troupe

	(杨八姐游春)	
1957	<i>Falsely Accused Shu E</i> (淑娥冤)	Qiu Xiaopeng
1957	<i>Wang Zuo Breaks His Arm</i> (王佐断臂)	Yang Zhenxiong
1958	<i>White Haired Girl</i> (白毛女)	Cheng Lingxi, Yan Xueting, Tang Gengliang
1959	<i>The Martyr Dr. Bai Qiu'en</i> (白求恩大夫)	Jiang Yuequan, Tang Genglian, Yao Yingmei, Su Siying, Jiang Wenlan
1959	<i>Breaking the Mountain Siege</i> ¹¹⁷ (冲山之围)	Tang Gengliang, Zuo Xuan, Su Siying, Jiang Wenlan
1959	<i>Jiangnan Spring Tide</i> (江南春湖)	SH PT Troupe
1959	<i>Red Plums in the Snow</i> (雪里红梅)	Liu Tiangyun, Zhou Yunrei, Yan Xueting, Zhang Weizhen
1959	<i>White Tiger Mountain</i> (白虎岭)	Cheng Lingxi Xia Shi ¹¹⁸
1962	<i>The Mei Tang Girl</i> (梅塘姑娘)	Zhu Yan
1963	<i>The Servant Girl Qing Wen</i> (晴雯)	Cheng Lingxi, Xia Shi
1964	<i>The Green Reeds</i> (芦苇青青)	Cheng Lingxi
1964	<i>The People are Strong, the Horses are Brawny</i> (人强马壮)	Yi Chen, Xia Shi

¹¹⁷ *Breaking the Mountain Siege* was later revised and renamed *The Green Reeds* (1964) (Wu 1996, 97).

¹¹⁸ “Xia Shi” is a penname used by Wu Zongxi.

A.4 NEW SHORT-LENGTH STORIES COMPOSED BETWEEN 1949 AND 1964

Year	Title	Composer
1951	<i>Little Er Hei Marries</i> (小二黑结婚)	Liu Tianyun
1954	<i>The Communist Party Registration List</i> (党员登记表)	Zuo Xuan
1954	<i>The Martyrdom of Liu Hulan</i> (刘胡兰就义)	Cheng Lingxi
1958	<i>Mistake In, Mistake Out</i> (错进错出)	Liu Tianyun and Hua Shiting
1958	<i>Six and a Half Pairs Become One in Spirit</i> (六对半变一条心)	Qiu Shaopeng, Zhu Xuefei
1958	<i>Old Man Meng</i> (孟老头)	Liu Tianyun
1958	<i>Xuguang and Wuweizhai Restuarants</i> (曙光与五味斋)	Qian Yanqiu
1959	<i>Sunday</i> (礼拜天)	Rao Yichen and Shi Wenlei
1959	<i>The Honor of the Postman</i> (投递员的荣誉)	Yan Jingkun, Sun Mou
1960	<i>One Meal</i> (一顿饭)	Qiu Shaopeng
1962	<i>Visiting the Daughter</i> (探女)	Zhu Yanquan
1963	<i>Eight Eggs, One Kilogram</i> (八个鸡蛋一斤)	You Xiaoting
1963	<i>The Corner of the Passenger Car</i> (车厢一角)	Qiu Shaopeng
1963	<i>Five Acres of Land</i> (五亩地)	Wang Rusun, Tsui Ruojun, Lei Meihua
1964	<i>The Meeting on the Road</i> (路遇)	Zhu Xiaofei, Xia Yucai
1965	<i>Iron Man Wang</i> (王铁人)	Qiu Shaopeng

1965	<i>Xiao Naozhong and Qi Xiangtai</i> (小闹钟与气象台)	Zhu Yanquan
1965	<i>Night Visit to Xian Yang Village</i> (夜走向阳村)	Tang Nai'an and Zhu Xiafei
1965	<i>In the Hotel</i> (在招待所里)	Gong Huasheng

A.5 SAMPLE LISTING OF NEW OPENING BALLADS COMPOSED BETWEEN 1949 AND 1964

Year	Title	Composer
1951	<i>Thoughts on National Day</i> (国庆所思)	Lin De
1951	<i>The Old Peasant Bravely Catches the Spy</i> (老农奋身捉特务)	Fan Yanqiu
1951	<i>We Fixed the Huai River</i> (修好了淮河)	Su Feng
1951	<i>Post-Huai Harvest</i> (制好淮河丰收)	Fan Yanqiao
1951	<i>Returning a Favor to the Liberation Army</i> (报答解放军)	Su Feng
1951	<i>Extinguishing the Fire on Wuding Road</i> (武定路救火)	Fan Yanqiao
1951	<i>Supporting the Family of Dead Soldiers</i> (优抚列军属)	Fan Yanqiao
1951	<i>The People's Liberation Army</i> (人民解放军)	Fan Yanqiao
1951	<i>Jing Gang Mountain</i> (井冈山)	Su Wei
1958	<i>New Mulan Song</i> (新木兰词)	Wu Zongxi and Xu Lixian
1959	<i>Promoting Vernacular Language</i> (推广普通话)	Xu Lixian
1960	<i>The First Spring of the 1960s</i> (六十年代第一春)	Cheng Lingxi
1961	<i>Seeing Chairman Mao</i> (见到了毛主席)	Xia Shi
1961	<i>The Wonderful 8th Platoon from Nanjing Road</i> (南京路上好八连)	Hua Shiting
1962	<i>The Illuminating Thought of Mao Zedong</i> (毛泽东思想放光芒)	Shi Wenlei
1962	<i>Busy Harvesting</i> (收获忙)	Yu Xueyue, Cheng Hongxue
1962	<i>Battle During the Harvest Season</i> (战三秋)	Yu Xueyue and Cheng Hongxue
1962	<i>The More We Sing, The Happier We Are</i> (越唱越开心)	Qian Yanqiu
1962	<i>Old Wang Raises Pigs</i> (王老头养猪)	Tang Po Liang
1962	<i>The First Bridge Over the Yangtze River</i> (长江第一桥)	Jin Feng
1962	<i>Planting Red Flags on (Your) Thoughts</i> (思想上插上大红旗)	Zhu Xueqin and Xu Xueyue
1962	<i>Nani Wan</i> (南泥湾)	Xu Xueyue
1962	<i>Xiang Xiuli</i> (向秀丽)	Cheng Lingxi

1963	<i>Our Name Is The Revolutionary Arm</i> (我的名字叫解放军)	Cheng Lingxi
1963	<i>Members of the Commune Are All Sunflowers</i> (社员都是向 <i>Yanhua</i>)	Xia Shi and Yi Chen
1964	<i>We Depend on the Good Leadership of the Party</i> (我们靠党的好领导)	Wen Zi
1964	<i>Horse Drinks from the Wujiang River</i> (饮马乌江河)	Xia Shi and Rao Yucheng

APPENDIX B

ORIGINAL CHINESE TEXTS

B.1 *FIGHTING FOR THE SON (ZHOU YUQUAN VERSION)*¹

夺子

今朝要打死你在厅堂，
为天下除去一个不孝郎。

打死你这畜生方消心头恨，
惟拼老命作抵偿。

我定要当场将他打，
打他不孝爹娘罪一桩。

他是目无尊长，
独断独行太猖狂。

既然是继母命他详诗句，
为什么不与爹娘共相商？

既然详出诗中意，
为什么不把详情禀爹娘？

既然要去庵堂认亲娘，
为什么竟将我们瞒在鼓中央？

既然设下牢笼计，
为什么骗我们到此谈家常？

既然是谈家常变成了鸿门宴，
为什么将爹娘当作了汉刘邦？

既然说养育之恩须当报，
为什么要逼死爹娘在当场？

¹ Zhou Yuquan 1986, 536-7.

B. 2 *FIGHTING FOR THE SON IN THE LIVING ROOM (1959*
REVISION)²

徐公不觉泪汪汪，
顿时恼怒满胸膛。

你初上云梯良心变，
欺贫重富撕爹娘。

想世间少有你这种不孝子，
今朝要打死你在厅堂。

打死了畜生方稍心头恨，
我末唯拼老命作抵偿。

纵然畜生非我养，
这抚养的恩情比水长。

难道我今不能将他打，
打他是末不孝爹娘罪一桩。

他末目中并无尊长辈，
独断独行太猖狂。

既然是末寄母命他详诗句，
为什么不与爹娘共参详？

既然是末详明诗中意，
为什么末不把详情禀爹娘？

既然是末庵堂去把亲娘认，
为什么末不先告禀二高堂？

是末庵堂认了亲生母，
为什么要把我们满在鼓中央？

为什么要厅堂设下牢？计？
为什么要骗我们到此谈家常？

² Written by Cheng Lingxi. In Jiang 1986, 145-161.

为什么末谈家常变了鸿门宴，
为什么要把爹娘当作了汉柳邦？
为什么要逼死爹娘在当场？

他小小的年龄天良一丧尽，
竟似个人面兽心肠；
今日里我责打这畜生问你可应当。

那徐公抵杖心愤怒，
今日难饶你这不孝郎。

我爱你如珍宝，
将你当凤凰，

虽非亲生养，
煞费苦心肠，

自从丢官后，
老景倍凄凉，

挥尽辛酸泪，
涕泪满胸膛，
那有半点辛酸来叫你尝。

我是年迈苍苍花甲外，
不管它汗流脊背冷透衣裳，
还要深宵你读文章。

直指望教子成名能有靠，
那知养虎把身伤。

B.3 *STAYING FOR THE NEW YEAR (1952)*

留过年

指导员，
传一言，
为了任务要留过年。

本则是我应当留在工地上，
倒是离开婚期祇有三五天。

况且是做亲毕竟是终身事，
改期岂能再拖延。

猛想起电气工人姜阿土，
他为了完成水库在发水前，
把性命两字撇半旁。

他为工程能跳水，
为什么我为做亲却不能留过年。

想到此时生惭愧，
听那报名之声接连连。

B.4 *NEW MULAN SONG (1958)*

新木兰词

唧唧机声日夜忙，
木兰是频频叹息愁绪长。

惊闻可汗点兵卒，
又见兵书十数行，
卷卷都有爹名字，
老父何堪征战场。

啊爷无大儿，
木兰无兄长，
我自恨钗环是女郎。

东市长鞭西市马，
愿将那裙衫脱去换戎装。

登山川涉水长途去，
代父从军意气扬。

朝听渐渐黄河急，
夜渡茫茫黑水长。

鞞鼓隆隆山岳震，
朔风猎猎旌旗张。

风驰电扫制强虎，
跃马横枪战大慌。

关山万里如飞渡，
铁衣染血映寒光。

转战十年才奏捷，
归来天子坐明堂。

策勋十二转，

赏赐百千强，
木兰不愿向书郎。

愿借明驼千里足，
送二早早回故乡。

爹娘闻女来，
出廓相扶奖将，
姊姊问妹来，
当户理红妆，
小弟问姊来，
欢呼舞欲狂，
磨刀霍霍向猪样，
一家喜气上面庞。

开我东阁们，
作我西客床，
脱我战时袍，
着我旧时裳，
当窗理云兵，
对镜贴花黄，
含笑出门寻伙伴，
伙伴见她尽惊惶。

同行一十有欲载，
不知将军是女郎。

谁说女儿不刚强。

B.5 *BUTTERFLY LOVES THE FLOWER: REPLY TO LI SHUYI (1958)*

蝶恋花： 答李淑一

我失骄杨君失柳，
杨柳轻飏直上重霄九，
问讯吴刚何所有？
吴刚捧出桂花酒。

寂寞嫦娥舒广袖，
万里长空且为忠鬼舞。

忽报人间曾伏虎，
泪飞顿作倾盆雨。

APPENDIX C:

NEW MULAN SONG SOURCES

C.1 *MULAN POEM (5TH -6TH C. AD)* ¹²¹

Tsiek tsiek and again *tsiek tsiek*,
Mu-lan weaves, facing the door.
You don't hear the shuttle's sound,
You only hear Daughter's sighs.
They ask Daughter who's in her heart,
They ask Daughter who's on her mind.
"No one is on Daughter's heart,
No one is on Daughter's mind.
Last night I saw the draft posters,
The Khan is calling many troops,
The army list is in twelve scrolls,
On every scroll there's Father's name.
Father has no grown-up son,
Mu-lan has no elder brother.
I want to buy a saddle and horse,
And serve in the army in Father's place."

In the East Market she buys a spirited horse,
In the West Market she buys a saddle,
In the South Market she buys a bridle,
In the North Market she buys a long whip.
At dawn she takes leave of Father and Mother,
In the evening, camps on the Yellow River's bank.
She doesn't hear the sound of Father and Mother calling,
She only hears the Yellow River's flowing water cry *tsien tsien*.

¹²¹ Translation by Hans Frankel in *The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady: Interpretations of Chinese Poetry* (1976, 68-71).

At dawn she takes leave of the Yellow River,
In the evening she arrives at Black Mountain.
She doesn't hear the sound of Father and Mother calling,
She only hears Mount Yen's nomad horses cry *tsiu tsiu*.
She goes ten thousand miles on the business of war,
She crosses passes and mountains like flying.
Northern gusts carry the rattle of army pots,
Chilly light shines on iron armor.
Generals die in a hundred battles,
Stout soldiers return after ten years.

On her return she sees the Son of Heaven,
The Son of Heaven sits in the Splendid Hall.
He gives out promotions in twelve ranks
And prizes of a hundred thousand and more.
The Khan asks her what she desires.
"Mu-lan has no use for a minister's post.
I wish to ride a swift mount
To take me back to my home."

When Father and Mother hear Daughter is coming
They go outside the wall to meet her, leaning on each other.
When Elder Sister hears Younger Sister is coming
She fixes her rouge, facing the door.
When Little Brother hears Elder Sister is coming
He whets the knife, quick quick, for pig and sheep.
"I open the door to my east chamber,
I sit on my couch in the west room,
I take off my wartime gown
And put on my old-time clothes."
Facing the window she fixes her cloudlike hair,
Hanging up a mirror she dabs on yellow flower powder
She goes out the door and sees her comrades.
Her comrades are all amazed and perplexed.
Traveling together for twelve years
They didn't know Mu-lan was a girl.
"The he-hare's feet go hop and skip,
The she-hare's eyes are muddled and fuddled.
Two hares running side by side close to the ground,
How can they tell if I am he or she?"

C.2 *HUA MULAN*¹²²

From amidst the clatter of looms rise cries of wrenching anguish!
The beauty is distraught!
She is shocked to hear the Khan's troops
Have already invaded the land.
Reading the enlistment summons she spies her
Father's name after only ten lines!

Oh, how can my father bear the hardships of war?
I have no elder brothers, and our family lacks grown sons.
I hate that I was born a girl!
Yet, with the whip in the south market, and the steed in the west market,
I'll willingly trade my skirts for a warrior's tunic.
I'll endlessly climb mountains and cross rivers in place of my dear father!
With a bold spirit I'll enlist.

Generals who fight many battles are destined to
Participants in a hundred battles must eventually die.
Yet after ten years the troops met victory.
On their return the Emperor sat in his bright hall
Honor the officers and soldier who had committed valiant deeds.
But Mulan was reluctant to receive rank,
She wished for "only a camel to speed me home!"

Her parents leaned in the doorway, her sisters awaited inside;
The whole family burst with joy when she returned.
Little brother set to sharpening a blade to butcher swine and sheep.

Opening the east chamber, then sitting on her bed,
Mulan donned her gown and dressed her hair.
When she went to meet her companions, she discovered their surprise—
Indeed, though they have fought for ten years
Together none could believe the general
Was in truth a girl.

Mulan was filial and valiant, a sort of person rare in this world, indeed!

¹²² Translation by Mark Bender in "Suzhou *tanci*: Keys to Performance" (1989, 52-3). The original Chinese language text is found in Zhao Jingshen's 1947 compilation *Selected Tanci* (*Tanci Xuan*).

APPENDIX D

BALLAD TRANSCRIPTIONS

Key for transcription symbols:

() = denotes part played by accompaniment instruments

x = non-pitched syllable

↘ or ↗ = downward or upward vocal slide

(A-F#) = trill between A and F#
ΛΛ

// = musical grand pause during which spoken narrative occurs

D.1 FIGHTING FOR THE SON IN THE RECEPTION HALL

$\text{♩} = 60$

5

1.Xu Gong

9

rub. bu jue lei— wang—

14 (Mr. Xu could not stop his eyes from filling with tears.) (A-G#B)

wang— a.t.

19

rub. a.t.

2.dun— shi—

24 (Suddenly his heart was filled with anger.)

rub. a.t. rub. a.t.

nao— nu— man— xiong— tang—

31 47.00

36 (You are just beginning to succeed but your heart is already changed.) B-A#

rub. a.t. rub. a.t.

3.ni chu sheng yun ti— liang xin— bian—

42 (You take advantage of the poor, kiss-up to the rich, and ignore your parents.)

rub. a.t. rub.

4.Qi— pin zhang— fu—

48 *a.t.* *rub.* 47.45 *a.t.*
si die — niang

54 *rub.* *a.t.*
 5.xiang jun shi

59 (I think that you are among the very few un-filial sons in the world.)
rub. *a.t.* *rub.*
shao you zhezhong — bu xiao ——— zi ——— 6.wo

64 (Today I will beat you to death in the living room.) 48.28
a.t. *rub.*
jin chao yao da — si ——— ni zai ting tang

70 (My anger can only be resolved if I can kill the beast.)
a.t. *rub.* *a.t.*
 7.da si le — chu sheng ——— fang shao wo xin tou — hen — en en —

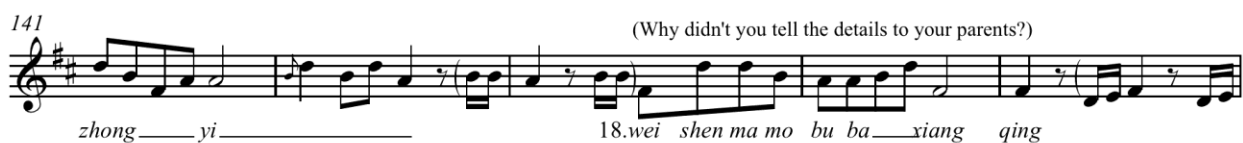
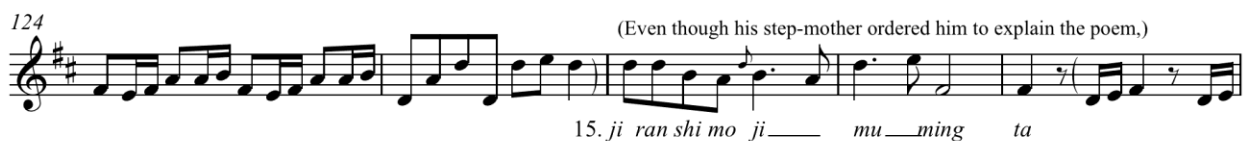
76 (I am willing to give up my life for this.)
a.t. *rub.*
 8.wo mo wei ping — lao ming — en zuo di — chang.

82 48.57 (Although I am not the birth parent of this beast.)
rub. *a.t.* *rub.*
 9.zong ——— ran ——— chu — sheng fei wo —

87 (The gift of raising you up is longer than water.)
 3 *a.t.*
 yang ——— 10.zhe fu yangde qing

92 *rub.* *a.t.* *rub.* *a.t.*
 bi shui ——— chang

97 (Why can't I beat him today.) 51.15
rub. *a.t.* *a.t.*
 11.nan dao wo jin bu neng ——— jiang ta — da ———



156 (Although you met your birth mother in the convent,)
 er gao tang 21.ji ran shi mo an tang ren le

161 (Why did you conceal the truth from us?)
 qin sheng mu 22.wei shen ma yao ba wo men zai

166 (Why did you set up this tricky scheme here?)
 gu zhong yang? 23.wei shen ma yao ting tang she xia

171 (Why did you lie to us by telling us to come for a chat?)
 lao lang ji 24.wei shen ma yao pian wo men dao ci

176 (How did a family chat become the "Hongmen banquet"?)
 tan jia chang? 25.wei shen ma mo tan jia chang

181 (Why did you treat your parents like Han Liu Bang?)
 bian le hong men yan 26.wei shen ma yao ba die niang

186 (Why do you want to kill us?)
 rit. dang zuo le han liu bang? 27.you fu si die

191 (E-D#) 54.50
 niang zai dang chang rub. 28.ta xiao xiao de

198 (Although he is still young he has lost his conscious completely.)
 nian ling a.t. tian liang yi sang jin

204 (He looks like an animal with a human face;)
 29.jing shi ge ren mian shuo xin

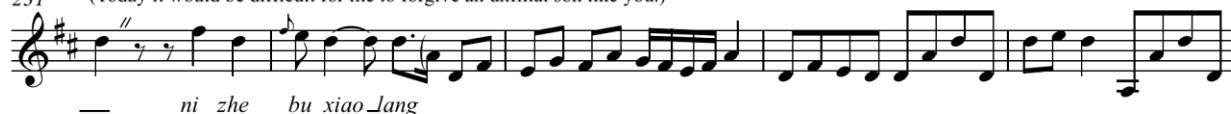
209 (Today I ask you should I not beat the beast.)



220 (Mr. Xu was holding a stick and filled with anger,)



231 (Today it would be difficult for me to forgive an unfilial son like you.)



236 (I love you like a treasure,)



(I treated you like a phoenix)

34.jiang ni dang feng huang

241 (Although we are not your birth parents,) (We spent so much energy and time on you.)



246 (Ever since I lost my job,)



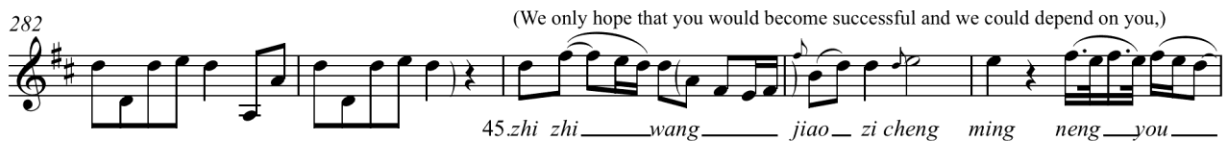
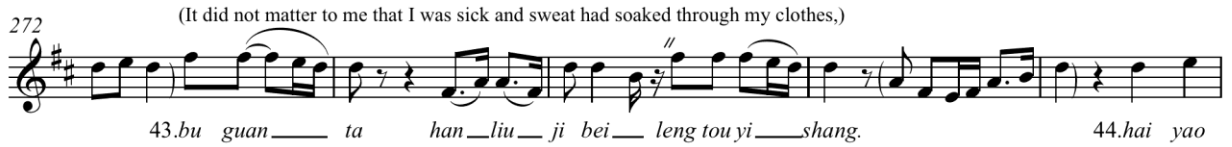
251 (We cried and cried,)



(our hearts are filled with tears,)

256 (Have we ever let you suffer any of this.)





D.2 STAYING FOR THE NEW YEAR

9 (The officer,) (gave his order,)
1. zhi dao yuan lai zhuan yan

18 (Someone must stay here through the new year to complete this mission,) (G-F#)
2. wei le ren wu yao liu guo nian

27 (I should stay at this construction site)
3. ben ze wo ying dang liu zai gong di shang ah

37
4. dao li kai hun

47 (But it is only a few days until my wedding day,)
qi zhi san wu tian.

57 (Moreover, marriage after all is for life,)
5. kuang qie zuo qin bi jing shi zhong shen shi, 6. gai qi qi neng

66 (How can I change the date and delay it.) (G-F#)
zai tuo yan

75 (I suddenly remember the electrician Jiang A'tu,)
7. meng xiang qi dian qi gong ren Jiang A tu,

84 (In order to complete the reservoir before the flood,) (F#-A)

8.ta wo—le wan—cheng shui—ku— zai fa shui— qian, 9.ba—xing—ming— liang zi

93 (He cast the word "life" aside,)

pie bang— pang. 10.ta—wei—

102 (If he can give his life for the project,) (Why do I have to leave to be married?)

gong—chang— neng tiao— shui 11.wei—shen me wo—wei— zuo a qin— que bu neng—liu

111 (G-F#)

rit. guo— nian— 12.xiang dao—

120 (Thinking of this, I felt ashamed,)

ci— shi sheng— can— kui— 13.ting na bao— ming— zhe—

126 (Hearing that sound, of people signing up one after another.) (G-F#)

shen— jie lian— lian—

D.3 NEW MULAN SONG

$\text{♩} = 60 \text{ BPM}$

1. ji ji ji sheng

(The busy loon sounds day and night,)

ri ye mang,

(Full of gloomy anxious thoughts, Mu-lan sighs deeply.)

2. mu lan shi pin pin tan

xi chou xu chang

(The Khan is starting a war with China)

3. jing wen ke han dian bing zu,

(Our Emperor has sent ten orders to enlist troops.)

4. you jian bing shu shi shu hang,

(Each bears my father's name,)

5. juan juan dou you die ming zi

(Father is too old to fight a battle.)

6. lao fu he kan zheng zhan chang,

(He does not have a grown-up son,)

(Mu-lan does not have an older brother,)

7. a ye wu da er, 8. mu lan wu xiong zhang,

76 (Why do I have to be a girl?)
 9.wo zi hen chai huan shi nu lang

84 $\text{♩} = 132$
 acc. 10.dong

94 (She gets a whip from the eastern market, a horse from the western market.)
 shi changbian xi shi ma, 11.yuan jiang na qun shen
f suddenly slower

105 (Mulan wishes to change from her dress into her father's war-robe)
p acc. *a tempo*
 tou qu huan rong zhuang

115 (Climbing the mountains and crossing the rivers,)
 suddenly slower *a tempo*
 12.deng shan she shui chang tu qu

127 *f, rit.* $\text{♩} = 96$
 u 13.dai fu cong jun

(Mu-lan goes on the long journey in place of her father with spirits high,) (Hear the early morning sound of the rushing Yellow River)
 139 *a tempo* *p*
 yi qi yang 14.zhao ting jian jian huang he ji,

150 (And cross the long dark river at night.)
rub., cresc. *mf* *acc.* *a tempo*
 15.ye du mang mang hei shui chang

161 (The drums shake the mountains)
rub.
 16.pi gu long long



shan yue zhen _____ 17.shu feng _____

183 (The wind rips through war-flags.)



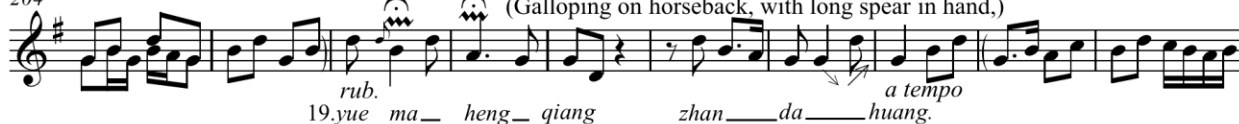
_____ lie lie jing qi _____ zhang. _____

194 (Like wind and thunder, Mu-lan fights the invaders,)



18.feng _____ chi dian sao zhi qiang hu,

204 (Galloping on horseback, with long spear in hand,)



19.yue ma heng qiang zhan da huang.

214 (A million miles of frontier is left behind,)



20.guan shan wan li ru fei du



21.tie yi

235 (Her shimmering war-robe is stained with blood.)



_____ xue ying han _____ guang .

246 (Victory finally comes ten years later,)



22.zhuan zhan shi nian cai zou

256 (The Emperor sits in the Great Hall.)



ji, 23.gui lai tian zi zuo ming

266 (A dozen times, he summons Mu-lan,)
acc. *a tempo* *mf*
 tang 24.ce xun

275 (And gives her plenty of rewards) (But Mu-lan does not wish to be a general.)
f *dim.* *p* *rub.*
 chi er zhan, 25.shang ci bai qian qiang, 26.mu lan bu yuan xiang shu

286 (She wishes to have the fastest horse,)
acc. *a tempo* *f*
 lang. 27.yuan jie ming tuo qian li zu,

296 (To return home early.)
rub. *p* *a tempo*
 28.song er zao zao hui gu xiang

307
acc. *rub.* *mf*
 29.die niang

318 (When father and mother hear of Mu-lan's return) (They come to greet the heroine.)
pp *a tempo* *f*
 wen nu lai, 30.chu kuo xing fu

328 (When sister hears about Mulan's return) (She hurriedly puts on her make-up,)
mf
 jiang 31.zi zi wen mei lai, 32.dang hu li hong zhuang 33.xiao di

(When little brother hears of Mu-lan's return,)(he cheers and jumps up and down,)(With a sharpened knife he chases the pig and goat)
rub. *f* *a tempo*
 wen zi lai, 34.huan hu wu yue kuang, 35.mou dao huo huo xiang zhu yang

347 (Happiness beams on the faces of the whole family.)
dim. *p* *acc.* *a tempo*
 36.yi jia xi qi shang mian pang.

358 (Opening my east-side door,) (Sitting on the west-side bed,) (Taking off the war-robe,)

mf
37.kai — wo_dong — ge men, 38.zuo — wo_xi — ke chuan, 39.tuo wo_zhan shi — pao,

368 (Putting on my old dress,) (Combing my hair,) (And putting on a yellow flower,)

f *dim.*
40.zhao wo jiu shi shang — 41.dang chuan li — yu_bing, 42.dui jing tie hua — huang —

379 (Smiling I walk out to meet my company of soldiers,) (The whole company is startled.)

p *a tempo, f*
43.han xiao — chu men — xun_ huo ban, 44.huo ban — jian ta jin jing —

390 (For ten years,)

huang.
45.tong — xing_ yi shi — you — yu zai —

401 (We did not know that the general was a girl,)

46.bu zhi — jiang jun shi — nu — lang

409 (Who says that a girl is not strong?)

f
47.shui shuo nu — er bu gang — qiang

D.4 BUTTERFLY LOVES THE FLOWER

(I lost "Poplar" and you lost "Willow,")

mf
1.wo shi jiao

10 *mf* jun shi liu *acc.*

16 (Poplar and Willow were carried by a light wind up to the highest heavens,)
2.yang liu qing biao zhi shang zhong xiao ju

23 (They asked Wu Gang, "What do you have?")
3.wen xu Wu Gang

28 (Wu Gang brought out the sweet-smelling osmanthus wine,)
he suo you 4.Wu Gang peng chu gui hua jiu gui

34 $\text{♩} = 100$
hua jiu

40 (The lonely Chang E waves her long sleeve,)
5.Ji mo Chang E shu guang

46 (She dances through the heavens for the loyal souls,)
6.Wang li chang kong qie wei zhong gui wu

53 *p*
ah ah

60

acc. *ff*
7.hu bao

66 (Suddenly, there was a report of a hidden tiger among the people,) *p* *mf*
ren jian zeng ceng fu hu 8.Lei fei

72 (Tears fly suddenly like a downpour.) *f* *mf* *f*
dun zuo qing pen yu yu

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