

Adapting Chinese Southwestern Folk Music to Cello:
An Analysis and Performer's Guide to Chen Yi's
Three Bagatelles from China West (for Cello and Piano)

by
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A Research Paper Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Musical Arts

Approved April 2025 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2025

ABSTRACT

This project consists of both a recording of Chen Yi's *Three Bagatelles from China West* (Duet for Cello and Piano), and a research paper examining the adaptation of Chinese Southwestern folk music to the cello. Chen Yi initiated and adapted this new transcription of *Three Bagatelles from China West* for cello and piano, both as part of this research project and for me to give its premiere. This research paper explores essential considerations in the process of cross-cultural adaptation, including an introduction to Chinese Southwestern folk music, as well as discussions on differences in theoretical systems, instrumental limitations, performance practices, and authenticity in interpretation. This research paper uses Chen Yi's *Three Bagatelles from China West* (Duet for Cello and Piano) as a case study, offers comprehensive musical analysis and performance guidance to highlight key practical considerations in both the compositional and interpretative processes, ultimately emphasizing the significance of such adaptations in contemporary music-making. Through this study, readers develop an awareness of the possibilities of integrating Chinese and Western musical traditions, while musicians and scholars can expand their understanding of the compositional techniques and performance approaches to further contribute to cross-cultural collaboration.

DEDICATION

To my Mother 梁洁芳. To my Father 劳兆锦.

No words in the universe can express the depth of love and support I have received from
my family.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The past three years at Arizona State University have been one of the most precious chapters in my life, passing as fleetingly as a meteor's trail across the sky. It is not just a Doctor of Musical Arts degree to conclude this chapter, more importantly, it represents the growth and memories I have collected during the emerging adulthood years of 21 to 24. Throughout my journey, my lifelong companionship with music has been filled not only with beauty, but also moments of self-doubt and tears, while seeking something I have gradually realized may not exist—perfection. At the heart of it all, it is the love that I have received from the many people who I encountered along this path.

First and foremost, I want to thank Professor Tom Landschoot, who has been not only my doctoral advisor and cello professor, but also a mentor who has witnessed my journey and growth through ups and downs over the past few years. Thank you for always encouraging me to strive for artistic improvement. Many thanks to my dear committee members, Professors Ted Solis and Catalin Rotaru, for their tremendous support throughout my program at ASU. Special thanks goes to Professor Chen Yi from UMKC. Without her, this thesis and recording project would not have been possible. Thanks for all the invaluable suggestions you gave for my thesis and recording.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to some of the significant mentors in my life journey. My first cello teacher, Wing On Leung, who introduced me to the cello, which has since become my best and longest companion. My beloved teacher, Zhiwen Situ, who guided me and recommended me to come to the U.S. to continue my studies. My mentor, Chu Yi-Bing, who has deeply shaped my musical aesthetic, and thanks for all the substantial conversations and guidance I have received from him over the years.

I am thankful to Professor Pin Fei Tang, Dr. David Kendall, Dr. Elvin Rodriguez, Dr. Dean Anderson, and my friend Leqi Yan at La Sierra University, where I finished my Performance Certificate. I also want to thank Dr. Marek Szpakiewicz and Dr. Claire Fedoruk at Azusa Pacific University, where I completed my Master of Music.

My warmest gratitude goes to all the friends I have met at ASU. It is impossible to mention everyone here, and I am sure I will miss many. I want to thank all the lovely people in the cello studio at ASU. I will cherish every memory with all of you. Thanks to my friends Dana Hurt, Shaorui Zhu, Maoxuan Feng, Pin-Han Lo, and Mason Haskett. I send my best wishes to all my friends for happiness and fulfillment in the journeys ahead.

I want to thank my boyfriend, Ho Tat Lam, whose presence brightens my days like sunshine. Your love, warmth, and joy have been a continuous source of strength and support, especially during those stressful moments as I push through the final year of my Doctorate and navigate my career path after school. I appreciate all the dedication you bring to our relationship and look forward to more colorful memories together afterwards.

Most importantly, I want to express my deepest appreciation to my parents and grandmother. While words cannot fully capture the immensity of my love and gratitude for all of you, I feel fortunate to be a classical musician—when I cannot find the words, music becomes the voice of my heart, allowing me to express my deepest emotions. As I am shedding tears while writing this, thank you, Mommy and Papa, for all your love and support, for always believing in me, for creating a beautiful world for me, for guiding me through every milestone, for standing behind me for every challenge, and for giving me the strength and courage to face life and embrace change. I love you.

Lastly, I thank every individual I have met for shaping me into who I am today.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Motivation

Music has been a lifelong bridge between my Chinese heritage and my love and education for Western classical music traditions. My awareness of the foreign culture and arts has always been a source of motivation throughout my memory, and it ultimately led to my decision to take up Western instruments in addition to the Chinese folk instruments and music I have listened to since before my earliest memories. And while I have learned several Chinese folk instruments growing up: pipa, guzheng, and hulusi—it was the cello that quickly became my deepest love.

With a background combining a thorough education in Western classical music, and a root of Chinese heritage, I have always been drawn to observing and exploring the possibilities and outcomes of integrating Chinese folk music to Western instruments, more specifically, the cello, my main instrument. It is with this experience and curiosity, I have started to consider the potential research topics that include both Chinese folk music and Western classical music for my doctoral project.

Throughout this journey, I have considered many different topics for my thesis. There are numerous possibilities for research, especially considering the increasing use of the cello in Chinese traditional music ensembles because of its wide sound range and human-like tone color. This opens up various possibilities for research that connects Chinese traditional music and Western classical music. I have considered several research topics, including analyzing performance techniques for Chinese folk music on the cello, exploring the integration of Cantonese music with the cello (as I am Cantonese),

discussing how the cello can imitate the sounds of Chinese folk instruments, examining contemporary compositions that incorporate Chinese folk music for the cello, and many others.

The turning point in my research idea occurred in the summer of 2023, when I sent an email to composer Chen Yi. After extensive discussions with many wonderful musicians and scholars in the fields of musicology, performances, anthropology, and ethnomusicology—most notably the communications with composer Chen Yi and my doctoral advisor, Tom Landschoot—I have decided to present Chen Yi’s *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for cello and piano) as a case study for my thesis and recording project.

In addition to analyzing this composition, I will produce a video recording and present the world premiere of the cello and piano version of this piece with pianist Michael Zifeng Zheng in 2025 in Katzin Concert Hall at Arizona State University. It is a great honor to conduct a research on a piece written by composer Chen Yi, a renowned Chinese-American female composer, and in doing so, contribute to supporting and promoting the works of Chinese-American composers. More importantly, this opportunity allows me to help preserve and share Chinese traditional music with a wider audience. This piece, which highlights the music of several ethnic minority groups from Southwest China, will serve as the illustration for my research paper on adapting Chinese Southwestern folk music to Western string instruments, specifically the cello.

Another reason for choosing this piece as a case study is my deep admiration for Chen Yi, a phenomenal Chinese-American female composer, whom I have looked up to since childhood. It is both a dream fulfilled and an honor to study and present the world

premiere of one of her works. Chen Yi is originally from Guangzhou province in China, as am I, which gives us a shared background. She has become a significant role model and an inspiration to many young musicians growing up today, including me.

However, adapting Chinese traditional musical elements to the cello is more challenging than it may seem. Throughout the process of practice, rehearsal, discussion, and research, I have encountered numerous difficulties and failures. As the performer presenting the world premiere of the cello and piano version of this composition, I take the primary responsibility for making interpretative decisions, which often brings uncertainty and self-doubt.

Nevertheless, these challenges have been an invaluable and rewarding experience for me as a performer, educator, and scholar. I have grown through experimenting with different interpretations and learning from each attempt. Ultimately, this project has strengthened my artistic and academic development, inspiring me to continue exploring the fusion of Chinese folk music with Western instruments.

Introduction to Chen Yi & *Three Bagatelles from China West* (For Cello and Piano)

This section is going to provide a biographical information about the composer Chen Yi, as well as a brief introduction to Chen Yi's *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano).

Introduction to Chen Yi¹

As a prolific composer who blends Chinese and Western traditions, transcending cultural and musical boundaries, Dr. Chen Yi is a recipient of the prestigious Charles Ives Living Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2001. She is the Cravens/Millsap/Missouri Distinguished Professor at the Conservatory in the University of Missouri-Kansas City. An Honorary Member of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) elected in 2024, she has been inducted to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences in 2005, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2019.

Born in China, Ms. Chen has received bachelor and master's degrees from the Central Conservatory in Beijing, and Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Columbia University in the City of New York. Her composition teachers included Prof. Wu Zu-qiang, Prof. Chou Wen-chung, and Prof. Mario Davidovsky. She has served as Composer-in-Residence for the Women's Philharmonic, Chanticleer, and Aptos Creative Arts Center (93-96) supported by Meet The Composer, and on the composition faculty at Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University (96-98).

¹. Chen Yi 2024 Concert Bio, Personal Communication, Email, December 16, 2024.

Fellowships and commissioning awards were received from Guggenheim Foundation (96), American Academy of Arts and Letters (96), Fromm Foundation at Harvard University (94), Koussevitzky Music Foundation at the Library of Congress (97), and National Endowment for the Arts (94). Honors include the first prizes from the Chinese National Composition Competition (85, 12), the Lili Boulanger Award (93), the NYU Sorel Medal Award (96), the CalArts/Alpert Award (97), the UT Eddie Medora King Composition Prize (99), the ASCAP Concert Music Award (01), the Elise Stoeger Award (02) from Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Friendship Ambassador Award from Edgar Snow Fund (02), the UMKC Kauffman Award in Artistry/Scholarship and Faculty Service (06, 12, 19), and the Lifetime Achievement Award for Choral Music from the World Youth and Children Choral Artists Association (22). Honorary Doctorates are from Lawrence University (02), Baldwin-Wallace College (08), University of Portland (09), The New School University (10), and the University of Hartford (16). She has given numbers of whole evening concerts of her orchestral, chamber, and choral works around the world, and served as Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music and Tianjin Conservatory, among many other schools and institutions in China and in the United States.

Her music is published by Theodore Presser Company, performed worldwide, by such musicians and ensembles as Yehudi Menuhin, Yo-Yo Ma, Evelyn Glennie, Chanticleer, Cleveland/Halle/Saxon State Orchestras, BBC/Royal Philharmonics, BMOP, The Women's Philharmonic, Seattle/Pacific/Singapore/China National/San Francisco/Chicago/New Zealand/BBC Symphonies, LA/NY/China Philharmonics, Stuttgart/St. Paul/St. Luke's Chamber Orchestras, Rascher/Prism Saxophone Quartets, Music From

China, and Shanghai/Ying Quartets; and recorded in over 130 CDs, on such labels as Bis (02, 03, 04, 11), New Albion (97), CRI (99), Teldec (97, 99 w/ Grammy Award for Colors of Love, 03, 08), New World (08, 09 w/ NPR Top 10 Classical Music Album Award for Sound of the Five), Albany (04, 05, 06, 09, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 22), Naxos (07, 08, 09, 12, 15, 22), Bridge (09, 14, 18), and others on Delos, Angel, Nimbus, Cala, Avant, Atma, Hugo, Koch International Classics, Centaur, Eroica, Capstone, Quartz, Innova, DECCA, Navona, Etcetera, XAS, and China Record Co. since 1986.

For more information about Chen Yi's works please visit the following websites:

Publisher: <<https://www.presser.com/chen-yi>> & <www.presser.com/chen-yi-at-70>

Program Notes: <<http://library.newmusicusa.org/ChenYi>> (Compositions Sort by Title)

CDs:<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0Bn8So8miWeV7L4vO4P6XL?si=0Lcmf_M4RSmLfCnO_-iUxA>

A Book on the composer and her works: "Chen Yi" by Leta E. Miller and J. Michele Edwards (2020) as a part of the Women Composers series:

<<http://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/catalog/44dhr5bk9780252043543.html>>

Another book "Chinese Émigré Composers and Divergent Modernisms, Chen Yi and Zhou Long" authored by Mia Chung (2024) as a part of the Elements in Music Since 1945 on Cambridge Elements series:

<<https://www.cambridge.org/core/elements/abs/chinese-emigre-composers-and-divergent-modernisms/22EC7F0B7B184CD2CDFA99F6C280E1AE>>

A Brief Introduction to *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano) /

西南小曲三首 (大提琴与钢琴)

Three Bagatelles from China West is a piece that incorporates musical elements from the Jingpo, Yi, and Miao ethnic minority groups (景颇族、彝族、苗族) in China.

This piece is divided into three small pieces (or can be called as movements):

I. Shan Ge 第一乐章:山歌调

II. Nai Guo Hou 第二乐章:乃过侯

III. Dou Duo 第三乐章:兜朵

Each movement in this composition represents the musical elements of a specific ethnic group, with inspiration drawn from either a Southwestern Chinese folk song or a traditional folk instrument. The entire composition profoundly reflects the broad musical and artistic characteristics of folk music from the Southwestern region of China. It also demonstrates the use of modern notation system to employ various contemporary extended playing techniques to imitate multiple Southwestern Chinese folk instruments and folk songs.

Three Bagatelles from China West was commissioned by the national music organization, the former Meet the Composer (MTC), for its New Music, New Donor program, as part of the Flute Book for the 21st Century project, specifically for flutist Marya Martin. Chen Yi also served on the board of directors of MTC for many

years, contributing to the promotion of contemporary classical music. During her time at MTC, she assisted flutist Marya Martin in fundraising for the New Music, New Donor program and secured a donation from Mr. Gilbert Kaplan to cover the commission fee. Mr. Kaplan was one of the patrons supporting this initiative.

Three Bagatelles from China West was originally composed in two versions in 2006: one for flute and piano, and one for two flutes. Professor Marya Martin, who was on the faculty at the Manhattan School of Music, observed that the standard flute repertoire was often repeated in university entrance auditions. Therefore, she initiated this commissioning project with the goal of expanding the flute repertoire.

This composition is dedicated to Mr. Gilbert Kaplan, a longtime friend of the composer Chen Yi. The dedication honors Kaplan's tremendous support for classical music worldwide, with deep admiration and respect. Kaplan was a famous businessman and financial publisher in New York City, as well as a passionate classical music enthusiast, particularly devoted to Gustav Mahler's compositions. Kaplan was also a conductor. In 2007, Kaplan attended the premiere of *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for flute and piano) in New York City.

During my interview with Chen Yi, I inquired about the connection between Gilbert Kaplan and her career. She mentioned that she first met Kaplan while studying at Columbia University, through a mutual friend who was Kaplan's Chinese tutor at the time. Kaplan was also seeking opportunities to conduct Mahler's music with a symphony orchestra in China at the time, which led him to connect with Chen Yi and her husband, Zhou Long. Zhou Long had previously studied under conductor Yan Liangkun in China. From that point on, Kaplan became a strong supporter of Chen Yi's compositions,

including partially sponsoring the production of her first commercial CD in the USA, *The Music of Chen Yi*, performed by The Women's Philharmonic and Chanticleer, conducted by JoAnn Falletta on New Albion [NA090] released in 1997.

Over the years, Chen Yi has adapted numerous transcriptions of *Three Bagatelles from China West* for various instrumental ensembles. She adapted this composition for cello and piano for my recording project and research paper. I will be presenting a recording and giving the world premiere of the cello and piano version in 2025.

The importance and ongoing impact of this research project

In today's world, the society has been making greater efforts to recognize compositions by composers from different backgrounds, to promote a variety of musical forms, including folk musical traditions. As a result, understanding the relationship and building a connection between Eastern and Western music is becoming increasingly important. I will be briefly summarizing the importance and ongoing impact of this research project from several factors below.

The role in general education and humanity studies: music plays a vital role in the humanities and arts, offering valuable insights for students of all majors. Just as world history is a fundamental part of general education, world music has also become an essential topic and subject. My recording project, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for cello and piano), serves as a musical example of how Eastern folk music elements can be skillfully integrated and adapted using Western instruments and techniques. Students,

regardless of their musical background or experience, can easily learn and identify some of the key characteristics of Chinese folk music through the recording, such as the use of pentatonic scales, expressive slides and half steps, and a distinctive timbre that contrasts with the harmony-focused approach of Western classical music.

The role in music education: many music students majoring in Western classical music have limited opportunities to explore and engage with folk musical traditions beyond the Western classical music throughout their education. This limitation comes from various factors, including the focus of music festivals and competitions, the structure of academic curricula, and the repertoire and program design of concert performances.

Throughout history, renowned composers such as György Ligeti, Béla Bartók, and Jean Sibelius have drawn inspiration from folk music traditions, demonstrating the value of integrating different musical influences and elements. However, many composition students in Western countries today receive limited exposure to these traditions during their formal training. This recording and research paper aim to inspire change by encouraging music students and professionals to broaden their artistic perspectives and explore new possibilities. The recording and research paper could offer expanded and unconventional perspectives and ideas, encouraging them to explore incorporating different musical traditions into their work.

For music performers, understanding folk traditions often requires direct, hands-on experience with those art forms. As a cellist myself, I have been taught the stylistic nuances of German, French, and Italian dance forms in Bach's cello suites, but fully

understanding their essence became more natural only after physically engaging with their distinct dance rhythm myself.

Similarly, this recording and research paper aim to convey the characteristics of Chinese folk music, offering insights to students from various musical backgrounds on how to approach and interpret Chinese folk music, and eventually form and develop their own understandings and interpretations. This exchange of information can help music students to recognize both the parallels and contrasts between different musical systems, such as scales, rhythms, theoretical frameworks, aesthetics, and performance practices.

This not only broadens their technical expertise but also enhances their ability to interpret and express music with authenticity and sensitivity. For instance, introducing the pentatonic scales and expressive sliding techniques in Chinese folk music can provide musicians trained in Western musical traditions with a new perspective on timbre, melody, and ornamentation. Conversely, musicians with an Eastern music background can benefit from studying the richness and complexity of the harmony and musical structure in Western classical traditions.

The value in cultural exchange: the collaboration between Eastern and Western music presents a valuable opportunity not only for musicians but also for audiences and individuals across different disciplines to study and appreciate the variety of cultural traditions. Music is universal, but with many languages and dialects, serves as a bridge that connects different cultures, allowing individuals to explore and appreciate the richness and uniqueness of different traditions beyond their own. For this exchange to be effective and enriching, it is essential to develop a deeper understanding of the origin of

the cultures and the role of music in their society. This includes the study of its historical background, social context, and artistic expressions.

With Chen Yi's growing influence in the world of music and society, the study of her work is becoming increasingly important. Musicologists and ethnomusicologists have the opportunity to explore her integration of different musical traditions, while performers can benefit from interpreting her music authentically and studying the extended techniques she employs. A deeper understanding of her work can inspire collaborations among musicians, composers, and educators from various backgrounds, leading to innovative compositions and performances that blend different cultural elements in the ongoing future.

After all, collaborations between Chinese folk music and Western classical music create opportunities for cultural exchange and musical innovation. These partnerships enable musicians to explore new timbres, techniques, and styles, and ultimately developing a deeper understanding of each tradition. Western orchestras engage with the flexibility and fluidity of rhythms and pitches in Chinese folk music, while Chinese musicians gain exposure to the structured and systematic forms and instrumentation of Western classical music. Examples such as *The Butterfly Lovers' Violin Concerto* composed by He Zhanhao and Chen Gang in 1959, and Tan Dun's *Crouching Tiger Cello Concerto* illustrates how the collaborations and the fusion of two musical traditions can result in unique and dynamic performances. Ultimately, these interactions broaden artistic and audience perspectives and contribute to the evolution of global musical expression.

An increasing number of world music ensembles are emerging in conservatories and universities worldwide, offering music students distinguish opportunities to engage with different musical traditions. In these ensembles, students can observe and study folk instruments firsthand, gaining experiences into different scale systems, tonal structures, performance techniques, and sound production. Through this immersive learning experience, students develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of musical expressions beyond their own background and education.

Not only are world music ensembles gaining popularity, but some music schools in the United States of America are also offering students the opportunity to take courses related to Chinese folk music, as well as private lessons on Chinese traditional instruments. For example, Stanford University offers guzheng lessons to students; Columbia University Teachers College provides erhu lessons to students; Berklee College of Music offers a course titled *Music and Instruments of China*, which explores Chinese traditional musical styles and instruments. Additionally, Bard College Conservatory of Music, in partnership with the Central Conservatory of Music (CCOM) in Beijing, offers a unique five-year double-degree program in the Liberal Arts and selected Chinese instruments at the US-China Music Institute. These opportunities contribute to a broader understanding of Chinese folk music and provide students the chance to engage deeply with non-Western musical traditions.

However, the study of cross-cultural music presents both practical challenges and opportunities for innovation. One major challenge is the varying amount of time and focus that students can dedicate to studying musical traditions outside their primary area of training, which can impact their ability to fully engage with and understand music

from other traditions. David W. Hughes identified three major factors influencing students' engagement with world music based on his experience teaching in England: the duration of the program, the possibility that undergraduate students may be pursuing multiple majors, the structure of the curriculum-specifically, and the balance between academic coursework and performance-based studies.² These factors can shape the depth of students' exposure to world music and their ability to develop a comprehensive understanding of different musical traditions.

². David W. Hughes, "When Can We Improvise? The Place of Creativity in Academic World Music Performance," in *Performing Ethnomusicology: Teaching and Representation in World Music Ensembles*, ed. Ted Solis (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 261–263, <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520937178>.

CHAPTER 2

CHINESE SOUTHWESTERN FOLK MUSIC

Southwestern China is characterized by the many ethnic minority groups in this region, each with a unique and rich musical heritage. This chapter provides an overview of the region's geographical information and explores the folk music traditions of these communities. This chapter highlights their distinct musical characteristics, instruments, and social significance, examining how music serves as an integral part of cultural identity and daily life.

Introduction to Southwestern China and Its Folk Music

Geographically speaking, the Southwestern part of China is a region consisting of Yunnan province, Sichuan province, Guizhou province, Chongqing city, and the Tibet Autonomous Region. However, wider definitions of Southwestern China often include Guangxi province and the western part of Hunan province. There are fifty-five officially recognized ethnic minority groups in China, and there is a big number of ethnic minority groups in the Southwestern region, some of the ethnic minority groups have a bigger population than the other groups, including the Miao, Yi, Zhuang, Jingpo, Dong, and Naxi ethnic minority groups.³ In this chapter, I will be focusing on the five main regions of the Southwestern part of China: Yunnan province, Sichuan province, Guizhou province, Chongqing city, and the Tibet Autonomous Region.

³. June Teufel Dreyer, "China's Minority Peoples." *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 19, no. 2 (1993): 332-333. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23262737>.

Below is a sub-regional map of Southwest China that includes Sichuan province, Chongqing city, Guizhou province, Yunnan province, and the Tibet (Xizang) Autonomous Region (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Subregional Map of Southwest China: Sichuan, Chongqing, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet (Xizang).⁴

Broadly speaking, “folk music” can be referred to as “traditional music.” The forms of folk music is divided into folk vocal songs, folk instrumental music, folk dance forms, folk narrative poems, and folk operas. Folk music typically contains a social purpose for their ethnic minority people, it could be a ceremony, ritual, celebration, service, work, and religious activity.

⁴. Fenggang Yang and J. E. E. Pettit, "Chapter 8 Southwest China 西南地区," *Atlas of Religion in China*, (Leiden: The Netherlands: Brill, 2018), 173.

However, the definition of folk music varies across different regions of the world and is often shaped by specific cultural criteria. Common characteristics of folk music include anonymous origins or unknown composers, oral transmission through generations, elements of improvisation and rhythmic flexibility, distinct social functions and purposes, and adherence to traditional performance practices.⁵

Studying the social purpose of folk music is essential, as understanding its function and role in rituals and society can provide a more profound understanding of its musical characteristics and the use of instrumentation. Chinese folk music is deeply rooted in ceremonies and rituals, with specific repertoire and ensembles designated for different occasions. In general, folk instrumental music in China is performed in three main ceremonies: weddings and funerals, calendrical festivities, and occasional rituals.⁶ Ceremonies, particularly those related to life events such as weddings and funerals, hold great significance in Chinese culture and are traditionally categorized as “red and white business.”

In the Southwestern region of China, folk music varies widely across different areas and ethnic minority groups, from a various perspectives including social function, celebratory traditions, instrumentation, and musical styles. While some ethnic groups place more emphasis on religious themes in their music, others might focus on documenting daily life or highlighting rituals and celebrations.

⁵. Ngan Nei Chan, "Exploring Chinese Folk Musical Elements in Three Piano Works by Tan Dun, Bright Sheng, and Chen Yi" (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 2022), 4. <https://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/exploring-chinese-folk-musical-elements-three/docview/2685070637/se-2>.

⁶. Stephen Jones, “Ceremonial Music,” in *Folk Music of China : Living Instrumental Traditions*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 14-18.

Yunnan Province

Yunnan province is located in China's southwestern frontier, bordering countries are Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar. This significant location has made Yunnan province an important location of cultural exchange and trade for centuries, functioning as a connection between mainland China and Southeast Asia. In Yunnan province, ethnic minorities make up more than 30% of its total population, with 25 recognized ethnic minority groups, such as the Yi, Bai, Hani, Zhuang, Dai, Lisu, and Miao ethnic minority groups. Notably, the development of folk music in Yunnan is vibrant and expansive. Among the more than 500 known musical instruments in China, over 200 originate from Yunnan province.⁷

Some key features of the folk music in Yunnan province include its strong reflection of the people's profound respect for nature and life, with musical themes closely tied in daily life and routines. The folk music of Yunnan province vividly depicts the daily labor of local people, bringing their daily work to life while also expressing the emotions embedded in the labor process. Additionally, Yunnan folk music carries a strong ceremonial aspect, as it plays an essential role in the rituals of local ethnic minorities. Religious traditions is an important part of ritual music, strengthening the community's spiritual beliefs. In terms of lyrics, the music primarily incorporates and reflects elements of ethnic minority groups' distinguished seasonal rituals, festive celebrations, and marriage traditions.⁸

7. 田尚科."浅谈云南民族音乐." *民族音乐* .03(2018):26.

8. 欧阳丽梅."云南原生态民族音乐研究." *音乐生活* .08(2021):54.

Guizhou Province

Guizhou province includes a large number of ethnic minority groups, including the Miao, Dong, Yi, and Shui ethnic minority groups. These groups preserve and maintain most of their own distinct dialects/languages, rituals, customs, celebrations, and traditions. Historically, Guizhou province has been less developed than other provinces in China, but it has seen significant improvements in infrastructure and economic growth in recent years. Despite this, Guizhou province remains as one of China's less urbanized regions, preserving much of its traditional way of life.

Guizhou province's abundant natural, cultural, and environmental resources are outstanding. It is home to nearly 4,000 species of wild plants and around 1,000 species of wild animals, positioning it as a significant hub of biological diversity in China. Notably, Guizhou is one of the regions in China that is known for its rich supply of herbs for Chinese traditional medicine.⁹

The geographical and social environment of Guizhou province has contributed to a vast variety of traditional folk music among its ethnic minority groups. The extensive cultural exchange and mutual influence among different ethnic minority groups have resulted in a complex and broad range of musical characteristic. Even within the same ethnic group, musical traditions differ across specific regions.¹⁰

⁹. Yang and Pettit, 185.

¹⁰. 任洁."浅析贵州少数民族音乐." *贵州民族研究* 38.10(2017):125.
doi:10.13965/j.cnki.gzmzyj10026959.2017.10.027.

Sichuan Province

Sichuan province is one of the most economically developed provinces in western China, with its growth driven by agriculture, as well as the industries of aerospace and military.¹¹ Approximately, over 6% of Sichuan province's population belong to ethnic minority groups. The largest of these groups are the Yi and Tibetan (Zang) ethnic minority groups. One of the most well-known musical traditions in Sichuan is the Sichuan opera (川劇), and the dramatic face-changing (变臉) art.

Chongqing

Chongqing is a prominent city and municipality in southwestern China, notably, Chongqing became a municipality directly governed by the central Chinese government in 1997, after separating from Sichuan province. It is located at the confluence of the Yangtze and Jialing rivers, Chongqing is encircled by steep hills and mountains, earning it the nickname "Mountain City." Chongqing is also home to several ethnic minority groups, including the Tujia, Miao, Yi, and Zhuang ethnic minority groups, among others. The Tujia ethnic minority group is one of the largest ethnic minority groups in this region.

Tibet

Tibet, it is also called the Tibet Autonomous Region, and Xizang. Many people know Tibet as the "Roof of the World" because it is the highest and largest plateau on

¹¹. Yang and Pettit, 179.

Earth. Tibet is surrounded by the towering peaks of the Himalayas and is known for its breathtaking natural beauty. Tibet is deeply associated with Tibetan Buddhism, which shapes much of its cultural identity. The majority of the population in Tibet is the Tibetan ethnic minority group. However, there are also other ethnic minority groups living in Tibet as well.

The Significance of Blending Musical Traditions

As a Western classical musician, I have had the opportunity to study and perform many folk music pieces from various cultures around the world, including works by renowned composers such as Bartók and Kodály. As a Chinese musician, I feel a deep responsibility to introduce Chinese traditional music with the Western world and with Western classical musicians. In the context of the twenty-first century, there is an increasing demand for cross-cultural collaborations to develop understanding of different cultures, particularly by blending folk cultures and traditions.

This is evident in initiatives like Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble and the works of leading composers such as Chen Yi, Zhou Long, Tan Dun, and Chou Wen-Chung. Their compositions are frequently featured in programs by distinguished orchestras, music festivals, and renowned soloists worldwide. Tan Dun's film music has also been prominently presented in Hollywood movies, including *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Hero*, and *Fallen*. These collaborations highlight the potential for cultural understanding and exchange through different types of arts and medias, with more than just music.

Consequently, the collaboration of Western classical music and Chinese folk music is becoming increasingly necessary to provide more innovative approaches and new possibilities.

Chinese traditional music is gaining increasing attention and recognition internationally because of its abundant and expansive cultural heritage, which reflects the traditions of various ethnic minority groups. This traditional music represents an invaluable international treasure for musicians worldwide. The best way to honor, preserve, and celebrate folk music is by sharing and utilizing it, allowing more people to learn about it and ensuring it becomes a lasting and enduring legacy for future generations.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF THREE BAGATELLES FROM CHINA WEST (FOR CELLO AND PIANO)

This chapter focuses on Chen Yi's *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano), providing a musical analysis and performance guide from the perspective of a cellist. In addition, it includes a discussion of the Chinese Southwestern folk music elements that serve as the foundation and inspiration for this composition.

Introduction and Overview

Chen Yi's *Three Bagatelles from China West* was originally composed in two versions in 2006 and premiered in New York City: one for flute and piano, and one for two flutes. Over the years, the composer Chen Yi has made several adaptations for different instrumental ensembles, including versions for clarinet and piano, for violin and cello, for flute and clarinet, for flute and guitar, for guanzi and sheng, for clarinet and sheng, for double bass and piano, and several others combinations.

Chen Yi has transcribed and adapted this piece for cello and piano for me, and I will be presenting a recording and giving the world premiere of the cello and piano version in 2025. Chen Yi mentioned that the folk music from China West has inspired her to write this piece, which incorporates various folk music elements and inspirations taken from the folk vocal songs and folk solo instrumental pieces of several ethnic minority groups in Southwestern China.

This piece is written in three movements, or it can also be called three short pieces. Each movement features inspirations from a certain ethnic minority group in Southwestern China.

I have included the program notes written by Chen Yi below:

Chen Yi 陈怡

Three Bagatelles from China West (2006) 西南小曲三首

I. Shan Ge 第一乐章:山歌调 (景颇族)

II. Nai Guo Hou 第二乐章:乃过侯 (彝族)

III. Dou Duo 第三乐章:兜朵 (苗族)

Commissioned by Meet the Composer for flutist Marya Martin, in the Flute Book for the 21st Century project, as a part of MTC's New Music, New Donors program, my work Three Bagatelles from China West is written in three movements, with the original version for flute and piano, and another version for two flutes. The authentic folk music from China West has amazed and inspired the composer to write this piece, which has the folk music elements drawn from the solo piece Shange Diao (山歌调) played on the wind instrument Lerong (勒绒), as well as the musical pattern played on the small mouth wind instrument Kouxian (口弦) of the Jingpo People (景颇族); the solo piece Nai Guo Hou (乃过侯) played on the wind instrument Bawu (巴乌), as well as the pitch material sung in the folk song Ashima (阿诗玛) of the Yi People (彝族); the folk song Dou Duo (兜朵), as well as the sound effect of the Lusheng ensemble playing (芦笙合奏) of the Miao People (苗族).

The work is dedicated to Mr. Gilbert Kaplan, a long time friend of the composer, for his tremendous support to classical music in the world, with deep admiration and respect.

This work has been adapted for various versions, including duets for clarinet/saxophone/double bass and piano. This version for cello and piano is adapted for Yongqi Lao, to be premiered in her DMA recital at the Arizona State University in 2025.¹²

¹². Chen Yi, Program Notes, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano), (Malvern, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2024).

The title of this piece, *Three Bagatelles from China West*. The term “bagatelles” refers to short and musical compositions. It is typically without a specific formal structure.¹³ This term comes from the French word “bagatelle,” meaning “trifle” or “something insignificant.” Bagatelles is also most famously associated with the composer Ludwig van Beethoven, who wrote a set of piano bagatelles. In this case, Chen Yi’s “three bagatelles” refers to a combination of three short musical pieces.

This piece does not follow a certain form or structure based on the Western music theory system. While we cannot use traditional Western music theory to fully determine and explain the form and structure of this piece, it generally follows a slow-moderate-fast structure from the listener’s perspective. I have concluded a basic outline of the structure of this composition, based on the tempo and musical expressions provided by the composer (see Table 1).

First Movement: <i>Shan Ge</i>	♩=116/58	Lightly/a tempo: ♩= 116 Freely: ♩= 58
Second Movement: <i>Nai Guo Hou</i>	♩= 96	Lively
Third Movement: <i>Dou Duo</i>	♩= 100	Simply

Table 1. The Basic Outline of the Structure of *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano).

¹³. Maurice J.E. Brown, "Bagatelle." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 8 Mar. 2025, 1. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000001758>.

Analysis of Each Movement

This section will offer a comprehensive analysis of each of the three movements, addressing various aspects such as score analysis, performance considerations, the influence of folk elements, introduction to folk instruments, and an examination of playing techniques.

Analysis of the First Movement-*Shan Ge*

The first movement is titled *Shan Ge* (山歌调). The inspiration for this movement comes from the musical elements of the folk solo piece *Shange Diao* (山歌调) of the Jingpo minority group (景颇族), traditionally performed on the Lerong (勒绒), a traditional wind instrument. Additionally, the Kouxian(口弦), another small traditional wind instrument, serves as the inspiration for a recurring musical pattern throughout the first movement.

This movement alternates between the time signatures of 2/4, 3/4, and free meter, with tempos shifting between approximately $\text{♩} = 116$ and $\text{♩} = 58$. The duration is around six minutes. The musical expression indicated at the instruments' entrance is marked as “lightly” and “freely.”

The Jingpo people is an ethnic minority group primarily reside in Yunnan province, China. They are known for their rich oral traditions, including folk myths, epics, and stories, as well as their exceptional bamboo craftsmanship. The Jingpo ethnic

minority group also has a broad collection of folk wind instruments, especially the reed instruments. Music plays a central role in their culture and traditions, with dance music and instrumental ensembles being an important part of their festivals and celebrations as well.

The folk solo piece, *Shange Diao*, meaning “mountain songs” in Chinese language. This term typically refers to a category of improvised folk work songs in free rhythm, and these songs are usually sung loudly during outdoor labor, especially during activities like weeding and harvesting.¹⁴ However, shange diao (mountain songs) do not necessarily refer to songs sung in the mountains; rather, they refer to folk songs performed in open outdoor areas.¹⁵ Although this term is widely used by local singers in many areas of China, the meaning of this term may be different depending on who and where it is used.¹⁶

Lerong is one of the most distinctive folk instruments of the Jingpo ethnic minority group. It is a blowing wind instrument. The entire instrument is made of bamboo. The lerong is characterized by its unique tonal qualities: when played with a gentle breath, it produces a soft tone; a flat blow yields a mellow sound; and a forceful blow results in a bright, resonant tone. It is more common to see the lerong played in solo

¹⁴. Alan R. Thrasher et al., "China, People's Republic of," *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 29 Dec. 2024, 75. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000043141>.

¹⁵. Leta E. Miller and J. Michele Edwards, “Choral and Solo Vocal Works,” in *Chen Yi*, (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 2020), 129.

¹⁶. Antoinet Schimmelpenninck and European Foundation for Chinese Music Research. *Chinese Folk Songs and Folk Singers : Shan'ge Traditions in Southern Jiangsu*. (Leiden: CHIME Foundation, 1997), 17.

performances, and most of the songs played on the lerong are folk songs of the Jingpo ethnic minority group.

In Wu Minzhang's thesis, Wu mentioned that the lower register of the lerong is difficult to produce, and the instrument can easily produce harmony.¹⁷ This characteristic of lerong is worth considering when adapting this movement for the cello, that the cello has a rich and resonant lower register, which is on the contrary to lerong. However, this movement includes a small use of the cello's lower register (the G and C strings on the cello), aside from a few sustained notes and recurring patterns. Below is a photo of lerong (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. The Picture of Lerong.¹⁸

¹⁷. 吴敏彰. 景颇族边棱音管乐器传统制作技艺与改良实践研究. 2022. 云南师范大学, MA, thesis. 15. doi:10.27459/d.cnki.gynfc.2022.000260.

¹⁸. 唱起古老的歌谣, 景颇人手拉手跳起舞, *Yunnan Ethnic Culture Audio & Video Publishing House*, Accessed 10 Feb. 2025, <http://ynmzyx.cn/zh-hans/content/727>

Kouxian is a folk reed instrument that is being used extensively in ethnic minority groups across Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, Hainan, Xinjiang, and Qinghai regions, as well as some Southeastern countries in Asia. Particularly, kouxian is favored by women from all the different ethnic minority groups, with young women being the primary players. Young women in those ethnic minority groups often store their kouxian in beautifully designed containers, and carry with them wherever they go. These containers serve as both functional items and representations of the rich folk art traditions of ethnic minorities.¹⁹

Kouxian is divided into wood, metal, and bamboo types based on the materials that are being used in the instrument. In Qin Xu's article about kouxian, the kouxian serves as a musical tool for expressing thoughts and emotions, functioning like a human voice. The kouxian produces a unique soft, speech-like tone, and features a small pitch range, making it ideal for conveying subtle feelings, as listeners must lean in close to hear. It is also being used to perform folk tunes, improvisations, ancient epics, and stories about village life and ancestral history.²⁰ Another thing to keep in mind is that the shape and structure of kouxian varies slightly among different ethnic minority groups. Below is a photo of a five-leaf kouxian (see Figure 3).

¹⁹. 秦序, "民族乐器口弦初探." *音乐艺术* 01(1981); Accessed 25 Dec. 2024, 42. doi:10.19359/j.cn31-1004/j.1981.01.011.

²⁰. 秦序, 43.



Figure 3. The Five-Leaf Kouxian.²¹

The inspiration from the kouxian is reflected in a highly recognizable and repeated pattern that recurs throughout the entire movement, functioning as a key component of the main theme of this movement. This pattern, consisting of the notes “B” and “C,” appears on the cello almost at the end of every short and long phrase, sometimes it is an octave higher and sometimes it is an octave lower, and this pattern is also present in the piano accompaniment (see circled passages in Example 1).

²¹. Codell. "5 Leaf Kouxian." Photograph. June 4, 2009. *Wikimedia Commons*. Accessed 16 Feb. 2025.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3A5_Leaf_Kouxian.jpg.

a tempo (♩ = 116) E Freely

32

Vc.

Pno.

mp

Piano

36

Vc.

Cello

39

Vc.

a tempo (♩ = 116)

Example 1. Chen Yi, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano),
Shan Ge, mm. 32-43.

There is no clear bar line in the cello section throughout this entire movement, indicating the cellist has full control on how the phrasing should be structured. This reflects a characteristic of folk music, where bar lines are often flexible or absent, allowing performers for freer rhythm and tempo. In contrast, the piano part in this movement follows a strictly measured structure with consistent bar lines throughout the entire movement.

When adapting Chinese folk music to the cello, it is important to consider where breaths would naturally occur, it is even more important to take into account whether the musical elements and inspiration are taken from a folk wind instrument or within the phrasing of a folk vocal song. While string instruments do not require physical breaths or rests in the same way, we must still carefully review these considerations in the phrasing. It is necessary to pay attention on where breaths might occur, this would help preserving the natural flow and expressive beauty of the folk music, ensuring that the cello interpretation remains true and authentic to the original folk style.

Another distinguished feature in this movement is the tempo marking for the cello and piano. In most sections, the piano's entrance is marked at $\text{♩} = 116$, with the instruction "lightly" from Chen Yi; while the cello is set at $\text{♩} = 58$, marked "freely" every time when cello takes over the melody.

Although Chen Yi has mentioned that she expects performers not to follow a strict and consistent tempo throughout the piece, as it should be naturally imitates the improvisational aspect of folk musicians, however, she did provide specific tempo markings that shift back and forth twelve times between the cello and piano in this movement.

In the first movement, the cello part stays in "freely" with a marking $\text{♩} = 58$ most of the time, except in the final section of this movement, where it returns to "lightly" or

“a tempo” with the piano together. The figure below provides a detailed outline of the tempo markings for this movement (see Table 2).

Tempo ♩=	116	58	116	58	116	58	116	58	116	58	116	58	116
Bar number	1	6	15	18	25	30	32	35	41	44	48	53	60-end
Instruments	pf	vc	pf	vc	pf	vc	pf	vc	pf	vc	pf	vc	vc&pf

(* “vc” stands for cello; “pf” stands for piano)

Table 2. Outline of the Tempo Markings of Chen Yi’s *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano), *Shan Ge*.

Grace Notes

The use of grace notes is quite prominent in this composition, particularly in the first movement. According to Chen Yi, this extensive use of grace notes is intended to imitate the way farm laborers play instruments and/or sing, often without extensive formal music education or knowledge about music theory. Below, I will be explaining how these grace notes imitate the playing of farm laborers.

Firstly, the grace notes contribute to the atonal character of the composition by utilizing rapid grace note passages, which prevent listeners from identifying a specific key or pitch throughout the piece.

Secondly, the grace notes are used to mimic the conversational speech of folk people. Since conversational speech typically does not follow a specific scale or mode, it often includes various uncommon intervals and microtones. These grace notes create an undefined effect in terms of scale and mode. Together, these two factors help to initiate an approach to evoke the original and unrefined essence of farm laborers, capturing the authentic spirit of their musical expressions and traditions.

However, the difficulty of executing these grace notes on a string instrument should be taken into account. This composition was originally written for flute and piano, and two flutes, intending to mimic the Southwestern folk wind instrument lerong. Grace notes can be played much faster and more accurately on a wind instrument like the flute and lerong, compared to a cello, which takes more technical challenges to achieve the similar sound effect and articulation. Below is an example from the score that demonstrates the extensive use of grace notes in a short excerpt (see Example 2).

The image shows a musical score excerpt for a cello. It begins with a box containing the letter 'A' and the word 'Freely' followed by a quarter note and the number '58'. Below this, the number '6' is written. The music is written on a single staff with a bass clef. The notes are mostly eighth and sixteenth notes, many of which are beamed together and have grace notes above them. The dynamic marking 'mf' is written below the staff. The excerpt ends with a double bar line.

Example 2. Chen Yi, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano),

Shan Ge, m. 6.

Overall, in the *Three Bagatelles from China West*, there are three types of grace notes that are presented, each with distinct characteristics that should be executed differently in terms of speed and rhythmic considerations (see Table 3). However, there is no “eighth grace note without a slash” in this composition.




	Eighth grace note with one slash
	Sixteenth grace note with one slash
	Sixteenth grace note without a slash

Table 3. Three Different Types of Grace Notes in Chen Yi’s *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano).

In my interview with Chen Yi, she explained that the use of a slash on the grace notes is intended to distinguish them from the regular eighth-note grace notes that we often see in Western music compositions. She stated that the slash indicates these grace notes should be played as quickly as possible. These grace notes are considered “non-important” notes, functioning more like a prefix to the main note.

Analysis of the Second Movement-*Nai Guo Hou*

The second movement is titled *Nai Guo Hou*, it is inspired by the folk solo piece *Nai Guo Hou* (乃过侯) played on the Bawu (巴乌), a folk wind instrument, as well as by the pitch material from the folk song *Ashima* (阿诗玛) of the Yi ethnic minority group (彝族). This movement did not set a time signature, with a tempo marking of approximately ♩= 96, and a duration of about four minutes. The musical expression indicated at the top of this movement is “lively”.

Yi people is an ethnic minority group primarily reside in the mountainous regions of Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Guangxi provinces in the Southwestern region of China, with the majority of their population concentrated in Yunnan province. Yi people consist of six main dialects, varying based on the specific regions where the communities are located.

The bawu is a folk wind instrument commonly used in the music of the Yi, Miao, Dai, Hani, and other minority groups in southwestern China.²² It is a free reed instrument with one single metal reed. Based on the definition on *Grove Music*, a free reed instrument refers to a type of wind instrument that includes a flexible metal tongue that it is fixed at one end to a stationary plate.²³ It produces sound when air flows through a

²². Alan R Thrasher, "Bawu." *Grove Music Online*. 13 Jan. 2015; Accessed 25 Dec. 2024, 1. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-4002274932>.

²³. Barbara Owen and Richard Partridge. "Free reed." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 14 Mar. 2025, 1. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040930>.

flexible reed, it vibrates freely without being attached to a frame. In many free reed instruments, each reed produces only one fixed pitch, requiring a separate reed for every note.²⁴ However, some free reed instruments, such as the bawu and hulusi, use finger holes to create multiple pitches from a single reed.

The bawu most likely originates from Yunnan Province in China. Bawu is typically made from a bamboo tube or a wood tube, measuring around 30 cm or more in length, including a single metal reed, with seven holes to place fingers on the front and one hole on the back.²⁵ Although its shape and horizontal playing position may lead some people to mistake it as similar to a Chinese flute-dizi, it is actually a different instrument. Below is a picture of the Bawu (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. The Bawu.²⁶

²⁴. Owen and Partridge, 1.

²⁵. 贺锡德."中国少数民族乐器介绍之八——西南地区少数民族乐器葫芦笙和巴乌." *音响技术* 03(2007); Accessed 4 Mar. 2025, 77.

²⁶. Bawu, *Baltimore Recorders*, Accessed 10 Feb. 2025, https://www.baltimorerecorders.org/html/instruments/bawu_sem.html

Nai Guo Hou is a folk solo piece that is originally played on the folk instrument bawu, however, this folk piece can be played on other folk instruments of the Yi ethnic minority group too. I have found a CD online that recorded solo performances of *Nai Guo Hou* on various different folk instruments, including the instrument Sanxian.²⁷

In this second movement, the pitch materials of the piano are taken inspiration from the folk song *Ashima*. *Ashima* is originally a long narrative poem of the Sani communities (撒尼) of Yi people (彝族), primarily passed down orally among the people in Yunnan Province. This beautiful and distinctive epic represents the collective creativity and spirit of the Sani communities of Yi people. It has been sung and shared across generations, maintaining its deep connection to the community and its cultural heritage. The story of *Ashima* is about a woman who courageously resists oppressive forces, and her name is Ashima. This narrative captures the resilient and upright spirit of the Sani people, expressing their values, beliefs, and cultural identity. With growing significant importance for anthropology, ethnology, and folklore research, *Ashima* has gained widespread recognition from scholars in China and abroad. It stands as a cultural symbol of the Sani communities and the Yi ethnic group as a whole.²⁸

An interesting aspect of *Ashima*—this long narrative poem—is its depiction of the Yi ethnic minority group’s strong connection to the folk wind instrument kouxian, emphasizing their love for the instrument to that of a cherished baby. As we have

²⁷. 中國少數民族音樂集成, 第 6 輯, 雲南彝族音樂專輯 CD 195, 搖籃, 1995. CD.<https://www.books.com.tw/products/0020115332?srsItd=AfmBOorm2sbmbokH8adQLohJJa4z7T0mJXQR5Ip0YsItKWSgazI6q6GA>

²⁸. “云南少数民族口传经典史诗彝族撒尼叙事长诗《阿诗玛》.” *创造* 31.02(2023):82.

discussed earlier in this chapter, the kouxian serves as the inspiration for the first movement of this piece.

Microtones

A microtone refers to any musical interval that is smaller than a semitone. In the second movement, Chen Yi includes a large number of microtones throughout the entire movement. In general, composers use various markings to indicate microtones, and these differences in notation may reflect variations in the size of the intervals, for example, specifying whether the pitch is exactly, more than, or less than a quarter step. Instead of using the more common microtone markings that we often see in Bartók's and Lutosławski's works, Chen Yi uses the following symbols to indicate microtones in this movement (see Figure 5).

The size of microtones varies depending on the composer. For example, some composers may envision intervals smaller than half a semitone, while others may refer to any size of intervals outside the traditional twelve-tone system, including those found in folk music scale systems, such as the pentatonic scales in Southeast Asia.²⁹

²⁹. Paul Griffiths, Mark Lindley, and Ioannis Zannos. "Microtone." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 22 Dec. 2024, 1. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000018616>.

I have confirmed with Chen Yi that all the microtones in *Three Bagatelles from China West* indicate quarter steps. An upward arrow indicates a quarter step above the written note, while a downward arrow indicates a quarter step below the written note (as shown in Figure 5). However, there are no upward arrows in this composition, meaning there are no quarter steps above the written notes—but only quarter steps below them.



Figure 5. Chen Yi's Notation Marking of Microtones.

The two examples below show where the microtone markings are placed with the notes in *Three Bagatelles from China West* (see Examples 3 and 4). Sometimes the marking is right next to the note, while sometimes it is placed below the flat sign (*b*). This difference may be due to the notation software used.



Example 3. Chen Yi, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano),

Nai Guo Hou, m. 155.



Example 4. Chen Yi, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano),
Nai Guo Hou, m. 154.

Playing microtones on the cello while performing with the piano can be challenging, considering the piano is a well-tempered instrument, making it difficult to adjust the cello's intonation for microtones. Understanding that to executing microtones precisely at a quarter step can be challenging in a musical context, considering factors such as rhythm and tempo, it is still essential for the cellist to have a clear auditory image of the microtones, as they might otherwise be perceived as out of tune by other performers.

Chen Yi has included a significant number of microtones in this movement. The figure below provides an excerpt illustrating the density of microtones within one single phrase (see Example 5).



Example 5. Chen Yi, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano),
Nai Guo Hou, mm. 153-155.

Extended Fingering Technique

One remarkable technical challenge in this movement is the extended fingering technique on the cello, which requires complex and unconventional finger placements and bowing technique. Regarding fingering placement, this composition includes many demanding fingerings that would have been simpler to perform on a wind instrument, as in the original version for flute and piano. This type of fingering often requires unnatural hand positions or awkward finger extensions. They may involve non-standard finger crossing, finger extensions and stretches, unusual finger combinations, and twisted hand rotations, all of which can affect intonation and stability of the performer.

In my interview with Chen Yi, she mentioned the use of such twisted fingerings is inspired by her early professional experience playing the violin in a professional Beijing Opera ensemble, which often demands complicated hand positions and awkward finger placements on the violin. This type of fingering placement appears throughout the entire second movement in the cello part, with an intensity that recurs multiple times within a

single phrase. Below is an example of a passage in *Three Bagatelles from China West* that requires twisted fingerings on the cello (see Example 6).

The image shows a musical score for cello, Example 6, from Chen Yi's *Three Bagatelles from China West*. The score is in bass clef and spans measures 141 to 144. Measures 141, 142, and 143 are circled in orange, highlighting string crossings. Measure 144 features a 'slow gliss.' and a 'S.P.' marking. Dynamics include <f> and mp. A box labeled 'D' is above measure 143.

Example 6. Chen Yi, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano),
Nai Guo Hou, mm. 141-143.

Bowing is another technical challenge compared to the flute, especially in sections with frequent, fast string crossings throughout this movement. These passages demand a high level of precision and accuracy from the cellist, requiring excellent coordination between the right hand, which must execute the bowing and string crossings as cleanly as possible, and the left hand, which must quickly adapt to position changes. Remarkably, many of those string crossings start from the up bow on the cello, adding to the challenge. The complexity of these techniques presents a level of difficulty that contrasts significantly with the more straightforward execution on a wind instrument like the flute. This is an example of a phrase that requires approximately six times of string crossings, depending on the chosen position and strings that I highlighted in orange (see Example 7).

Strings on the Cello

C

mp

II III II III III II III II

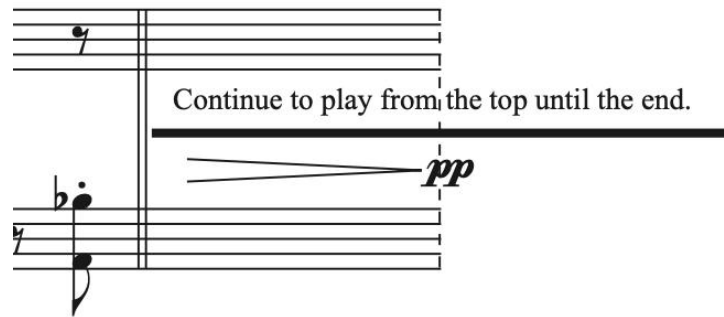
Example 7. Chen Yi, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano),
Nai Guo Hou, mm. 135-136.

The accompaniment part in this movement is using the effect of ostinato, in this version, it is the piano. An ostinato effect refers to the repeated use of a musical pattern multiple times in continuation while other elements of the music typically evolve and vary. This straightforward and memorable compositional technique is commonly found in oral musical traditions worldwide. Most importantly, it is often being used to support other voices in the music passages. The pattern of ostinato requires a repeated rhythmic structure.³⁰

The use of ostinato effect has increased the freedom and unpredictability in each performance, as the collaboration between the cello and piano varies each time, making every performance unique. Chen Yi mentioned that this approach is inspired by her early experience in the Beijing Opera ensemble, specifically the “action strings (行弦)” effect

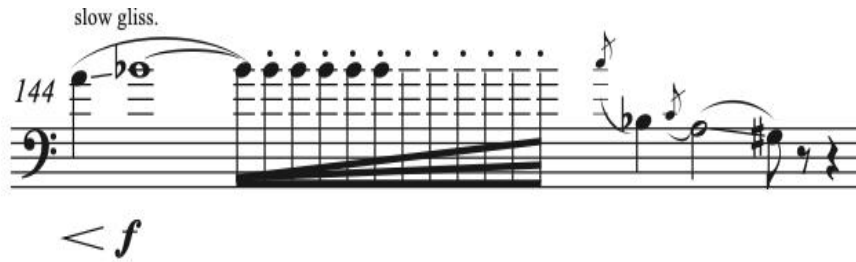
³⁰ Laure Schnapper, “Ostinato.” *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 22 Dec. 2024, 1. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000020547>.

in Beijing Opera. This is a compositional technique enables the accompaniment to connect to the main instrument at any spot in the music, including rests, to ensure the music continues in Chinese traditional opera. This technique is also similar to the looping patterns found in jazz music. Below is Chen Yi's instruction for the accompaniment part on achieving this effect (see Example 8).



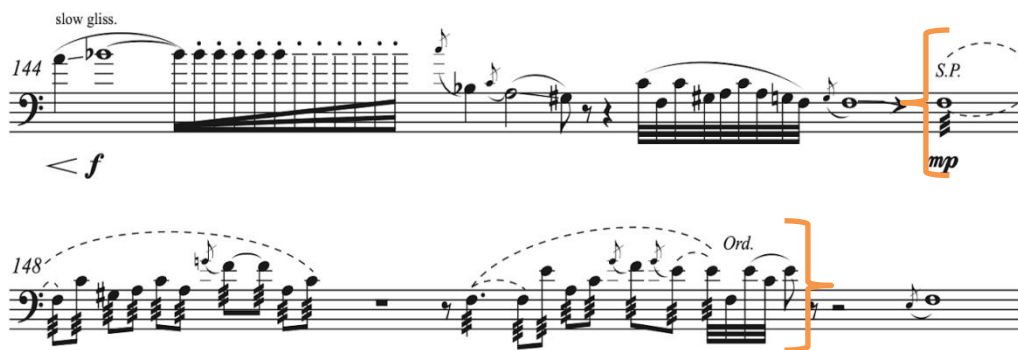
Example 8. Chen Yi, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano),
Nai Guo Hou, m. 120.

There are several passages in this movement where slow glissandos are required on the cello (see Example 9). Cello performers typically use increased bow pressure and a slower bow speed to achieve a natural and slow glissando. In contrast, producing a glissando, especially a slow one, is quite challenging for wind instruments, as the instrument's structural limitations, which restrict control over this effect. As a result, the cello, and string instruments in general, are better suited for achieving this particular sound in this context.



Example 9. Chen Yi, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano),
Nai Guo Hou, mm. 143-145.

There is a section near the end of the second movement with two phrases featuring tremolo performed at the tip of the bow on cello (see Example 10). This passage evokes an exotic, folk-like character, creating a magical atmosphere that transforms the movement's intense energy, driven by fast thirty-second notes, into something more mysterious and delicate.



Example 10. Chen Yi, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano),
Nai Guo Hou, mm. 144-152.

I have also discussed this passage with my pianist during rehearsals, and we both agreed that this tremolo passage serves as a useful cue, signaling the approach of the movement's conclusion in our collaboration. Given that the pianist plays an ostinato pattern throughout the entire movement, it can be challenging to keep track of the cellist's position in the movement. Therefore, the tremolo phrases provide a helpful reference indication for timing and synchronization.

Regarding bar lines, similar to the first movement, the cello section in the second movement does not have clear bar lines as well, allowing the cellist to fully shape the phrasing and determine the length of the thirty-second notes independently. Similarly, the piano part in the second movement maintains a strictly measured structure with consistent bar lines throughout the entire movement, as it is driven by a steady ostinato pattern.

Regarding all the whole notes in the cello part for this movement, as well as the other two movements in the piece, I inquired with Chen Yi about the timing and duration of those whole notes. She instructed that the whole notes in this composition should not be counted, instead, performers should focus on making the phrases and whole notes flow as naturally as possible musically. Much like farm laborers, who do not typically count when they play, performers should approach this music with a natural, free-flowing style, similar to how wind instruments and vocal arts are performed in folk traditions.

Analysis of the Third Movement-*Dou Duo*

The third movement is titled *Dou Duo*. This inspiration in this movement comes from the folk vocal song *Dou Duo* (兜朵) as well as the sound effect of the Lusheng ensemble (芦笙合奏) playing of the Miao ethnic minority group (苗族). This movement is set in a 2/4 time signature, with a tempo of approximately $\text{♩} = 100$. The duration of this movement is around one minute long. The musical expression indicated at the top of this movement is “simply”.

The Miao people is an ethnic minority group in Southwestern China. They primarily live in the Guizhou, Yunnan, Hunan, Sichuan, Guangxi, Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, and Hainan provinces, as well as smaller communities in neighboring countries like Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. The Miao ethnic minority group has abundant traditions and festivals, including the Miao New Year and the Lusheng Festival, which are central to their cultural identity.

The lusheng is one of the most iconic instruments of the Miao ethnic minority group. It is a traditional mouth organ that consists of multiple bamboo pipes, each equipped with a free reed, inserted into a long hardwood blowing tube. The instrument's construction includes the sheng dou (笙斗/the body of the instruments), sheng guan (笙管/the pipes of the instruments), and reed (簧片). The lusheng in the Southwestern region of China typically consists of six pipes of sheng guan in varying lengths, assembled together in a wooden sheng dou.³¹ Lusheng comes in various different sizes, ranging from

³¹. 贺锡德."中国少数民族乐器介绍之九——西南各少数民族喜爱的芦笙." 音响技术 .04(2007):75.

very small to several meters in length.

The lusheng is typically played in ensembles with other instruments, producing rich, layered harmonies and polyphonic textures. Each bamboo pipe contains a triangular free reed made of bamboo or bronze, housed within the wind-chest, and has a finger hole above it. Some versions of lusheng feature pipes with multiple reeds to enhance volume and resonance, contributing to the instrument's distinctive and dynamic sound.³² Below is a photo of lusheng (see Figure 6).



Figure 6. Lusheng.³³

³². Alan R. Thrasher, "Lusheng." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 11 Feb. 2025, 1. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000046584>.

³³. Lusheng, *Chinese Instruments*, Accessed 11 Feb. 2025, <https://www.zgmzyq.cn/en/chinese-musical-instruments/lusheng/>

The piano accompaniment in this movement begins at a very fast tempo, contrasting sharply with the first two movements. This tempo evokes the sound of the Lusheng ensemble of Miao people. In Guizhou, the Miao community combines Lusheng music with traditional dance, creating a dynamic and celebratory performance. In this movement, Chen Yi likely aims to replicate the interplay of music and dance in the piano's entrance, capturing the festive and lively spirit of the cultural tradition of Miao people.

From a performer's perspective, it is easy to overemphasize slides and glissandos during the frequent position changes on the cello in this movement. However, maintaining control over these shifts is essential for achieving clarity and precision. Unlike the flute, which has limited capacity for slides due to its structure, the cello can naturally produce subtle slides, making it a better fit for this movement. Given that the movement is based on the folk vocal song *Dou Duo*, where slight slides are an organic part of singing, controlled use of slides on the cello can beautifully capture the vocal element of this movement. However, overuse of sliding should be avoided to ensure the performance remains true to the character of the music. Unfortunately, there is not much information available about the folk vocal song *Dou Duo*.

Unlike the rhythmic freedom present in the other two movements, this movement requires a more consistent tempo and rhythm to ensure synchronization with the accompaniment. Chen Yi instructed that the tempo of this movement should remain around quarter note =100, from the beginning till the end, with "*Simply*." The piano plays dense and continuous sixteenth-note chords throughout the entire movement, that it is challenging for the soloist to recover if they lose their place. Given the reaction time

needed for the piano strings to resonate in such fast passages, especially in coordination with the cello, maintaining a strict tempo is crucial for successful coordination and performance.

There is a recurring rhythmic figure throughout the entire third movement (see Example 11), with both notes accented each time it appears. This deliberate emphasis highlights the significance and energy of the rhythm in this movement. It drives the musical flow forward each time it appears, requiring performers to articulate it clearly and precisely.



Example 11. Chen Yi, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano),
Dou Duo, mm. 188-189.

The articulation of this recurring figure is particularly important when played on instruments, as it highlights the intended musical expression and phrasings. However, in the vocal version of the folk song *Dou Duo*, it is likely that the singer delivers these moments with a lighter emphasis, treating the accented and unaccented notes with less contrast due to the natural limitations of the human voice.

Regarding all the grace notes in this movement, it is important to remember that all the grace notes are played before the beat. This timing ensures that the downbeat note aligns with the lower register of the piano, specifically the left hand of the pianist, creating a specific harmony between the two instruments on the downbeat. This is important to maintain a steady musical pause and tempo between the two instruments throughout the entire movement. The example below illustrates the importance of ensuring the note following the grace notes should synchronize with the chord of the piano (see Example 12).

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a cello and piano. The first system, starting at measure 176, shows the cello part with a grace note followed by a quarter note. An orange box highlights this quarter note, which aligns with a piano chord. The piano part features a steady accompaniment of chords. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The second system, starting at measure 180, continues the cello part with another orange box highlighting a note that aligns with a piano chord. Dynamics include *f* and *mp*.

Example 12. Chen Yi, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano),
Dou Duo, mm. 176-183.

In terms of performance practice, this movement presents a distinct contrast to the first two movements. It should convey a lively and energetic character not only through musical gestures but also through the performer's physical expression and posture. The piano part should apply minimal and short pedaling to maintain clarity, ensuring that each note remains crisp and articulate while delivering the vibrant and rhythmic energy of this movement.

Conclusion of the Extended Techniques on Cello in this Piece

As we have discussed in the previous chapters, this composition incorporates several extended techniques on the cello that are not commonly found in standard cello repertoire. Below is a table that outlines all the extended techniques used in this composition, providing a general overview of what they are (see Table 4).

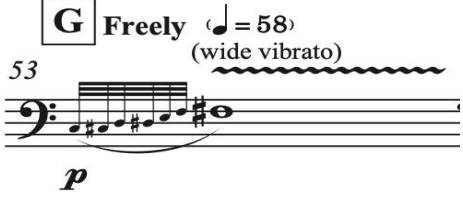



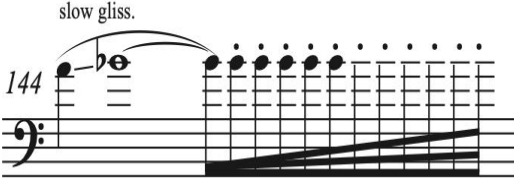

Name of the Technique	Measure Number	Music Example
Wide vibrato	m. 53	 <p>53 G Freely (♩ = 58) (wide vibrato) <i>p</i></p>
Very fast thirty-second notes	mvt. II	
Microtones	mvt. II	
glissando	m. 137	
Slow glissando	m. 144	 <p>144 slow gliss.</p>
Tremolo on the tip of the bow	mm. 147-150	 <p>S.P. <i>mp</i></p>

Table 4. Example of the Extended Techniques in Chen Yi's *Three Bagatelles*

from China West (for Cello and Piano).

This composition features several notable extended techniques on the cello. I have selected two to highlight and explain here. First is the use of wide vibrato in the first movement at measure 53 (see Table 4). My interpretation and execution of this vibrato involve starting with a slow and wide vibrato that gradually becomes narrower and faster. The imagery I associate with this vibrato is an attempt to mimic the sound of a folk wind instrument resonating in an open area.

The recurring thirty-second note passages throughout the second movement showcase another remarkable technical feature on the cello (see Table 4). This figure consistently drives the musical flow and contrasts dramatically with the steady rhythms of the piano accompaniment. It almost acts like a grace note, adding expressivity and imagination to the musical passage.

Comparison of the Cello and Piano Version with Other Arrangements

As Chen Yi's *Three Bagatelles from China West* has been performed with various instrumental ensembles in the world, and I will be presenting the world premiere of the cello and piano version. This section provides an overview and feedback comparing the different versions of this piece from a listener's perspective, based on performances on various versions that I have found on YouTube.

Version for flute and piano

This is a video recording by Arin Sarkissian, flute and Chi-Jo Lee, piano.³⁴ This version closely resembles the version for cello and piano, where the piano serves as the accompanying instrument. The performance is remarkable, showing a wide dynamic range from the flutist. The collaboration between the flutist and pianist is well-balanced, with their music flowing naturally like an engaging dialogue.

In the first movement, the flute plays the grace notes with greater delicacy and a more airy timbre compared to the cello's leading melody. The flute better imitates the folk instrument *lerong*, as both share similar wind characteristics. In the second movement, the flute executes the thirty-second notes with a faster speed and lightness than the cello. These passages requires a more demanding challenge for the cello to deliver with the same agility and lightness. In the third movement, the cello generally achieves clearer articulation due to the nature of its bowing technique, which allows for more distinct separation between notes, especially in fast or accented passages. The bow provides more direct control over note length, attack, and articulation. However, the flute's unique vibrato allows for a distinctive prolongation of notes, creating an intriguing expressive effect. And the flute carry a brighter sound in this movement.

³⁴. Arin Sarkissian, "Chen Yi - Three Bagatelles from China West for Flute and Piano," *YouTube video*, posted March 8, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LV9PIHbaNRU>.

Version for flute and cello

This is a video recording by Eva Ding, flute and Emma Kato, cello.³⁵ One of the major differences between this version and the cello and piano version is that, in this version, the cello plays the piano part, which is the accompaniment, while the flute takes the main melody.

As the accompaniment in the first movement, the cello is played with less articulation than the piano due to the differences in the instruments. However, in the second movement, the cello can produce glissandos and natural slides—something the piano cannot do. Additionally, the cello offers flexibility in adjusting intonation, making it easier to match the flute, especially on microtones in the second movement. From a listener's perspective, in the third movement, the accompaniment on the cello differs significantly from that on the piano. The cello provides a lower yet lighter and more bouncing sound in this movement.

³⁵. KOE, "Three Bagatelles from China West arr. for Flute & Cello - Chen Yi," *YouTube video*, posted June 27, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rr09Rr0CIoU>.

Version for violin and cello

This is a video recording by Xueao Yang, violin and Kendra Grittani, cello.³⁶ In this version, the violin takes the main melody, while the cello serves as the accompaniment. One of the key similarities between the violin and cello is that both instruments can produce glissandos, vibrato, and a similar tonal quality despite their difference in pitch range, making their sound blend seamlessly.

In the first movement, while the cello provides more resonance in the edition where it plays the melody, the brighter tone of the violin allows for a wider range of dynamics and color changes. Personally, I particularly enjoy the second movement, where both instruments can execute similar slides and microtones, creating a beautifully unified sound.

Version for violin and piano

This is a video recording by Patrick Yim, violin and Kiu Tung Poon, piano.³⁷ In this version, the violin takes the main melody, while the piano serves as the accompaniment. The violin produces a light, delicate, and bright timbre. Notably, in the

³⁶. Kendra's Cello, "Three Bagatelles from China West arr. for Violin & Cello by Chen Yi," *YouTube video*, posted March 31, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJTSEP8moWA>.

³⁷. Patrick Yim, "CHEN Yi: Three Bagatelles from China West for Violin and Piano (2009) [Patrick Yim, Kiu Tung Poon]," *YouTube video*, posted February 5, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TP69btmI0gA>.

grace notes and fast thirty-second-note passages, it delivers a lively and expressive sound. Its bright tone also evokes the festive atmosphere of the music of the ethnic minority groups.

Version for flute and guitar

This is a video recording by Kimberly McCoul Risinger, flute and Angelo L. Favis, guitar.³⁸ In this version, the flute takes the main melody, while the guitar serves as the accompaniment. The combination of flute and guitar is innovative and refreshing to watch.

However, in the first movement, there are moments when the flute overshadows the guitar, especially when the guitar plays in its lower register. The guitar solo at the beginning of the second movement is particularly interesting to watch and listen to, especially as the guitarist added unique ornamentation to vary the notes. In the third movement, it is difficult to figure out the individual notes played by the guitar, especially when it is overlap with the flute. Instead, the guitar primarily provides a sound effect, which aligns with Chen Yi's intention for this movement—to create a “lusheng ensemble” sound effect.

³⁸. angelofavisguitar, “CHEN YI: Three Bagatelles from China West,” *YouTube video*, posted February 13, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwnDWG_QT-0.

Version for clarinet and piano

This is a video recording by Emilio Rosario, clarinet and Mio Arai, piano.³⁹ In this version, the flute takes the main melody, while the guitar serves as the accompaniment. Compared to the previous editions, where the flute takes the lead, the clarinet generates a lower, warmer, and rounder sound. This tonal quality creates a contrast with the flute's brighter, lighter timbre. Since the clarinet is also a wind instrument, it is also closely resembles the folk wind instruments featured in this movement, contributing to the piece's folkloric atmosphere and adding variety to the overall texture.

Southwestern Folk Influence in Selected Works by Chen Yi

Chen Yi has composed numerous works inspired by the musical and cultural traditions of Southwestern China. To provide broader context for her artistic exploration of this region, I have selected several significant compositions of her that demonstrate her engagement with Southwestern Chinese influences in this section.

In Chen Yi's *Three Dances from China South* for dizi, erhu, pipa, and zheng, although the first two movements of this composition took inspiration from the musical

³⁹. Emilio Rosario, "Three Bagatelles from China West: Shan Ge (Mvt 1)- Chen Yi," *YouTube video*, posted May 21, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CHYesZYIY4>.

traditions of Guangdong and Hainan provinces in Southern China. The final movement, however, it is inspired by the Lusheng ensemble of the Dong ethnic minority group in Guangxi province, which is broadly considered part of Southwestern China. The Lusheng ensemble is an important source of influence and inspiration for many of Chen Yi's works, including the *Three Bagatelles From China West* in this thesis, since she first experienced the ceremonial performances of Lusheng ensemble in the 1980s. The rhythmic patterns characteristic in this final movement also imitates the effect of the Lusheng ensemble, and the lyrical melody is adapted from a folk song in Guangxi province.⁴⁰

In Chen Yi's *Suite from China West*, this is a four-movement composition that is originally written for two pianos. This composition incorporates multiple folk songs and traditional musical materials from ethnic minorities in Western China. Chen Yi mentioned in her notes that this piece has folk music elements drawn from the folk songs *Gadameilin* and *Pastoral* of the Meng ethnic minority group; *Ashima* of the Yi ethnic minority group; *Du Mu* and *Amalياهو* of the Zang ethnic minority group; and *Dou Duo* and the Lusheng ensemble music of the Miao ethnic minority group.⁴¹

In Chen Yi's *A Set of Chinese Folk Songs* for S.A.T.B. Chorus, the tenth movement incorporates the elements of the mountain song from the Yi ethnic minority group in Guizhou province, along with most songs from the Han people in China.⁴² The Han people make up approximately 93% of China's population. This is one of her many

⁴⁰. Miller and Edwards, "Solo and Chamber Music Works," 99-100.

⁴¹. Chen Yi, *Suite from China West*, (Malvern, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2007).

⁴². Miller and Edwards, "Choral and Solo Vocal Works," 128.

compositions that show her deep understanding of a wide variety of musical traditions that go beyond traditional folk music.

Revisions Needed in the Score

During my study and research of this piece, I have discovered several printing errors in the score. These typos may have resulted from invisible lines across bars. I have reported these issues to the composer, Chen Yi, and they will be addressed and revised according in future editions.

1. At bar 215, also the final note of the piano in the third movement, *Dou Duo*, this note should be an octave higher (see circled in Example 13).

The image shows a musical score for the third movement, *Dou Duo*, from Chen Yi's *Three Bagatelles from China West* for Cello and Piano. The score is for measures 212 to 215. The piano part is in the lower register, and the final note in measure 215 is circled in orange. A text box next to the circled note reads "An Octave Higher". The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp* and *p*, and fingering numbers like 6 and 8^{va}.

Example 13. Chen Yi, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano),

Dou Duo, mm. 212-215.

2. The original tempo marking for the third movement, *Dou Duo*, is a quarter note = 88. However, this tempo feels too slow to present the intensive energy of this movement. After discussing with Chen Yi, we have adjusted it to quarter note = 100, rather than 88.

3. At bar 56 in the first movement, *Shan Ge*, there appears to be an error in the placement of the glissando marking (see markings in Example 14).

The image shows a musical score for Cello (Vc.) in the first movement of *Shan Ge*. The score is in bass clef and begins at measure 55. The tempo marking is *mf* (mezzo-forte). The music consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. In measure 56, there is a glissando marking, which is a box containing the word "Glissando" in orange text. The glissando is placed over a note that is not the final note of the measure. The score ends in measure 57 with a *f* (forte) dynamic marking.

Example 14. Chen Yi, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano),

Shan Ge, mm. 55-57.

4. At bar 131 in the second movement, *Nai Guo Hou*, there should be a sharp (#) sign to indicate a D-sharp (see circled in Example 15).



Example 15. Chen Yi, *Three Bagatelles from China West* (for Cello and Piano),
Nai Guo Hou, mm. 130-131.

CHAPTER 4

**THE APPLICATION OF CHINESE SOUTHWESTERN FOLK MUSIC TO
WESTERN BOWED STRING INSTRUMENTS: VIOLIN, VIOLA, CELLO, AND
DOUBLE BASS**

The differences between Western classical music and Chinese traditional music significantly impact the integration and collaboration between the two musical traditions, particularly in terms of instrument construction, technical limitations, and distinct musical traditions. This chapter explores the application of Chinese Southwestern folk music to Western bowed string instruments: violin, viola, cello, and double bass. This chapter examines the key differences between the two musical traditions and discusses the technical challenges and considerations involved in the adaptation process.

The Factors of Instruments

Aside from the differences in musical traditions across cultures, the physical structure of an instrument plays a crucial role in shaping its tone, vibration, function, and overall sound production. Various factors, including the shape, size, materials, and construction techniques of the instrument, directly influence its timbre, resonance, and ability to produce and sustain certain pitches. The measurements of different components—such as the body, strings, and sound holes—determine the instrument’s acoustic properties and how it responds and adapts to various playing techniques and sound production. Additionally, the choice of materials, whether wood, metal, bamboo,

or other natural elements, significantly affects the instrument's tonal characteristics and expressive capabilities.

Furthermore, acoustics play a significant role in shaping musical expression in both traditions. The open-air performance settings in many Chinese folk musical traditions influence the way folk instruments are designed and played, often featuring bright and powerful tones that carry well outdoors. Meanwhile, Western classical instruments have evolved over time within indoor concert hall settings, emphasizing balance, sustain, and harmonic blending. Understanding these acoustic differences is important when adapting Chinese folk music to Western instruments, requiring adjustments in articulation, phrasing, and interpretation to preserve the essence of the music.

Due to the differences between musical instruments across cultures, adapting music from one tradition to another requires careful consideration and adjustment. The thought process involves imagining how the folk musical material would sound on the Western instrument—assessing whether it feels natural or is difficult to produce, particularly with unusual pitches and ornamentations. If challenges arise, one must explore possible solutions, technical adaptations, including creative reinterpretations to achieve a similar sound effect and timbre. Additionally, it is essential to consider how these choices would influence the overall musical expression and performance, ultimately shaping the way the adapted piece is perceived and experienced.

It is important to recognize the challenges surrounding the preservation and inheritance of instrument-making traditions in Southwestern China, as well as some other

ethnic minority regions.⁴³ Many folk instrument makers are elderly, and there are few young artisans taking up the craft. This may be due to several factors, including the bigger popularity of more widely recognized Chinese traditional instruments like erhu and guzheng, and the challenges of transportation and limited access for information in the ethnic minority regions. Additionally, age, health, and family circumstances of these elder craftsmen put their expertise at risk of fading and declining. This decline may trigger a significant threat later on, potentially leading to the disappearance of one or even several distinctive folk instruments from their ethnic traditions.

When adapting Chinese Southwestern folk music to Western bowed instruments, the approach varies significantly depending on whether the source material originates from a folk vocal song, or a folk wind instrument, or a folk bowed string instrument. This is because of the fundamental differences in playing position and performance techniques across these instruments.

One major challenge is the differences in bowing techniques and finger placement between instruments. For instance, Western bowed string instruments have a fingerboard that allows for natural glissando, which closely mimicking the expressive slides of the human voice in folk vocal music. However, achieving the same level of articulation and clarity as folk wind instruments can be difficult on Western bowed string instruments.

Additionally, adapting the distinct ornamentation and articulation techniques found in folk music to Western bowed instruments presents significant technical challenges. This process demands creative solutions to preserve both the authenticity and

⁴³. 杨琛."中国西南少数民族乐器的数字化采集、保护与推广研究." *黄钟(武汉音乐学院学报)*.03(2022):48. doi:10.19706/j.cnki.cn42-1062/j.2022.03.005.

expressiveness of the original music while accommodating the technical constraints of Western string playing.

Music Theory Systems

The foundational music theory systems of Western classical music and Chinese folk music differ significantly. This section is going to explore key aspects that such as tuning systems, tessitura and range, rhythm, counterpoint and harmony, as well as notation and transcription methods between Western classical music and Chinese traditional music.

In Western classical music, common tuning systems include twelve-tone equal temperament, pythagorean tuning, just intonation, well temperament, and meantone temperament. These systems form the foundation of the structure of the music. Similarly, Chinese traditional music utilizes various tuning systems, such as the pentatonic scale system (five-tone scale), the hexatonic scale system (six-tone scale), the heptatonic scale system (seven-tone scale), and instrument-specific tunings, each contributing to its unique tonal characteristics.

Unlike Western classical music, most Chinese traditional music does not follow twelve-tone equal temperament. Instead, it employs flexible pitch variations and non-tempered intervals. Chinese Southwestern folk music generally follows these traditional tuning approaches, often incorporating flexible pitch variations and non-tempered intervals that differ significantly from Western harmonic structures.

The complexity of these different tuning systems influences multiple aspects when it comes to musical performances. In the example of string instruments, the differences in tuning impact string tension, which in turn affects resonance, timbre, key, melody, and harmony. In Chinese traditional stringed instruments, such as the erhu, pipa, and guzheng, tuning is often adjusted to accommodate regional styles and specific repertoires. This adaptability contrasts with Western bowed string instruments, which are typically designed for fixed-pitch tuning. When adapting Chinese folk music to Western string instruments, musicians must navigate these tuning differences, sometimes modifying finger placement, bowing techniques, or even re-tuning strings to achieve a more authentic sound.

Moreover, the harmonic framework differs significantly. While Western music often emphasizes harmonic progressions and functional tonality, Chinese folk music, also in Southwestern areas, relies more on modal structures, heterophonic textures, and subtle pitch inflections. These differences present both challenges and opportunities for musicians attempting to merge elements of Chinese folk music to Western classical music techniques and instruments.

The concept of counterpoint is fundamental in Western classical music, emphasizing the independence of multiple voices. However, in Chinese folk music, harmony, counterpoint, and polyphony are not the primary focus. Instead, the texture is often characterized by heterophony, where multiple musicians perform the same melody with slight variations in ornamentation, phrasing, or rhythm.

In music, “tessitura” refers to the range of pitches that an instrument or a singer can comfortably and effectively play or sing. It is different from “range,” which refers to

the total range from the lowest to the highest note an instrument or a singer can produce. Tessitura focuses on the specific section of the range where the performer is most comfortable and where the instrument or voice sounds its best. Considering the range of both instruments and singers is essential when transcribing or adapting music from one tradition to another. Differences in tessitura, pitch range, and tonal characteristics can significantly impact how the music is reinterpreted.

The tessitura and range are key elements in Chinese traditional music, influencing the overall texture, timbre, and the capacity of expression of the music. Although Chinese traditional music does not prioritize wide ranges or extreme tessitura in the same manner as Western classical music, these aspects still play a crucial role in shaping the musical characteristics and styles of both instrumental and vocal traditions in Chinese music. In Chinese traditional music, the tessitura of the melody is mostly high, and the treble instruments usually dominate the melody, like erhu, pipa, suona, and etcetera.⁴⁴

Throughout the history of Chinese traditional music, single melody—or the primary voice—has been a main focus.⁴⁵ As a result, higher-pitched instruments frequently take the lead in solo performances, chamber music, and ensemble settings, contributing to the overall balance and musical expression. Chinese traditional instruments such as the erhu, pipa, guzheng, and suona often dominate the melody due to their naturally higher tessitura. Their broad pitch ranges enable expressive melodic lines

⁴⁴. Jones, “Basic Musical Features,” 110.

⁴⁵. Jiang Jing, “The Influence of Traditional Chinese Music on Professional Instrumental Composition.” (*Asian Music* 22, no. 2, 1991), 89.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/834308>

and virtuosic performances, further emphasizing the importance of melody in Chinese traditional music.

Rhythmically speaking, the aesthetic perception of rhythm differs greatly between the West and China. In Chinese folk music, rhythmic structures tend to be more flexible, often incorporating free and irregular meters and tempos. This characteristic contrasts sharply with the emphasis on regular, strictly defined time signatures, tempos, and rhythms in Western classical music.

Western classical music places significant importance on clear distinctions between strong and weak beats, as well as the structural organization of form, particularly after the Industrial Revolution. In contrast, Chinese folk music, especially that of ethnic minority groups, often features a more flexible rhythmic approach, relying on a single melodic line with a freer timing. Considering the oral transmission of these traditions and the absence of standardized notation in the history, improvisation plays a crucial role, allowing for more rhythmic flexibility and personal expression.

One of the biggest challenges in transcribing and preserving Chinese folk music is the documentation of musical records and scores. Since folk music in the past is often passed down orally without a standardized notation system, especially those with a longer history, tracing the authenticity of interpretation, performance practice, and musical traditions becomes more difficult.

The notation systems of Western classical music and Chinese traditional music differ significantly. Western classical music primarily follows staff notation, whereas Chinese traditional music historically uses gongche notation, and modern Chinese music often uses jianpu notation (numbered notation). Because of the variety of notation

systems in Chinese traditional music, achieving uniformity and consistency in performance practice is more challenging.

Gongche notation is one of the oldest Chinese music notation systems, using Chinese characters (工, 尺, 上, 四, etc.) to represent pitches. It is commonly found in Chinese traditional opera and folk ensembles. However, rhythm and ornamentation are typically conveyed through performance practice rather than explicitly written in the notation.

Jianpu notation, also known as numerical notation, is the most widely used system in modern Chinese music. Instead of placing notes on a staff or tablature, this system assigns numbers (1–7) to scale degrees, similar to Western solfège (Do = 1, Re = 2, Mi = 3, and etcetera). Notably, many Chinese folk songs have been transcribed into jianpu notation for the purpose of education, ensure their preservation, and make them more accessible to a wider audience and musicians.

While Western staff notation is increasingly used in modern Chinese compositions and music schools in China, many contemporary Chinese-born composers, such as Tan Dun, Lei Liang, and Chen Yi, incorporate Chinese traditional musical elements into their compositions using Western music notation. Due to the differences in instruments and timbres, many contemporary composers often include comprehensive instructions or annotations to instruct performers in achieving the desired sound and playing techniques that they envision.

Performer Considerations

Performance practice and techniques have evolved significantly over the centuries because of various factors. These include the expansion of compositional techniques, the increased exposure to folk music leading to the fusion of different musical traditions, and the ongoing exploration of new sound possibilities and ensemble combinations.

Additionally, the developments in instrument construction, the changes in performance aesthetics, and the discovery of music authenticity have also contributed to the evolution of musical interpretation and execution.

Utilizing the same performance technique on a folk tune within a different tonal system can significantly change the listener's musical perception. For example, applying tremolo to a Chinese folk melody on a Western instrument can create a distinctive and exotic effect for the audience because of some unique and memorable characteristics of Chinese folk tonal systems. The interaction between technique and tonality shapes the overall musical expression, influencing how the piece is perceived and experienced.

There are many new approaches to music performance today, regardless of a musician's cultural background or training. In China, unique ensemble combinations have emerged, such as cello with guqin, piano with suona, and the extensive use of cello and double bass in Chinese folk ensembles. Meanwhile, in the Western classical world, symphony orchestras increasingly feature Chinese folk instruments like the pipa, guzheng, and dizi as soloists. This ongoing exchange between composers, performers, sponsors, and audiences highlights a mutual influence, for an increase of cross-cultural collaborations and expanding the sound possibilities of contemporary music.

There are many unconventional and experimental performance techniques in contemporary music. For example, on the cello, performers employ unusual techniques such as extreme sol ponticello, extreme sul tasto, playing on the tailpiece, putting the bow behind the bridge, and integrating electronics or external objects to expand the cello's sonic possibilities. These techniques push the boundaries of traditional cello playing, creating new textures and timbres in contemporary music.

For contemporary techniques, there are various method books and studies that focus on contemporary playing approaches, preparing students to study and perform contemporary compositions. In Alfia Nakipbekova's article, she examines several contemporary method books, including *Pro Musica Nova: Studien zum Spielen Neuer Musik: für Violoncello* (1985), compiled and edited by Siegfried Palm, and *Ten Etudes (Preludes) for Solo Cello* (1974) by Sofia Gubaidulina. She also compares these method books to a traditional cello technique book, the *High School of Cello Playing, Op. 73, 40 Etudes for Solo Cello* by David Popper, illustrating how technical demands have evolved and how contemporary cello performance has expanded in both technique and expressive possibilities.⁴⁶

As musicians, it is our responsibility to cultivate cultural sensitivity when interpreting folk music on Western instruments. Many foreign audiences may not have a clear understanding of music from other cultures, which places us as bridges between traditions and cultures. As performers, we are not only the interpreters but also the

⁴⁶. Alfia Nakipbekova, "Contemporary Cello Technique: Performance and Practice." (*Music & Practice* 6, 2020), 2. <https://www.musicandpractice.org/volume-6/contemporary-cello-technique-performance-and-practice/>.

presenters, introducing and sharing this “new music” with audiences, thus contributing to cross-cultural appreciation and understanding.

Improvisation plays a crucial role in Chinese folk music, contrasting with the more structured tradition of Western classical performance. Due to the oral transmission of folk music traditions and the absence of standard notation systems in the past, performers often have the freedom to interpret melodies with flexibility in rhythm, phrasing, and ornamentation.

The lack of standardized music education in many folk traditions further encourages a more spontaneous and personalized approach to performance. In contrast, Western classical music typically adheres to precisely notated compositions, where improvisation is less common outside of specific historical practices, such as Baroque ornamentation or cadenzas in concertos. This practical difference highlights the contrasting philosophies of musical expression between the two musical traditions—one rooted in flexibility and personal interpretation, the other one emphasizing precision and faithful execution of the composer’s intentions.

Above all, adapting Chinese folk music to Western instruments is more complex than it may initially appear; composers and performers must thoughtfully consider various factors such as instrumentation, stylistic differences, theoretical considerations, and cultural traditions, and make the necessary adjustments to preserve the authenticity of the original music.

CONCLUSION

Music is universal, but with many languages and dialects, that connects people and cultures across different backgrounds. In recent years, the collaboration and integration of Chinese folk music with Western classical music has become a significant focus, with many contemporary composers and musicians contributing to this global connection.

The exploration of Chen Yi's *Three Bagatelles from China West* reveals the remarkable potential that exists at the collaboration of Chinese traditional musical tradition and Western classical musical tradition. This research paper demonstrates how such adaptations can successfully preserve the essential characteristics of Chinese Southwestern folk music while effectively incorporating them into Western string instruments like the cello. Chen Yi's *Three Bagatelles from China West* also exemplifies how cross-cultural musical collaboration can produce compositions of artistic significance that honor both traditions without compromising the integrity of either.

Through comprehensive musical analysis and performance guidance, this study contributes to our understanding of the practical considerations involved in incorporating different musical systems, instrumental techniques, and cultural contexts. The adaptation process highlights both the challenges and creative possibility that emerge when navigating between Chinese and Western musical traditions. Chen Yi's compositional approach provides valuable examples into how these challenges can be addressed with sensitivity and artistic vision.

Despite these contributions, this study represents only one perspective within a much broader field awaiting further exploration. Additional research is needed to

examine other composers' approaches to similar cross-cultural adaptation, particularly focusing on different ethnic minority traditions within China. Comparative studies examining adaptations for various instruments would provide valuable context for understanding the specific capabilities and limitations of different instruments. Moreover, ethnomusicological research into performer experiences and audience responses across different cultural backgrounds would enhance our understanding of how such works function in varied performance contexts. Above all, future scholarship in this area has the potential not only to broaden artistic horizons but also contribute to more cultural exchange and understanding in our world.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF SELECTED PERFORMANCES OF

THREE BAGATELLES FROM CHINA WEST

(Provided by Chen Yi as of 3/20/2025)

Three Bagatelles from China West for flute and piano, or 2 flutes (2006) [3 mvts, 10']; commissioned by Meet The Composer's Flute Book for the 21st Century, dedicated to Gilbert Kaplan; premiered at Weill Hall by Marya Martin, 3/29/07, NYC; adapted For guanzi & sheng, performed at BMMF, 5/27/07, China; (violin & viola version) at Sunday Afternoon Concert Series of The Mallarme Chamber Players in Durham, NC, 2/3/08; adapted for double bass and piano, by Basso Moderno Duo (Allan Von Schenkel and Kristen Williams) throughout 08/09 season in a concert of NYWC composers (at the Montpelier Arts Center Recital Series, Washington DC on 10/11/08; at Fordham University in NYC on 10/22/08; in Romania and Bulgaria In December 2008; in National Women's Month concert in Albany and at the Women Composers Festival of Hartford in CT, March 2009); at UMKC Musica Nova, 9/25/08; Webster University Community Music School, 4/18/09, St. Louis, MO; at Music09, Blonay, Switzerland on 6/23/09; by Marya Martin on 11/8/09, Manhattan School of Music, NYC; by Cheryl Xuanzi Lim at Peabody 4/20/3010; by Susan Hoepfner and Lydia Wong at U Toronto on 1/27/11, at Canadian Embassy in Mexico City and at U Texas-Austin in Feb. 2011; by Patricia Spencer and Linda Hall, Merkin Hall, NYC, 3/2/2011; by Grace Lai at GH, UMKC, 4/28/2011; by Hannah Porter at Bishop Spencer Place, KC, MO, 4/30/2011; by Patricia Spencer and Linda Hall, at Bard Hall, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, 6/26/2011; by Small-Yang Duo in UTC on 9/17/2011, in Southern Adventist University College of Music, TN on 9/19/2011; at University of Louisville New Music Festival 11/9/2011, KY; by Linda Chatterton and Leeza Beriyeva in Old Bisbee, AZ, 1/28&29/2012; in MTSU in March 2012; by Linda Chatterton and Anna Guony Guomundsdottir on 3/11/2012 in Reykjavik, Iceland; by Mary Au and Sheryl Cohen in

NYC, 3/26/2012; at the Greater Portland Flute Society Flute Fair 2012, in The Old Church, Portland, OR, 4/15/2012; at Humboldt State University New Horizons Festival of Music & Diversity by faculty musicians in Arcata, CA, on 4/22/2012. by Linda Chatterton (flute) and Matthew McCright (piano) at Chicago Cultural Center, 4/30/2012, at Burgess Foundation in Manchester, UK, 8/21/2012, and at Hennepin United Methodist Church Gallery, MN, 9/30/2012; by Sophia Tegart and Rajung Yang at Haddock Hall, University Idaho, 10/11/12; (movement Dou Duo) by Pete Nowlen at VITA program, Sacramento, CA, 10/14/2012; by Shelley Smith at Florida Flute Convention, 1/25/2013; by Qian Jun at the International Clarinet Association Conference, 7/24/2013, Assisi, Italy, in Eastman School on 10/12/2013, at Baylor U, TX on 1/31/2014. (a new version for flute and guitar) by Duo Damiana (Molly Alicia Barth and Dieter Hennings) at the OBF on 7/4/2014; at the 4th Mu Phi Epsilon International Convention, Sacramento, CA, 8/1/2014; by Jordi Torrent and Qiao Zhang at Warwick Arts Center in University of Warwick, in Coventry, UK, on 8/24/2014; by Duo Damiana at Middle Tennessee State University on 9/9/2014, at Murray State University on 9/10/2014, at University of Kentucky on 9/11/2014, and at Vanderbilt University on 9/13/2014; by Lin Lin at Trinity College of Music, Faversham Assembly rooms, Preston Street, Faversham, Kent, ME13(8PG, UK, 10:45am, 1/24/2015; by Duo Damiana (Molly Barth and Dieter Hennings) at Guzzetta Recital Hall, U. of Akron, OH, 3/1/15, at Chamber Hall, Baldwin Wallace, OH, 3/3/15, at Recital Hall, Indiana State University, IN, 3/4/15, at Thompson Recital Hall, DePauw University, IN, 3/5/15, at Kulas Recital Hall, Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, OH, 3/7/15, at University of Louisville, KY, 3/8/15; at UNM, 3/24/2015; at NYWC concerts by Laura Falzon and Pamela Sklar at Music at St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia

University, NYC, 3/10/2015, and at Nicholas Roerich Museum, NYC, 3/15/2015; at UNM, 3/24/2015; by Henry Chen and Locus Wong on 5/27/2015 at Concert Hall, Building 601, Soochow University School of Music, Suzhou, China; by Inspirare Duo (Lisa Jelle flute and Gail Lehto Zuger clarinet), Wed 7:30 PM, 9/30/2015, Huntington Recital Hall. University of Capital, Columbus, OH; by Linda Chatterton (flute) and Rachel Brandwein (harp) at UMKC Conservatory, KC, MO, 10/11/15; by Duo Damiana in UW-Madison on 12/8/2015; by Jun Qian and Kae Ayer in Michigan State University on 10/4/15 and U of Michigan on 10/6/2015; by Jun Qian and Kae Ayer in Michigan State University on 10/4/15 and in U of Michigan on 10/6/2015; by Linda Chatterton (fl) and Rachel Brandwein (hp) at UMKC Conservatory, KC, MO, 10/11/15 (flute and harp version world premiere); by Sophia Tegart and Jennifer Garrett at George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon, 7:30pm, 10/22/2015; by Hannah Porter and Jessica Koebbe at Prairie Baptist Church, Prairie Villase, KS, 10/25/2015; by Tokyo Nomad Chamber Ensemble on 12/1/2015 in Sichuan Conservatory of Music at its annual Sun River new music festival, Chengdu, China; by Qiao Zhang near Barcelona, Spain, 1/19/2016; by Christina Jennings (flute) and Hsing-ay Hsu (piano) in Modern Musical Valentines concert, Pendulum New Music, Boulder Public Library Concert Series, UC-Boulder, CO, Sunday 2pm, 2/14/2016; by Linda Chatterton & Matthew McCright (Flute & Piano Duo in Ruby's Music Room) in Melbourne, Australia, 3/11/2016; by Duo Damiana (Molly Barth, flute and Dieter Hennings, guitar) on 3/12/16 at the Britt Music and Arts Festival, Rogue Community College, Medford, OR, on 3/13/16 in the Broadway Avenue House Concerts, University of Oregon, OR, on 3/16/2016 at the Annenberg Auditorium, Snite Museum of Art, in University of Notre Dame, IN, on 3/17/2016 at the William Harris Lee & Co.'s

salon in Chicago, IL, on 3/20/16 in the Chatter Sunday concert at Las Puertas in Albuquerque, NW; by Qiao Zhang at the 4th Convention of Association of Flautists of Spain, in Bilbao, Spain, 4/29/16; by Kino-Shita Flute at the 5th China-ASEAN Music Week, Nanning, China, 6/11/2016; by Kim McCormick and Dana Milan, School of Music Barness Recital Hall, USF, FL, 10/23/16. by Linda Chatterton (fl) and Rachel Brandwein (hp) at CUHK on 11/17/16 and HKBU on 11/19/16 in Hong Kong; by Aimee Toner and Dean Deng at the Columbia Classical Performers concert in NYC, 3/5/2017; by Joanna Tseng in MM recital at U of British Columbia in Vancouver, B.C., Canada, 2016/17; by Linda Chatterton and Rachel Brandwein, at the Mt Olive's Music Series, Minneapolis, MN, 4/30/2017, in Excelsior, MN, 5/14/2017; by Duo Zonda (Orlando Cela), hosted by Equilibrium Concert Series at the New School of Music, Cambridge, MA, 9/16/2017, at Good Shepherd Catholic Church, 1950 Batchelder Street, Brooklyn, NY, 11229, 6:00pm, 10/8/2017; by newEar Music Ensemble at the Central United Methodist Church in KC, MO, 10/21/2017; by Curtis 20/21 Ensemble (dir. by David Ludwig) in Curtis, Philadelphia, PA, 12/1/2017, and in the Composer Portraits concert at Miller Theatre at Columbia University in the City of New York, NY, 12/2/2017; By Jonathan Borja and Mary Ellen Hauptert in the concert Open Borders, One-of-a-Kind Chamber Music Series, at Holy Spirit Parish in Stevens Point, WI, 6:30pm, 11/17/2017 and at the Viterbo University Fine Arts Center Recital Hall, La Crosse, WI, 3pm, 11/19/2017; at University of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN, 3/27/2018; by Jonathan Borja and Mary Ellen Hauptert at the Bonfire Chamber Music Festival, Myles Reif Performing Arts Center – Mary Ives Studio Theater, 720 NW Conifer Drive, Grand Rapids, MN 55744, 7:30pm, 7/26/2018; by Kimberly McCoul Risinger and Angelo Favis at the Red

Note New Music Festival on 2/11/2019 and in Bolen Faculty Recital Series at Kemp Recital Hall on 2/26/2019 in ISU, Normal, IL; by Ally Szeles (Wang Mingzhe's student) and Hyemin Kim/Mengyao Zhao at Cook Recital Hall in Michigan State University College of Music, at 2pm, 12/8/2019; by Patricia Spencer (flute) and Chen Tao (dizi) at Alfred University's Confucius Institute, NY, 3/17/21; by Eva Ding (flute) and Emma Kato (cello) at Music in Action, Heritage Against Hate, 4PM EDT, 5/23/2021, presented by PROTESTRA in partnership with Asian Musical Voices of America & Colors of Classical Music, at 114 E. 35th Street, New York, NY; by Mansi Shah and Ting Luo at the Fresh Inc Music Festival <https://youtu.be/ZX8DuB1aevU>, 6/16/2021; by Linda Chatterton and Matthew McCright in Returning Color to Our World concert, 7:30pm, 10/1/2021, Bjorling Recital Hall, Gustavus Adolphus College, MN; by Prof. Joel Braun and Alexandre Maynegre-Torra in a double bass recital of works by New York Women Composers at Jessen Auditorium, Butler School of Music, UT-Austin, TX, 10/25/2021; by Tara Helen O'Connor and Gilles Vonsattel in Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's China Inspirations concert at Alice Tully Hall, Sunday 11/28/2021, 5pm, NYC; by The Voyager Ensemble (Airi Yoshioka and David Yang), at Linehan Concert Hall, U of Maryland Baltimore County, Baltimore, MD 21250, 2/17/2022; by Ziqing Guan (DMA student of Jennifer Parker-Harley) and Claudio Olivera at Recital Hall, 4:30pm Thursday 2/17/2022 and Tuesday 3/15/22 in Celebration of the Asian & Pacific Islander Communities concert at University of South Carolina School of Music, SC; by Hannah Porter Occena and Emely Phelps at Davis Hall, School of Music, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa, 8pm, 3/8/2022; by at The Flute Society of Greater Philadelphia's Young Artist Competition; by Arielle Burke and Catherine O'Kelly (guitar)

at Faculty Recital in Rivera Recital Hall, 7:30pm, 4/1/2022, in Rivers School Conservatory, Newton, MA; by Ray Furuta and Gwendolyn Mok at 2022 Contemporary Music Festival featuring the Chamber Music of Chen Yi in SJSU Concert Hall, 10/20/22, SJ, CA; by Koe Duo (flute Eva Ding and cello Emma Kato) in the show For Mum, Dad: Home at Arts On Site, NYC, 7:30pm, 11/12&13&14/2022; by Hannah Porter Occena and Susan Grace in Sperry S. And Ella Graber Packard Hall of Music and Art, 5 W Cache La Poudre St, Colorado Springs, CO 80903, 11/5/2022; at Harry A. King Concert Hall on Friday 2/3/2023 7:30pm at SUNY-Fredonia; at 2023 NMF Concert III in Davis Hall, Gallagher Bluedorn, U of Northern Iowa, Waterloo, IW, 8pm 2/25/2023; by Rachael Lawson (flute) and Renzo DeCarlo (clarinet) in the Polymorphia concert, Silenced Voices: The music of composers-emigres from Asia, at FSU Museum of Fine Arts, FSU-Tallahassee, at 2pm, 3/4/23; by Terry Andrews and Fasbi Yusuf in Musica Nova concert at UMKC, 4/3/2023; by Terry Andrews & Dan Velicer (Pn), at TA's fl. DMA lecture-recital, Grant Hall, UMKC, 12pm 5/5/23; by Patrick Yim (Vn) and Kenny Lee (Vc) at the Flatirons Chamber Music Festival in Gordon Gamm Theater, Dairy Arts Center, Boulder, CO, 6/17/2023 at 7pm; by Maritime Silk Road Ensemble at the 39th??Shanghai Spring Festival in China in Melody concert at Shanghai Oriental Art Center, 425 Dingxiang Lu, by Shiji Dadao, Shanghai, China, 7:45pm, 3/29/2024; by Bianca Garcia and Gabriel Prynn at Atlantic Music Festival, Colby College, Waterville, ME 04901, 7:30pm, 7/24/2024; by Gergely Ittzés and Mika Sasaki in Daniel Saidenberg Faculty Recital Series Juilliard and Tianjin Juilliard Joint Faculty Recital on 1/24/2025 at 7:30pm in Paul Hall, The Juilliard School in NYC; by Prof. Ka-Wai Yu (Utah Tech U) in the ASTA National Conference in Atlanta, GA, 3/20/2025; premiere of the cello and piano version,

by Yongqi Lao (cello) and Michael Zheng (piano) in Katzin Concert Hall, ASU, Arizona,
7:30pm, 4/7/2025; by Hope Lee at her first graduate recital at IU, Bloomington, IN,
4/19/2025.

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM CHEN YI

Letter of Permission

I hereby give permission to Yongqi Lao to include the contents of our interview, emails, and conversations; my biographical information; sections of the scores; and a list of selected performances of Three Bagatelles from China West in the research paper titled Adapting Chinese Southwestern Folk Music to Cello: An Analysis and Performer's Guide to Chen Yi's Three Bagatelles from China West (for Cello and Piano) by Yongqi Lao.

Print Name: Chen Yi

Date: 3/12/2025

Signature: 

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM PUBLISHER



March 14, 2025

Arizona State University
School of Music
Attn: Yongqi Lao
50 E. Gammage Pkwy
Tempe, AZ 85281

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SCHEDULE A

Three Bagatelles from China West

Three Bagatelles from China West

By Chen Yi

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APPENDIX D
THE RECORDING OF
THREE BAGATELLES FROM CHINA WEST (FOR CELLO AND PIANO)
[Consult Attached Files]

BIOGRAPHY

Yongqi Lao (劳咏琪) was born in Kaiping, Guangdong, China on December 11, 2000. She received her Bachelor's degree in Music Education from South China Normal University in 2017. After moving to the U.S. to pursue studies in 2017, she completed a Performance Certificate in Cello Performance from La Sierra University in 2019; followed by a Master of Music in Cello Performance from Azusa Pacific University in 2021; and a Doctor of Musical Arts in Cello Performance from Arizona State University in 2025. Her musical mentors included Wing On Leung, Lin Ji, Sergi Boadella, Zhiwen Situ, Pin Fei Tang, Marek Szpakiewicz, Emanuele Silvestri, Chu Yi-Bing, and Tom Landschoot. She is a recipient of the 2023 Chinese Government Award for Outstanding Self-financed Students Abroad, issued by China Scholarship Council of Ministry of Education of the PRC, and the 2022 Southern California Chinese Community Outstanding Youth Achievement Award, issued by CCBA Los Angeles and all Southern California overseas Chinese Associations.