

開場白: Welcome to everyone who took the time to join us today. Our theme today is modern and traditional qin music. I have been thinking about how to distinguish between modern and traditional qin music for a while. I would like to think of the year 1956 when Mr. Cha Fuxi led a group of people to collect qin recordings and made the old eight pieces of CD 老八張 as a dividing line. The Guqin music created before that can be called traditional Qin music. Including the reinterpretation of the music by Mr. Cha Fuxi himself, such as today our guest David will play Dongting Qiusi. I categorize this piece as a traditional qin music, even though it is Mr. Zha's reinterpretation. Another example is the Weibian Sanjue , Leather Bindings Broken Thrice, which guest Chen Tong will play. WBSJ was handed down by Jia Kuofeng who was Yue Ying's teacher in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. I also classify it as a traditional qin piece.

The qin pieces created by contemporary composers are undoubtedly modern, but they may be created in the traditional style, or not. Among the NYQS members, there are composers, such as Bin Li, Andre Ribero, Stephen Dydo, and qin players who have composed modern qin music, such as Prof. Mingmei Yip, Prof. Shuishan Yu, Jim Binkly, Yan Yan Zhu, Shihua Yeh, and myself. Due to limited time and members' schedules, we could not hear everyone's composition, but we can continue this topic at our next year's events.

Today we will share with you different styles of modern qin pieces from our guests and members. Unfortunately, guest Dan Ried couldn't join in today due to his clinic schedule. And Prof. Mingmei injured her wrist and could not play today. But she will be here to comment at the end. Stephen also has a conflict schedule this afternoon. Chinese likes to say 計畫用遠趕不上變化 (plans never keep up with changes.) So our program will have some changes today. We hope for Mingmei's speedy recovery and hope to hear their new compositions in the near future.

Now let's start today's program. First, there will be 4 traditional qin pieces. Let's welcome our first performer, the youngest qin player today, Chen Tong. She will play two qin pieces. Shenren Chang (from Ming dynasty Xilutangqin) and , Wei Bian Sanjue, from the late 19th or early 20th century, Chen Tong, welcome.

## Slide 1

## Slide 2 介紹姚晨

Prof. Yao is in Beijing right now, and it is 5am there. So he couldn't attend our zoom meeting. But he generously sent me the links and information about his compositions. He also answered some questions by email. I'd like to play the first video of his composition of Xi Jiang Yue. And if we have enough time, I will play a part of his other compositions for qin, violin, viola and cello. Before we watch them, let me give you some information about the piece Xi Jiang Yue.

By the way, all these links will be pasted in the chat room after my presentation.

**Slide 3** Everything in the world is like a big dream. How many times have you experienced a cool autumn in your life? In the evening, the sound of the wind blowing the leaves resounded in the corridor. Look at yourself, and there are a few more silver threads on the brows and temples.

Wine is not good wine, but I am often worried that guests are few. Although the moon is bright, it is always covered by clouds. On this Mid-Autumn Festival night, who can enjoy this wonderful moonlight with me? I can only pick up the wine glass and look sadly to the north.

This poem is less famous than Su Shi's [Nostalgia for the Red Cliff] and [When Will the Moon Come]. Descendants are familiar with Su Dongpo, and they are often impressed by his magnificent imagination, majestic vision, and deep and heroic spirit. But this poem has a different atmosphere which is tactful and slow paced, sparse and melancholy. Contrary to Dongpo's other poems which in the eyes of the world, the pattern of opening and closing are imposing, it interprets another kind of ancient romance that brings a lot of sadness to the poet's heart. It seems to be crying, and it seems to be speaking in a desolate voice. Let our heartstrings be

touched by the bleak old aged west wind in the lyrics, and sigh together with the poet of this tragic song of life.

In the whole poem, the lyricist Su Shi creates a perfect mood that is clear, brisk and invigorating with emotional images such as the cool breeze, bright moon, and lonely lamp on the Mid-Autumn Festival night. The poet uses the "coolness" of the solar term to describe the "sadness" of life. Composer Yao Chen was deeply moved by the desolate expression in the lyrics, and resonated with the poet in the realm of life. Combined with the indifferent and noble character of the guqin, he used a direct way to express his heart to create this profound qin song. This qin song reflects the forbearing attitude of the composer after realizing the desolation of the world, as well as the state of mind of self-imposed exile.

**Slide 4 聽音樂**

**Slide 5 問與答**

Q1: Could you also share a piece of your notation so that everyone can know how you created it? For example, do you use a staff notation to match the guqin notation, or how do you mark the pitch and rhythm?

A1: The first page of the Moon over the west river score is attached.

Because I'm a composer trained in a conservatory, I've notated with staves, and the range, pitch, and rhythm are all very well-defined. If there are special sounds and sound needs, I will mark it with text to remind the performer. Guqin players will determine the fingering after the audition. In terms of qin songs, in order to adapt to the best sound range of different singers, key changing is also involved, so the guqin fingering notation has not been attached to the music score.

**Slide 6 Q2.** What do you think about the modern Guqin creation, between maintaining tradition and innovation?

A2: I have not yet encountered the inspiration and motivation to create Guqin solo, but I like to put Guqin into the compilation of small medium/Western chamber music to create, so that Guqin can interact and dialogue with other instruments. At this level, It's an innovation. In addition, I respect the guqin tradition very much, so when I create new works, I still pay attention to the traditional playing methods and timbre processing of the guqin. On this basis, I will consider what is special about the guqin in the expression of pure music, and more needs, both in tone and sound effect. Of course, the above are just some reflections. Most of the time, when I create, I don't think so much about what is traditional and what is modern.

**Slide 7 Q3.** Regarding the decision on the fingering of the guqin, did you consider it when you composed Xijiangyue? Or do you leave it to the performer to decide?

– Generally speaking, let the player decide, but in some cases, I will discuss with the player what kind of effect I want during rehearsal, and he/she will adjust the fingering according to my needs.

**Slide 8 Q4.** Does a guqin player trained in a conservatory have to be able to find the notes on the qin after reading the staff?

– No, they only come into contact with staff when they play contemporary works. Most contemporary works are notated using staves.

**Slide 9** Some views of Professor Luo Qin (Shanghai Conservatory of Music) and Professor Liang Lei (UCSD) on the composition of modern Guqin

On the 21st of last month, I listened to this zoom meeting, Chou Wen Chung Distinguished Lecture Series. Professor Luo Qin (who is a professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music) explained why he thinks that guqin notation not indicating the rhythm is not a defect. Because of limited time, I will not introduce the content of this meeting. However, I asked two questions to prof. Luo and the questions are about traditional and modern guqin music, so today I would like to share with you the responses of Professor Luo Qin and prof Liang Lei (from University of California San Diego, who was the host of that zoom meeting).

**Slide 10** Before Prof. Luo Qin answered my question, Prof. Liang Lei mentioned something worth thinking about: He said

"Chinese traditional music, especially the guqin, has a lot of **advanced things...** For example, the use of noise in the sound, in terms of Western music, has only begun to be used in recent decades, but in China, with the guqin, it has been applied to the level of perfection, and has been honed by thousands of years of tradition. In addition, the guqin includes improvisational performance, as well as a relationship between the body movement and the notation. These have not been noticed in the development of Western music until recent times. "

A few days ago, I saw Master. Li Fengyun playing the silk string Guangling San on WeChat. Most of the GLS video recordings we saw on-line were played on metal nylon strings and very few audio recordings of silk strings. Her playing reminds me of what Professor Liang Lei said, the use of noise, the relationship between body movement and the notation. The Shen Qi Mi Pu Guangling San is indeed the representative of the advanced techniques.

Prof. Liang Lei also mentioned that

"Mr. Zhou Wenzhong believes that in the analysis of his own music, he often feels that the biggest flaw in the analysis is to use Western music ideas to judge his works. I know that emotionally, he thinks this is a big mistake."

"The notation of guqin is unscientific from a certain point of view, but a simple notation method of guqin notation actually covers a variety of rhythms, such as Youlan, Youlan played by Guan Pinghu, and Youlan played by Wu Wenguang. The possibility that when we change this rhythm into staff notation, although it seems to be clearer, more things are lost. It loses its dynamic, loses its organicity and loses its variation. A Guqin phrase that provides a synthesis of so many possibilities may actually be a more scientific, more precise and more complete method."

**Slide 11** So here is the question I asked Prof Luo Qin:

Every Guqin piece was created in its own time as a "modern" piece. I would like to ask Professor Luo what kind of spirit should be mastered if one wants to create a modern Guqin piece today? What kind of creation do you think is a good creation?

Luo Qin: "This question has asked a very important and complicated thing. That is to say, what kind of perspective does the guqin we are discussing now with? Let us understand the guqin in ancient society and use the guqin as a symbol of traditional Chinese guqin? To understand and appreciate the guqin as an instrument of a scholar-officer, or to use the guqin as a timbre of a modern Chinese musical instrument? If you use the guqin as a modern musical instrument, you can recreate the image of the guqin with very modern and complex techniques. That is also very good."

But if the standpoint is to use the current works to reflect the meaning of the ancient guqin, I think there may be a dislocation in time and space. I wonder if this question has been answered."

That is Prof. Luo's response to my questions. I think the dislocation in time and space may mean that it is impossible to create ancient music in modern times. It can only be imitated or imagined. From Professor Yao Chen's composition, Xi Jiangyue, taken from an ancient poem , using the guqin and voice as if the ancient tunes are represented. I think it is a very good modern qin piece that has retained the traditional style.

This is what I want to share today, hoping to bring you a different perspective and reflection. Thank you~

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This is our last public on-line event this year. We will continue having on-line yaji next year. Please stay tuned and hope to see you all again next year.