

**Rural and Urban Explorations of Transnational Performance:**

**A Dialogue Between Traditional Southwestern Chinese  
and Contemporary North American  
Music & Dance**

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Alex Lubet, Advisor

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## Acknowledgements

“I am large, I contain multitudes!”<sup>1</sup> Through my artistic journey I have felt that I contain multitudes. My identity as a composer, performer, scholar, and choreographer however, is not individualistic. It is sustained and enhanced by a lot of people. Those mentioned here represent my main support system. They have helped me along the way to sustain all of my parts. These mentors, family members, colleagues, and friends have been instrumental to my growth and development in different areas.

As a composer, I have received the professional support and mentorship of Mingzhu Song, Alex Lubet, Mary Ellen Childs, Elliot McKinley, Anne LeBaron, and Adi Yeshaya. Their music continuously inspires me to create beyond my comfort zone, motivates me to dig deep to find my own voice, and demonstrates different ways to be a successful composer.

My identity as a performer was largely shaped by the influence of Maja Radovanlija, Michelle Kinney and Gao Hong. I found support from them and their fortitude as fellow women musicians and creative beings. Their warmth and openness strengthened me through my most difficult moments during my academic journey.

As a scholar, Guerino Mazzola, Karla Padrón, and Katie Levin have generously given me their honest opinions and challenged my thinking to explore deeper questions about my research on a broader academic spectrum. They shared their critical feedback, historical knowledge, and writing expertise which helped me navigate the world of publishing. I am grateful for their caring generosity.

As an aspiring choreographer, I followed the steps of Carl Flink and Jason “J-

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<sup>1</sup> Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself, printed in *Leaves of Grass* 1892-92, The Walt Whitman Archive, Print.

Sun” Noer, who guided my thinking about leadership through their lived example of organization, flexibility, and open communication skills. I see these characteristics as crucial to creating a strong work ethic and collaborative aesthetic.

Finally, my experience was substantially enriched by the mentorship and artistic mastery of my production team: in addition to the aforementioned Alex Lubet, Maja Radovanlija, and Jason Noer, important members of the team were Minsun Song, Margaret Ogas, Gabriel Blackburn, Smaida Mara, and Alice Gebura. I want to thank my family and friends. More of them than I can possibly mention here have supported me studying music professionally over the past two decades and have always encouraged me to honor my authenticity.



## **Abstract**

In this autobiographical, bi-cultural, and interdisciplinary production, I use piano, voice, dance, and acting to create a performance that weaves together Chinese and American cultural differences and similarities. The performance is an account of how I have learned to navigate the world as an academic and composer with the obstacles and successes that come with such a journey. I combine modern North American techniques with traditional Chinese ways of knowing through three art forms: theater, music, and dance. These very different musical traditions cooperate to connect performers and audiences. Chinese performers and audiences are reacquainted with their cultural roots, while U.S. audience members see something new in themselves as they experience this performance. This strategy increases the variety of receptive audiences for my compositions and allows for greater intercultural interaction and visibility between different cultures.

## Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES .....	V
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCES .....	2
BACKGROUND.....	2
INFLUENCES.....	2
<i>Mingzhu Song</i> .....	3
<i>Alex Lubet</i> .....	5
<i>Guerino Mazzola</i> .....	7
<i>Maja Radovanlija</i> .....	10
<i>Carl Flink</i> .....	12
CHAPTER THREE: QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS .....	14
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS AND THEORY.....	15
CHAPTER FIVE: PERFORMANCE.....	22
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION.....	38
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	42
APPENDIX A: PROGRAM FOR THE PERFORMANCE .....	45
APPENDIX B: SCORE FOR SCENE I: “PIANARCHY” .....	47
APPENDIX C: SCORE FOR SCENE II: “STANDING ALONE” .....	50
APPENDIX D: SCORE FOR SCENE III: “UNDER THE CLOUDY MOUNTAIN” .....	52
APPENDIX E: SCORE FOR “AT A PLACE FARAWAY” .....	55
APPENDIX F: SCORE FOR SCENE IV: “PAST MEMORIES OF FUTURE RIVERS” ..	57
APPENDIX G: SCORE FOR SCENE V: “THE OTHERS” .....	65

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 2.1. Mingzhu Song's Composition Studio, Class Of 2013: .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Figure 2.2. Alex Lubet's Concert, 2014: Yan Pang And Alex Lubet. ....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Figure 2.3. Commute Book Publishing Project, 2018: Jay Afrisando, Yan Pang, Jason Noer, And Guerino Mazzola (Photo By Alice Gebura). ....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Figure 2.4. International Society Of Improvised Music Festival, 2015: .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Figure 2.5. Dark Residency Project, 2018: Jamie Emerick. Zeev Roth, Rebecca Williams, Maxine Yamazaki, Mirabai Miller, Annie Hoffman, Carl Flink, Camille Horstmann,.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Figure 5.1. "Pianarchy": Yan Pang And Jason Noer (Photo By Alice Gebura). ....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Figure 5.2. "Standing Alone": Alex Lubet (Photo By Alice Gebura).....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Figure 5.3. "Under The Cloudy Mountains": .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Figure 5.4. "At A Place Faraway": Yan Pang And Alex Lubet (Photo By Alice Gebura). ....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Figure 5.5. "Past Memories For Future Rivers": .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Figure 5.6. "The Others": Margaret Ogas, Gabriel Blackburn,.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Figure 6.1. Advising Committee And Performers: Alex Lubet, Carl Flink, YanPang, Jason Noer, Guerino Mazzola, And Maja Radovanlija. ....</b>	<b>38</b>

## **Rural and Urban Explorations of Transnational Performance:**

*A Dialogue Between Traditional Southwestern Chinese Music*

*and Contemporary North American Music & Dance*

### **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

*Rural and Urban Explorations of Transnational Performance* is a bilingual theatrical production. It is an intercultural, interdisciplinary, and improvisational project that combines elements of U.S. and Chinese cultures. The structure of the work is based chronologically, according to the evolution of my own repertoire of influences, beginning more purely Chinese and gradually absorbing a more global set of styles, idioms, and traditions. The trajectory of this chronological narrative of who I was and who I have become is for the audience to experience both what has changed and what has been retained as I have developed my style.

The work will be centered on my own multidisciplinary performance practice, utilizing my training and experience: as a composer-performer (vocalist and keyboardist), dancer, and actor. In addition to my thorough professional training in Chinese and Western music, I trained in modern, jazz, Hip Hop, and African dance. I have additional experience as an actor, as both a student and a professional.

## **CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCES**

### **Background**

As might be expected, the influences that inform this work are many and varied. I studied keyboard during my early childhood years (1995-2005). I decided that I wanted to be a musician for life and because of my disability, dyslexia, I attended Sichuan Conservatory of Music instead of general education (2005-2008). My undergraduate training in composition at the Sichuan Conservatory of Music included a thorough grounding in Western and Chinese classical music (2008-2012). During my time in Sichuan, I conducted fieldwork in Southwestern China, collecting and transcribing folk music of many different minority groups, an experience that greatly expanded my ideas about vocal production. During my Master's program in keyboard at McNally Smith College of Music in Saint Paul (2012-2014), which emphasized American popular and also included composition and voice, I began to develop a musical approach that combined popular and traditional forms. During my Masters, I also began my studies at the University of Minnesota with my current advisor, Professor Alex Lubet (2014-2018). His work as a composer-performer crosses cultures in a manner that profoundly transcends superficial ideas about Chinese and American combinations of music.

### **Influences**

The five artists who influence my work represent a strong group of talented individuals who have supported my development as someone who aspires excellence as a composer, mentor, scholar, performer, and choreographer. Mingzhu Song, Alex Lubet, Guerino Mazzola, Maja Radovanlija and Carl Flink guide my interest in this topic.

## Mingzhu Song

Professor Mingzhu Song is the department head of the Compositional Techniques and Theory Research Center and national award composer. Song was my first composition professor (2007-2012), who led my interest into Chinese traditional music such as Sichuan Opera. First, I learned basic compositional tools from him. I draw on my knowledge and experience of Chinese music, and model aspects of my style on Mingzhu Song's musical style. Moreover, his music enriches the appreciation I have for my culture and adds to my understanding of modern tendencies and theoretical references. Because of this exposure and because I studied with Song, I have an intimate understanding of his music and my style is strongly influenced by him.



*Figure 2.1. Mingzhu Song's Composition Studio, class of 2013:  
Liwei Gao, Yan Pang, Mingzhu Song, Xiawan Cui, and Tingting Wang.*

In recent times, many modern music fans have forgotten about the Sichuan Opera. If we do not learn and write about it, it will fade forever into obscurity. In China, most people are aware of the sound of Chinese opera but are uninformed about the distinctive styles of Sichuan opera. Furthermore, few contemporary compositions are written in the style of traditional Sichuan opera. In addition, not many people *outside* of China know about the Sichuan Opera. My unique opportunity to study with Song combined with my grounding in Western classical music positions me to carry the legacy of the Sichuan Opera to a wider audience through my compositions.

Mingzhu Song's music is a good example for me as it combines contemporary Western music with Chinese traditional music to discover an innovative style of music. He does this by melding Chinese 4th and 5th intervals to create Western quartal and triadic harmony. He structures the Chinese traditional melodies for the Western audiences' expectations by applying Chinese Taoist inspired rhythms into a Western Fibonacci sequence, and putting Chinese musical styles into Western sonata form. Not only does Song successfully merge Chinese music with Western music theory and compositional techniques, but he also made his music appealing to both Chinese and Western audiences. This is why he is such a well-respected innovative Chinese composer, and I want to adapt strategy to find my voice in my final project.

## Alex Lubet

Professor Alex Lubet is the Division of Creative Studies and Media Head at the University of Minnesota. He is a composer and multi-instrumentalist, mountain dulcimer, acoustic guitar, electric and acoustic bass, ukulele, and National steel guitar. His compositions have received hundreds of performances on six continents.<sup>2</sup> He is my second mentor in composition who taught me for another five years (2013-2018) after Mingzhu Song (2008-2013). He has guided and advised me with my own work which is deeply grounded in the globalist aesthetic of the post-Cultural Revolution generation of Chinese composers. During Lubet's Masters study at the University of Iowa, he attended the Chinese-American composer Chou Wen-Chung's lecture and had one lesson with the visiting scholar. Chou's compositions and writings have had a transformational influence on musical internationalism through his many important students. Lubet credits him as the most influential teachers in his experience as a learner.



*Figure 2.2. Alex Lubet's Concert, 2014: Yan Pang and Alex Lubet.*

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<sup>2</sup> Dale A. Olson, "Globalization, Acculturation, and Transculturation in American Music: From Cultural Poo to Transcultural Art" in *Reflections on American Music: The Twentieth Century and New Millennium*, (New York: Pendragon Press), 280.



Our working relationship became more of a partnership, where Lubet's revision and performance of my music transformed the work of a single composer (me) to a collaborative compositional effort from both of us. I am indebted to him for his contribution to my musical growth and development. What I have taken from Lubet's teachings is a sense that it is not principally the relationships between sounds, especially choices of notes, that lend expression to music – the essential aesthetic principle of Western classical music—but the qualities of the individual sounds themselves, as is foundational in much of the music of East, South, and Southeast Asia. This distinction has been an important element of Lubet's influence.

I am interested in incorporating some of Lubet's ideas into my music and dance projects with my research partner Jason "J-Sun" Noer whose movement work and aesthetic has added a layer to my art which is to understand the impact music can have as social text. Anglo-American popular music is ever-increasingly a form of multimedia, interdisciplinary, audiovisual, and technology-driven performance art. Popular music influenced my earlier presentational and movement style, as well as offering new possibilities for the performance of race and gender. However, the potential for popular music to also have a political edge—made clear to me in my assistant teaching with Lubet—more substantially informs the text I will be singing and speaking in my future creative works.

## **Guerino Mazzola**

Professor Mazzola, with whom I have written several textbooks, including *Cool Math for Hot Music* (2016), *All About Music* (2017), *Basic Music Technology* (2018), and *Mathematical Design for Future Music Creation* (2018 in progress). I have studied and researched with Mazzola on mathematical music theory, gesture theory, music technology, jazz, and improvisation (2013-2018). His teaching has been particularly influential on my work in rhythm and performance practice. My sense of rhythmic flow and freedom has derived much from my exposure while improvising with him.



*Figure 2.3. ComMute Book Publishing Project, 2018: Jay Afrisando, Yan Pang, Jason Noer, and Guerino Mazzola (photo by Alice Gebura).*

He has also addressed the relationship between music and dance, something that is of obvious importance to my own work in general and in particular in my dissertation. My project is influenced by Mazzola's work between dance and music, cited in *All About*

*Music* (2017). Specifically, Mazzola's *Dancing the Violent Body of Sound* (2009), and *Teak Leaves at The Temples* (2006) are examples of how sound and movement function on their own and collaboratively. I am inspired by these intersections of the dancing body and the playing instrument. The study of Mazzola's collaborative projects *Dancing the Violent Body of Sound (Sound)* and *Teak Leaves at the Temples (Temples)* was particularly insightful because of its focus on improvisation and cross-cultural collaboration between Western music and Eastern traditional dance. In *Sound*, I found it interesting how the artists used electronic devices to connect dancing gestures and music. In fact, the dance movements were collected by movement sensors from the Arduino system, attached to the dancers' bodies, and sent wirelessly to a computer that transformed the data into musical sounds.

The result of *Sound* and *Temples* suggests that mathematics, gestural theory, and technology have the potential to expand the possibilities in music-making. Mazzola used three novel techniques to achieve this: 1) Dancers with devices so that musical changes depend on the dancers, 2) Finding common points from different cultures as a way of improvising and understanding each other with gestures, and 3) Endless creation, meaning that recording is just the very first step of the creative process. All of these creative processes of music production are why I am eager to further apply these ideas from Mazzola's theory to my own work. His research is based in the great musical heritage of jazz, but he continually tries to reach new levels of awareness. In a similar way, when I improvise, I forget, temporarily, about cultural differences and the potential difficulty of achieving mutual understanding between groups or individuals. Artistic communication during the act of creation helps people celebrate distinctive characteristics and practices. This is not to say that difference disappears completely or

permanently, or that culture is not important; the objective in my research is to find my voice/roots in my own culture. However, dissimilarities should not be a barrier between cultures: instead, diversity between cultures enriches artistic exchanges. For example, Mazzola took inspiration from the dancer's movements and found his own conception of time. Similarly, I conciliated dance and music and realized that time has a central role in my production.

Finally, I have a great esteem for Guerino's artistic and scientific approach to music, especially toward improvisation. His openness collaboration with different cultures and disciplines influenced the creative process of my dissertation performance, especially in the dance works. I am also interested in production and post production techniques. It is interesting to note that, in spite of the mixing technique that they use, musicians of Mazzola's Tetrade group try to make the recording sound as real as a live performance. From this, we can learn that the use of technology is not something "against" the reality and the realism of a musical performance. The technological tools are not meant to "hide" mistakes or change but to improve our expressive technique and have additional tools to enhance creativity.

## **Maja Radovanlija**

Dr. Randovalija is a guitar faculty who is a classical guitarist and improviser. She has performed frequently as a solo and chamber musician, touring European countries, Middle-east and North Africa. Radovanlija's interests include musical genres beyond classical, such as traditional Balkan music, jazz, experimental, and improvised music. Her interests in guitar repertoire include wide range of music, from early music (Baroque music) to contemporary/experimental music. Her presentation of various styles and different cultural background influenced my work as a performer. During the years (2014-2018) performing with Radovanlija around the world (Switzerland, Serbia, and China), I have learned many improvisation approach tools, and weave them into my music creation and performance.



*Figure 2.4. International Society of Improvised Music Festival, 2015:  
Paquita Faguet, Yan Pang, and Maja Radovanlija.*

Melodic improvisation tools will include melodic patterns in Chinese music traditions, to create a Chinese flavor that reflects my identity. The dancers choreograph repetitive patterns including among their gestures also the production of repetitive sound/noise. In fact, this way dancers manipulate their own body and their environment to make percussive sound to “lead” the musicians. I, as a performer, use signals: gesture- both musical and nonmusical; signal phrases/patterns, etc. The reason is to communicate with each other the change of section and of the chosen material.

I was very much inspired by Radovanlija’s cross-cultural practice, and the performance experience helped me to transform the study of my major field, music composition, into performance practice. I have valuable experience of learning from both traditional and contemporary perspectives and finding my own balance. I became more open to other cultures, and collaborative in order to make a more interesting final product, as a result of the convergence between different perspectives. It is a balance between original roots and a new content, and a balance between roots and new ideas, that I found important in my work.

## Carl Flink

Professor Carl Flink is the chair of the Theatre Arts & Dance department at the University of Minnesota. He is also the founder and artistic director of Minneapolis/St. Paul based movement theater Black Label Movement. He introduced me to a whole new world in collaborative projects as a choreographer, dancer, and composer. Flink inspired me in his dance composition modern dance technique classes (2016-2018). He explained his compositional/choreographic choices which helps me expand my perspective of music creation. He doesn't require the dancers to move the way he does, but they need to be capable of executing the given instructions. I am not capable of doing some of these movements physically, but his guidance helped me understand how these movements and momentum work, and how the dancers feel.



*Figure 2.5. Dark Residency Project, 2018: Jamie Emerick, Zeev Roth, Rebecca Williams, Maxine Yamazaki, Mirabai Miller, Annie Hoffman, Carl Flink, Camille Horstmann, Yan Pang, and Issac Roth (photo by Bill Cameron).*

During the study with Flink, I built a physical and verbal vocabulary in dance to be able to give a more concrete idea of what the movement I am looking for in my own



choreography. Now, I am able to describe the Chinese traditional dance movement, in comparison with classic ballet. Taiji focuses a person's energy to notice/follow the rhythms of nature and the universe around oneself. In classic ballet, the general posture is directed upward, ideally toward the heavens and away from earth.

Flink encourages dancers to break out of the “beautiful and elegant” aesthetic embraced in ballet and to engage with a way of moving that is authentic to a dancer's individuality – to express movement without strict technique. This mode of thinking inspired my music creation as well because I used to be very concerned about compositional techniques and theory. During my choreographic process, Flink constantly gave feedback that shaped the dance work. Alongside learning how to craft my dance piece, I also learned different ways how musicality and physicality intertwine to support each other.

I admire Flink's artistry, leadership, and communication skills during his courses and workshops. I worked with him on his Dark Residency project and had the opportunity to participate in the whole creation process from the beginning stage to a presentable phase. Dark is now ready for polishing in an effort to create a complete and professional performance. The artistic engine is to create an immersive dance theater work that uses raw athleticism and absurdity to drive its physicality. The intention of the project is to create a highly entertaining piece that is visually stunning, engaging, and smart. Flink devised a theater approach that involved everyone in the space being encouraged to propose ideas based on the framework we established for each phase. The whole intense creation process made me enthusiastic and ready for my own future art making. Flink always respected my individuality, where I come from, and helped me move toward creative works that physically manifested my thoughts.



### CHAPTER THREE: QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS

Although works of art do not approach problems in quite the same manner as works of research, they may nonetheless ponder important questions and propose solutions. In the broadest and least technical terms, *Rural and Urban Explorations of Transnational Performance* is a production about the meaning of migration. More precisely, this art form contemplates the journey from one home to another for a woman of color, moving between radically different cultures and nations. This movement creates an internal conversation about belonging and identity that is at best complex, and at worst adversarial. This internal conversation is the problem exposed through music, movement, and text in my work.

As a more purely aesthetic consideration, *Rural and Urban Explorations of Transnational Performance* addresses questions of resistance. Though not universal, there is a preservationist instinct among practitioners of Chinese traditional music. Similarly, there is an oddly conservative, isolationist aspect to Western musical modernism, one that rejects the idea of communication in favor of music as the realization of abstract, largely arbitrary theoretical systems. Both of these reactionary impulses pervade the formal training of musicians within their respective cultures. Part of the work of *Rural and Urban Explorations of Transnational Performance*'s journey through genres will be an expression of the casting off of these orthodoxies in favor of an immigrant musical dialect that demands that she be heard and understood.

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS AND THEORY

### Movement and Gesture

I desired to create structured Chinese traditional music combined with American contemporary dance for this project. According to Mazzola, the “making of art” involves the unfolding of mathematical concepts in physical space and time, allowing musical communications and exchanges between performers via “musical gestures.”<sup>4</sup> The theoretical approach to *gestures* started by Mazzola finds countless applications in the creative sense.

One way of theorizing music through gesture is rethinking the role of the score. While writing a musical score, we need to keep in mind that music can also exist without such a structure. A score is a notational tool that helps performers remember sequences of points to hit while moving continuously in space and time: pick specific pitch at a particular time with that loudness with that timbre. However, the movements’ instructions hidden in a musical score need to be transformed into real movements in real time. It means that performers, while playing, “unfreeze” the “frozen gestures” suggested by the score. We can think of a rotation in math. A formula may describe a rotation, but the scientist has to “bring to life” the formula, unfolding its meaning into a rotation. We may argue that, if we need a formula for a rotation, do we need a score for a symphony? However, can music exist without the score? Yes, it can. And we need to understand how to make music and musical gestures without scores, in order to better comprehend the meaning and the importance of these two elements when accompanied by a score.

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<sup>4</sup> Guerino Mazzola et. al., *All About Music: The Complete Ontology: Realities, Semiotics, Communication, and Embodiment*, (Hamberg: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 141.

Musical composition sometimes requires the inverse process, from physical reality to symbolic reality. The composer can start from real physical movement— such as piano improvisation—or “virtual” physical gestures imagined to be the final result when the music is performed. Starting from physical gestures, the composer has to find the optimal symbolic approximation of his or her ideas. It means he or she will answer the question: what are the symbolic indications whose physical realization is closer to my idea?<sup>5</sup>

In my project, I relied on this collaborative and recursive process both in performance and composition. On the music-performance side, I employed the pentatonic scale and drew on the Chinese way of playing associated with this harmonic and melodic material. I supplied the other musicians’ and dancers’ additional explanations because they did not come from a Chinese musical background. For example, in traditional Chinese music, it sounds like there is no rhythm, just musical elements flowing around. It is not measured, instead, it is more like an irregular pulse, which is rhythm but with a different time-sense than Western compositions. The performance demonstrated the result of dancers and musicians negotiating the relationship between gesture and musical expression.

Indeed, the musicians and dancers themselves re-arranged and edited different pieces throughout the process. For example, Lubet arranged Scenes II “Standing Alone,” (written for Lubet and originally for acoustic guitar) for mountain dulcimer. In my creative process for the dissertation performance, I worked to construct an experience for listeners while still employing specific techniques from Chinese art and culture. There is

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<sup>5</sup> Guerino Mazzola et al., *Cool Math for Hot Music: A First Introduction to Mathematics for Music Theorist*, (Hamburg: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 278.

also a danger of some traditional Southwestern Chinese forms dying out, such as Sichuan Opera, which my work may help preserve with performance. Additionally, I want practitioners in other genres to benefit from learning traditional Chinese musical forms, not merely to preserve, but to build personal and national repertoires.

## **Improvisation**

I examine the relationship and combination between traditional Chinese folk melodies and modern Western compositional techniques, including harmonizing and structuring music elements, which results in a hybrid cultural and musical exchange. I study how people comply with the rules and break boundaries and investigate the practice of remaining flexible as a mode of inquiry. I use these aforementioned strategies to inform my practice of improvisation during the creative process in music and movement to add a unique touch to my passion and carve out a distinct path as an artist.

Classical Western music mainly relies on scores to enable the transmission of musical knowledge across time and groups of people. Composers are expected to make written works more efficient and performances more precise. Even folkloristic pieces throughout Europe have often been transcribed into scores to help the work of scholars and performers. However, there are many other musical contexts where the transmission of repertory is mainly oral, and the production of music itself does not require written scores.

We are focusing here on the different approaches of musical creation. In communication theory, this part is called poiesis. It includes every exhibition of creative activity that involves either composition or improvisation. Poiesis is strictly focused on

the making of sound, not on the intended object itself.<sup>6</sup> As artists, we look to claim our individuality while at the same time, maintaining connection to other artists and scholars. It is within an exchanging-type scenario that collaborative interdisciplinarity emerges.

## **Interdisciplinarity**

Interdisciplinarity refers to my method which combines different traditional artistic disciplines to arrive at a new approach in my performance production with nuance and complexity. Regarding the interdisciplinary approach under the light of gesture studies, connections between disciplines can be made via “gestural similarities”. A “forte” gesture at the piano can be transferred to a “forte” gesture for a painter (a large and strong brush), as well as “dotted” sequences (staccato notes, points in visual arts), or continuous ones. The same concept, thought to approach and study relationships between music and image, can be extended to music and dance. In fact, in my ideal of interdisciplinary, musicians and dancers are adapting each other's gestures, mimicking and mirroring each other's movements. Dance is included in the field of “moving visual arts”, in my example of improvisation, we can see the musical gesture as the mirrored image of dancing one. The vice versa mirroring is also possible, with the dance mirroring the musical gesture of musicians. Interdisciplinary approaches to improvisation can be applied inside the same culture, or between different cultures.

Maja Radovanlija and I attended Pauline Oliveros’ deep listening workshop in 2016 to understand different ways of hearing music. Oliveros is an artist who was deeply inspired by connections between sounds, music, improvisation, and body gestures. She

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<sup>6</sup> Guerino Mazzola et al., *Basic Music Technology*, (Hamburg: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 14.

discovered that through processes of relaxation, she could listen more closely to tones, and this approach helped her gain insights into the phenomenology of listening itself. We took part in collaborative exercises such as building on one another's musical phrase to create a performance.

In the spirit of the Oliveros' sensibility, I became interested in forms of meditation that increase awareness, such as Taiji.<sup>7</sup> The key concept of movement in Taiji is fluidity. It is the same concept in Chinese music, the movement and journey from a note to another is just as important as the starting and finishing notes themselves. The Taiji-influenced sound and movements are presented throughout the performance: taking the time to let the sound ring and finish the dance movement while the "outside world" is chaos.

### **Cultural Diversity through Collaboration**

Working with diverse artists inspired me and enriched my musical production. Their unique musical and cultural background gave me a multidimensional thinking of my work. Through my work, I hope to encourage artists to be involved in complex cultural exchanges between old and new, East and West, composed/choreographed and improvised works. This merging collaboration contributes to a greater intercultural interaction and visibility between different cultures.

To establish this collaborative work, I explained my compositional and choreographic ideas within my Chinese background to welcome them to my artistic world. Once they understood the core ideas of my work, they had the flexibility to add

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<sup>7</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *Software for People*, (Baltimore: Smith Publications, 1984),148.

their cultural perspective and artistic background. Sometimes, collaborating with artists with their aesthetic self can be quite challenging especially in relation to different cultural perspectives and contexts. The understanding of different cultural context can involve tailoring music specifically and/or collaboratively for a group. Culture is both deep and complex; crossing between any two cultures is not trivial at all.<sup>8</sup> With open communication and understanding, this challenge can be overcome.

This approach is structured improvisation under the Chinese cultural content. For example, in traditional Chinese music, there is freedom in pitch and rhythm for performers because the notation system is gestural. Because of the oral tradition where the master teaches how to interpret the gestural notation, the same piece will be performed very differently depending on the master. Alex Lubet's style of playing the mountain dulcimer sounds like a *guqin* (Chinese ancient instrument) master. Lubet arranged "Standing Alone," set "At a Place Far Away," and gave many helpful suggestions during the process. Musical performance involves more than simply the notes played, with gestures being important, scholars working in the field of embodied artificial intelligence realized that cognition was more than simply the brain and its neural networks.<sup>9</sup>

With a shared work within a common project, a main message should be stressed: collaboration with dancers and performers with artistic and human communication and reciprocal understanding can help overcome differences and avoid separations. Carl Flink influenced two aspects of my embodied art: one, I learned from his professional

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<sup>8</sup> Guerino Mazzola et. al., *Basic Music Technology*, 175.

<sup>9</sup> Rolf Pfeifer and Josh Bongard. *How the Body Shapes the Way We Think: A New View of Intelligence*, (Cambridge: Edition illustrated Publisher MIT Press, 2006), 37-41.

choreographic tool kit, and, two, his innovative approach to dancing as an expression of “risk taking” in movements shaped my approach to human movement.

In order to do so, some shared gestural paradigms inside artistic improvisation are required. Collaboration enriches traditional music. It all starts with the events that happened around us having their own meaning. People can draw from these meanings in their own way, producing beautiful forms, full of the body of time. I appreciate Guerino Mazzola’s previously mentioned collaborative work and would like to incorporate his techniques to improve my works.

In this cross-cultural and interdisciplinary gestural communication, I created an intercultural composition and improvisation performance for the purpose of generating global and ongoing significance. As a classical guitar player, Maja Radovanlija's Eastern European influence in her improvised work makes her a distinctive type of improviser. I admire her artistic quality which encourages me to use my Chinese influence and become not only a composer, but also an improviser with different influences. Thus, bringing out multicultural, multiethnic, multiracial and interdisciplinary collaborations.

*The main objective of my dissertation is that creating this collaborative project, expressing and evoking aesthetic impressions through the music sound and dance movements produced a multicultural performance and creativity to promote performance, education, and research in improvised music. It illuminates connections between musical improvisation and creativity across fields.*



## CHAPTER FIVE: PERFORMANCE

The sequencing of this program is intentional: it all represents my identity and despite the struggles that I have faced, I am not fragmented. I am whole. There are five scenes (Scene I to V) that I composed to present to my audience in this performance. In addition, I added Alex Lubet's setting of a traditional Chinese folk song "At a Place Faraway"<sup>10</sup> in the middle of this performance: after the third scene. The first scene: "Pianarchy" talks about my experiences about fighting gender and patriarchy and realizing it is unavoidable.<sup>11</sup> The second scene: "Standing Alone" is representing a desire not to be alone by bridging Chinese and Western music.<sup>12</sup> The third scene: "Under the Cloudy Mountain" represents the hosting tradition in China.<sup>13</sup> The fourth scene: "Past Memories for Future Rivers" uses Sichuan Opera elements to reflect the beauty of the rivers.<sup>14</sup> The last scene: "The Others" uses the dance movements to show the race and hierarchy of a marginalized body.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Yan Pang, "Alex Lubet—At a Place Faraway," youtube.com, uploaded December 28, 2018, [https://youtu.be/e119B1h\\_TJA](https://youtu.be/e119B1h_TJA)

<sup>11</sup> Yan Pang, "Yan Pang and Jason Noer—Pianarchy," youtube.com, uploaded December 28, 2018, <https://youtu.be/GCP7p2QZQ9M>.

<sup>12</sup> Yan Pang, "Yan Pang - Standing Alone," youtube.com, uploaded December, 28, 2018, [https://youtu.be/d8Uv1IMzz\\_E](https://youtu.be/d8Uv1IMzz_E).

<sup>13</sup> Yan Pang, "Yan Pang—Under A Cloudy Mountains," youtube.com, uploaded December, 28, 2018, <https://youtu.be/tSpchuM67ac>.

<sup>14</sup> Smaida Mara, "Yan Pang—Past Memories for Future Rivers," youtube.com, uploaded December, 25, 2018, <https://youtu.be/CacZyImnem8>.

<sup>15</sup> Yan Pang, "The Others," youtube.com, uploaded December 28, 2018, <https://youtu.be/GCP7p2QZQ9M>.

## Scene I: “Pianarchy” (for piano and dance)

This piano and dance piece is a reflection of me starting my music career as a pianist. The music is inspired by and to honor Mingzhu Song (my first composition teacher), who uses Sichuan Opera music elements to create pieces that have the full-bodied traditional style of the local Sichuan area and display characteristics of modern music<sup>16</sup>. I took Song’s use of pure traditional single-line melodies placed in comparatively complicated harmonies and contexts based on pitch collections and figure sequence. From this, I create a fusion of traditional Chinese music and Western classical influenced music while incorporating urban and street dance movement with Jason “J-Sun” Noer.

I draw from my earlier piece "Twinkle Twinkle Sichuan Opera"<sup>17</sup> that I co-composed with Song to combine these ideas with my own experiences, theorize the possibilities or techniques, and created this piano and dance piece. I am taking a similar approach to this piece in which I describe the crucial moments of moving bodies, explain how my experience informs ideas about the bodies, and relate these ideas to the choreography.

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<sup>16</sup> Mingzhu Song and Yan Pang, “A Comprehensive Analysis of “The Scene of Sichuan Opera,” in *Collected Papers of One Hundred Tenure Professors*, (Chengdu, China: Sichuan People’s Publishing House Art Publishing House, 2004), 24-27.

<sup>17</sup> Mingzhu Song and Yan Pang, “Twinkle Little Sichuan Opera.” In *More Variations on the Theme of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” for Piano*, (Shanghai, China: Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, 2017).



*Figure 5.1. "Pianarchy": Yan Pang and Jason Noer (photo by Alice Gebura).*

This piece is a representation of my early classical piano training (with a reference to Chinese culture) and Urban & Street dance forms. The pianist (me) composed the music with traditional elements such as pentatonic scale with reference to Chinese harmonies. My fellow dancer is Jason “J-Sun” Noer because of his experience and talent in creative and improvisational works. J-Sun used break(danc)ing techniques to choreograph and freestyle different parts of the dance piece combined with the duality of Yin and Yang (the Two Modes).

Yin and Yang also represents the gender power dynamic between femininity and masculinity which often refers to women and men. I engage with the patriarchy that I have experienced in China, the United States, and other places that I have traveled. I became aware of the cultural expectations of a woman in my home country at a young

age. Chinese traditional culture engages with suppressing critical voices in relation to challenging gender power dynamics. As a composer at my music premier, a colleague came up to me and said, “No matter how good of a composer you are, as a woman, to marry well is better than making art well.” The manifestation of patriarchal forces supported by tradition was an impetus for my travel and study in the United States.

I was soon to learn that the same suppression of female classical musicians and cultural expectations did not change with my location. I argue that once a person becomes aware of how they are positioned in their own society, a search for utopia in different places leads to recognizing that dystopia is unavoidable and finally coming to terms with behaving in accordance with societal perceptions. My choreography is organized in three different parts, which embody gender struggle, patriarchy, and wanting to be accepted for my musical skills through performance. Each conveys a different internal social struggle in the mind of a Chinese woman in the U.S: conformity, yearning for political freedom, and becoming aware of how she is seen in the United States.

I am using music and dance as resistance and to engage/resist patriarchal practices in the US and China. I am developing strategies that push the boundaries in the specific art forms of break(dance)ing and folk/contemporary acoustic piano. My particular form of piano combines my knowledge of Southwestern Chinese folk and American contemporary compositional techniques. J-Sun, dancer and co-choreographer, uses nontraditional breaking with an aesthetic developed from many years of creating choreography for the stage and battling within the cypher (dance circle).

A few issues emerged during our collaboration - though we were attempting to work against a binary mode of inquiry, we often found ourselves in such a space. Examples of this are: music and dance, choreography and freestyle. I am calling attention

to creative ways of thinking through performance as a simultaneous collaboration rather than as separate art forms whose creation is unconnected.

Our intention is to interrogate the silences, gaps, cuts, breaks, bridges, and intersections of social justice issues with musical and dance practices informed by over 50 years of combined knowledge. These are choreographic and compositional considerations of the work:

- Silences - of identities within our art forms and societies
- Gaps - in knowledge surrounding historical events/things/objects/artifacts
- Cuts - spaces created by formations of foundations in different art forms
- Breaks - sustained moments of difference within predictable patterns
- Bridges - spaces of meeting created by various sides/insides/outside
- Intersections - places where tension resides between binaries

## Scene II: “Standing Alone” (for dulcimer solo)

This piece is dedicated to Alex Lubet, a multi-instrumentalist, who performed this piece at many places including China and USA. I wrote this work originally for acoustic guitar and Lubet arranged this piece for mountain dulcimer. The musical element references North and South Chinese traditional folk songs. Northern folk songs have high-pitched melodies that are vigorous and loud. The subject is typically sad, sorrowful, and about hardship, appearing as laments and/or ballads. The melodic lines have sharp angles with large intervallic jumps. Southern folk diction, on the other hand, is dainty, delicate, and often appears in long, subdued melodies. Southern folk rhythm is loose and gives a relaxed feeling. Southern folk music is more complementary and amorous than Northern music, often taking the form of a serenade.



*Figure 5.2. "Standing Alone": Alex Lubet (photo by Alice Gebura).*

In the Chinese concept of time and spatial dimension, the notes are important, but more central to this genre are the spaces between the notes. This concept was later imported to Japan and developed as the “Art of Ma” with a temporal dimension and can be translated by multiple concepts, such as spacing, interval, gap, pause, rest, and timing. Traditional Western concepts of musical time emphasize the start and end of a sound as essential, but do not highlight the inside of the event. The concept of time in Chinese tradition is different: being inside is the focus.<sup>18</sup>

Chinese traditional music uses rhythm as an organization of time in a succession of determined events as a secondary concern. Being inside time, not starting and ending time is the primary existential position of this musical form. In addition to playing with the juxtaposition of different northern and southern musical styles, I want my music to explore combinations of Western and Chinese music traditions. In so doing, my music is open to analysis in both Western music theory and Chinese music theory.

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<sup>18</sup> Guerino Mazzola et al., *ComMute Towards a Computational Musical Theory of Everything Shaping Future Music with Big Science*, (Hamburg: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 128 (tentatively).

### Scene III: “Under the Cloudy Mountains” (for voice and dulcimer)

In “Under the Cloudy Mountains,” I used Chinese folk singing interspersed with singing in Sichuan dialect. I added the Western compositional technique of atonal interruption to the tonal Chinese folk style. I want to build bridges between two distinct worlds – a Chinese musician growing up with traditional folk music and a musician trained in Western classical piano. A geographical distinction must be made in what I am terming “Chinese music.” Specifically, I am from South-West, but I experienced and studied both Northern and Southern traditions. In China, Northern folk music differs from southern folk music because of the difference in culture and dialect, along with diverse habits, values, customs, and aesthetic taste of the people.



*Figure 5.3. "Under the Cloudy Mountains": Yan Pang and Alex Lubet (photo by Alice Gebura).*



The culture of the Northern Chinese people is represented through their language, which is expressed through intonations and rhythms, and these spoken differences illustrate how the dialect may impact the regional musical style differences. The music of both North and South reflects the character of their songs to a certain extent with the same previously mentioned aspects of spoken language.

### **At a Place Faraway (for dulcimer solo)**

One of my goals of this performance is expanding the audience's understanding of traditional Chinese music. To accomplish this, I invited Alex Lubet to present his setting of the Chinese folk song, "At a Place Faraway," which he first performed for Chinese audiences at Sichuan Conservatory of Music, China. I was fascinated by Lubet's interpretation of this given Chinese music, and I wanted to include this in the performance to present the music from the original form (me singing the original song) in an instrumental work on dulcimer played by Lubet.



*Figure 5.4. "At a Place Faraway": Yan Pang and Alex Lubet (photo by Alice Gebura).*

Lubet understands that musical purity is concerned with maintaining the traditional music of the region by keeping its significant characteristics. He references Chou Wen-Chung, whose lectures and writings explain the prominence of Asian practices in American music. In his article "Indeterminate Origins: A Cultural Theory of

American Experimental Music,” Lubet explains that the most “fundamental element of musical expression” in traditional Chinese music is “the single tone.”<sup>19</sup> The Chinese view a single tone as a meaningful expression through the use of timbre, rhythm, harmony, and most importantly, articulation. The playing of one note acknowledges the existing harmony around it. In the vibration of one string, rhythm and timbre resonate. The traditional American instrument, mountain dulcimer, is very similar to the traditional Chinese instrument, the *guqin*. Lubet’s playing of the dulcimer emphasized this traditional Chinese concept, the single tones, in a non-traditional form.

Even though some Chinese musicologists might overprotect the tradition, I believe Western music influence is not damaging the purity of Chinese music; in fact, it might be the opposite in some cases. Lubet discusses the idea that “questions of identity frequently focus on a sense of place of belonging, some combination of nationalism and ethnicity, the latter often including or conflated with race.” Lubet references Chinese-American composer, Chou, as a ‘transethnic’ artist who “considers not only influences and usages of Asian musical and philosophical concepts and devices, but also ‘echoes’, and ‘parallels’ with key Asian musical ideas.”<sup>20</sup> Chou notes that the different aspects are not visible to the Western musician unless he is a scholar trained in his particular aspect of musicology.<sup>21</sup>

I am hoping to achieve a similar goal: being a Chinese-raised composer who creates art that both is inventive and resists cultural appropriation. At this juncture, it is important to acknowledge a long history of appropriation of cultural art forms by Euro-American artists who take techniques from other genres and label them ‘experimental.’

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<sup>19</sup> Alex Lubet, "Indeterminate Origins: A Cultural Theory of American Experimental Music," in *Perspectives on American Music since 1950*, edited by James R Heintze, (New York: Garland, 1999), 101.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 100-104.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 104-128.

Lubet names John Cage as a cultural appropriator and states that the composer, “has been taken to task for the manner in which he has applied such Asian philosophical concepts as *I Ching* and Zen.”<sup>22</sup> I call attention to this process to maintain a self-reflexive posture in relation to ideas of cultural borrowing and cultural appropriation.

My perspective as a classically (both traditional and Western classical & contemporary) trained musician will allow me to understand both traditions and theories. I grew up in a rich traditional cultural environment and have studied Western classical music. While the older Chinese generation needs to be more open to Western ideas, the younger generation must not lose respect for the beauty and integrity of their own traditions. In other words, I believe that emerging Chinese composers need to go further in their embrace of their own ethnic cultures as well as experimentation with Western music and concepts. Combining of East and West gives composers access to a broader audience. Having a greater number of people listening to new Chinese compositions leads to more commissions and more opportunities for artists engaged in this approach. Lubet’s “At a Place Faraway” is a successful demonstration of the intersection of Chinese traditional and Western contemporary styles.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 111.

#### Scene IV: “Past Memories of Future Rivers” (for Flute and Guitar)

In the past, I've been requested, as Chinese musician, to perform in a traditional musical style. In this piece, I reference Chinese folk style but use Western atonal techniques. I grew up in Sichuan, China; constantly hearing and seeing the Sichuan Opera influenced my beliefs about music. The Sichuan Opera's long history teaches the listener not only about music but also about Chinese art, society, history, and people. In recent times, many modern music fans have forgotten about the Sichuan Opera. Few contemporary compositions are written in the style of traditional Sichuan opera. In addition, not many people *outside* of China know about the Sichuan Opera. I hope to bring the legacy of the Sichuan Opera to a wider audience through my compositions.



*Figure 5.5. "Past Memories for Future Rivers":  
Minsun Song and Maja Radovanlija (photo by Alice Gebura).*

In “Past Memories for Future Rivers,” I include the styles of Sichuan Opera. These styles are conveying the emotional and dramatic content of this piece. The music plays a central role in the performance of Chinese Opera. All stage performances involve some form of singing and musical instruments. The principles of music in drama in Chinese opera will require a lot of physicality of my performers. It requires the efforts of a singer-actor who is a practitioner of Chinese traditional singing techniques and knowledgeable enough to tell a story, the performance stage singing, and dancing. Daily oral conversation is usually considered to be too realistic, thus the dancing and singing will elevate the drama.<sup>23</sup> I incorporated aspects of these styles, thus an understanding about the styles of Chinese opera help understand how it appears in my music.

Sichuan Opera is one of the most influential forms of Chinese local operas. The tunes have various distinctive characteristics with rich local style. It mixes aspects of various Chinese musical traditions including Gao Qiang (High-pitched Tunes), Hu Qin (Hu Instrument), Deng Diao (Light Opera), Tan Xi (Tan Opera), Kun Qu (Kun Opera), all of which have contributed to the development of Sichuan Opera music. Though I did not use specific references from Sichuan Opera in this piece, the genre influenced my choice of harmonic, melodic, percussiveness of the rhythmic accentuations of the flute and guitar.

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<sup>23</sup> Mingzhu Song and Yan Pang. “A Comprehensive Analysis of “The Scene of Sichuan Opera,” in *Collected Papers of One Hundred Tenure Professors*, (Chengdu, Sichuan People’s Art Publishing House, 2004).

### Scene V: “The Others” (for four musicians and four dancers)

This work moves through a varying spectrum of Chinese and American values including choreography of internal reflection and contemplation enacted through movement to portray external societal dissonance. The dance piece seeks to convey a process of racialization and translation in my birth country, my journey to the U.S., and my new home country. Racialization is the expansion “of racial meanings to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group.”<sup>24</sup> This process seeks to define the interactions between different bodies based on phenotypic differences to give one group power over another and justifications for unequal treatment in education, politics, and citizenship.



*Figure 5.6. "The Others": Margaret Ogas, Gabriel Blackburn, Jason Noer, and Yan Pang (photo by Alice Gebura).*

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2015), 111.

Through the performance, there are four main sections in this piece: unison (hive mind), fall (consequences for breaking the rules of society), running/mocking (misidentifying Chineseness), and linking (submissive to culture). Throughout the piece, I use influence of Taiji, especially in unison and running/mocking sections.

I showed the hive mind, or shared cultural values, of Chinese society and the consequences for insiders versus outsiders. These subjects are embodied in the dance when the dancers are flowing together in Taiji-like movement, but I am failing to follow the “norm,” my consequence of having been fallen on, and my need to struggle to re-separate after being hurt by attempts to assimilate. I work through issues of misidentifying Chineseness and a cultural stereotype (United States) and a societal expectation (China) of submissiveness. A Chinese woman in China traditionally submits to state authority, usually a patriarchal power structure. The political reality in Chinese society is that the nation's needs are always prioritized in relation to the individual's need. The dance work highlights misidentification by performers mocking my Taiji movements with stereotypical martial arts techniques. This piece demonstrates submission to the State with a linking/holding back of the Other who fails to find a place, pulled back into being submissive, and re-conforming with the expectations of society.



## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

### Identity

This dissertation project chronicled my personal and artistic immigrant narrative through music and movement that bridged my Chinese heritage with my current identity as a U.S. resident. I sought to make my transnational experience a visible and audible one. My intention was to perform a stand-alone, one-act work that would be programmed as a complete concert of forty-five minutes with music, movement, text, and projections. This dissertation performance provided me with an opportunity to present my project to an audience and participants for critique. *Rural and Urban Explorations of Transnational Performance* provided me with a space to explore my interest in the fusion of Western contemporary compositional techniques and dance forms with Chinese folk music.



*Figure 6.1. Advising Committee and Performers: Alex Lubet, Carl Flink, Yan Pang, Jason Noer, Guerino Mazzola, and Maja Radovanlija.*

I drew on my knowledge and experience of Chinese folk music to inform my contemporary compositional practice. My intention was to open channels of musical interactions between Western and Chinese musicians by fusing elements of Western art music with traditional Chinese music. The increased communication in styles and visibility of Western and Chinese musicians in my performance exposed audience members to both traditions.

### **Implications**

I demonstrated how traditional Sichuan cultural expressions influenced my creation process of my dissertation performance. Hence, combining these elements encourage artists like me to embrace their own ethnic roots while incorporating other stylistic features. The combination of traditional Chinese music with new techniques gives composers like me a global audience and may lead to more performance opportunities, which in turn broadens the field of composition. Ultimately, my participation in this project, as a Chinese musician trained in Western classical music and my knowledge and experience of Han Chinese music, contributes to the field by encouraging musicians to be involved in rich and complex cultural exchanges between old and new, as well as East and West. Not only does this music enhance communication between cultures, it may also encourage composers to learn from each other. My research aims towards creating art that exposes traditionalists to new trends and encouraging younger generations to appreciate traditions.

My audience was able to recognize—regardless of their origin and cultural background, at least one element from their own cultural background in my work, which

is the product of the traditional Chinese culture that I grew up in and the education (the critical thinking) that I received in the U.S. Through my composition and choreography, I expressed the pressure to make sense and integrate two different cultural norms and artistic perspectives: 1) the one I experienced in my home country, China, mostly influenced by traditional Chinese music and European classical music, and 2) the one I experienced as an immigrant/outsider in the United States, mostly influenced by American contemporary music and dance techniques. Therefore, there were times that I felt defeated and that I did not belong anywhere, and there were times that I had a sense of achievement after overcoming the academic and life surviving challenges. The first were portrayed and characterized as tension in music (harmonic tension) and choreography (muscle tension), and the latter as release in music (harmonic resolution) and choreography (muscle release). Together, tension and release create a dynamic and recursive composition through time, like a fractal structure.

This project helped me foreground methodologies developed from critical music, dance and performance studies such as choreographic ethnography and movement analysis. I considered how compositional and choreographic practices empower artists to express their racial, social, and gender identity in my future work and research. Artists taking part in this type of practice have the responsibility to recognize art as a platform to contribute to social change and use recognition to push through different types of boundaries.

## **Next Steps**

These six original pieces (including composer Alex Lubet) are significant moments in my identity formation, and I use theatrical movement (music and dance) to bring them to life. The flow of this practice/performance is spiral, nodal, and infinite. As I have talked about in this work, I began my training in Chinese music, moved to Western music, and then leaned into my Chinese music background while holding onto my Western music training, creating something new and living as a new self. This return, however, is not an absolute return to the beginning – it is not a circle – for I have been changed along the way by my educational and other life experiences (nodes). I am spiraling between these two cultures and incorporating my lived experiences along the way to create my art. As an emerging art-maker, I believe that the growth process is endless, and one must always test the limits of what is possible. Diligence is the path through the academic mountain and hardship is the boat across the sea of study of which there is no end.

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## APPENDIX A: PROGRAM FOR THE PERFORMANCE

### PROGRAM

#### SCENE I: PIANARCHY

Piano: Yan Pang  
Dance: Jason "J-Sun" Noer

#### SCENE II: STANDING ALONE

Dulcimer: Alex Lubet

#### SCENE III: UNDER THE CLOUDY MOUNTAINS

Voice: Yan Pang  
Dulcimer: Alex Lubet

#### AT A PLACE FAR AWAY

Dulcimer: Alex Lubet  
(Chinese folk song  
set by Lubet)

#### SCENE IV: PAST MEMORIES OF FUTURE RIVERS

Flute: Minsun Song  
Guitar: Maja Radovanlija

#### SCENE V: THE OTHERS

Dance: Jason "J-Sun" Noer  
Gabriel Blackburn  
Margaret Ogas  
Yan Pang

THANK YOU  
for celebrating this important  
moment of my life!

### Yan Pang Music Composition Doctoral Dissertation Performance: Chinese & American Art In Dialogue

Friday, November 16 at 7:30 pm  
Studio 100, Babara Barker Center for Dance





## ADVISING COMMITTEE

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### CARL FLINK Dance Director



Professor Flink is the chair of the Theatre Arts & Dance department at the University of Minnesota. He is also the founder and artistic director of Black Label Movement.

### ALEX LUBET Music Director Dulcimer



Professor Lubet is the Division of Creative Studies and Media head at the University of Minnesota. He is a composer and multi-instrumentalist, specializing in acoustic guitar.

### GUERINO MAZZOLA Committee Chair



Professor Mazzola is a music theorist, book writer, and jazz pianist who teaches at the University of Minnesota. His research models are used by leading researchers all over the world.

### MAJA RADOVALIJA Guitar



Dr. Radovalija is a guitar faculty at the University of Minnesota who is a virtuoso on classical guitar. Her recent interests include Balkan traditional music, improvised/experimental music, and interdisciplinary/collaborative works.



### YAN PANG Composer/Pianist/Singer Choreographer/Dancer

Yan is finishing her Ph.D. in Music Composition with a minor in Theater Arts & Dance at the University of Minnesota. Her work focuses on inter-cultural music composition and performance and, as part of this interest, she has been commissioned to compose for, and invited to perform at music festivals throughout the world. She considers both her music composition and dance choreography as a means to build multicultural understanding and tolerance.

A selection of her varied publications includes books *Cool Math for Hot Music*, *All About Music*, and *Basic Music Technology* (co-authored Guerino Mazzola et. al.) published by Springer.

## SPECIAL THANKS

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### ALICE GEBURA Photographer

### MIKE GROGAN Technical Coordinator

Beyond my advising committee and production team, more people than I can name here contributed to my artistic and academic journey with their mentorship and feedback. I would like especially to recognize the efforts of Mingzhu Song, Mary Ellen Childs, Elliot McKinley, Anne LaBaron, Adi Yeshaya, Harry Chalmers, Gao Hong, Elizabeth Nash, Dawn Baker, and Queen Drea. Over the past two decades of finding my artistic voice, they have helped me make art professionally and always encouraged me to honor my authenticity.

## COLLABORATORS

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### GABRIEL BLACKBURN Dancer



Gabriel has been performing professionally for four years and teaching for the past 3 years. He is currently a senior at the U of M pursuing a BFA in dance. His love for hip-hop, contemporary, and improvisation have largely shaped his body intelligence though he's been trained in other various movement disciplines.

### JASON "J-SUN" NOER Dancer



J-Sun is a graduate instructor and disciplinary head of the new Urban and Street Dance track in the Theatre Arts & Dance Department at the University of Minnesota. He is a long-term practitioner of several urban and street dance forms which he teaches, choreographs, theorizes, and performs.

### MARGARET OGAS Dancer



Margaret is a dance artist based in Minneapolis, MN. She started dancing in her hometown of Milwaukee, WI and attended the University of Minnesota, where she received a BFA in dance this May. Margaret engages with her local community as a performer, maker, and emerging arts professional.

### Minsun Song Flute



Minsun is an MM student in flute performance at the University of Minnesota. She is a student of Immanuel Davis.

APPENDIX B: SCORE FOR SCENE I: "PIANARCHY"

# Pianarchy

for piano and dance  
inspired by and in honor of Minzhu Song

Yan Pang

Adagio ad lib.

Piano

pp

Reo.

6

8<sup>va</sup>

Pno.

8<sup>va</sup>

Pno.

Reo.

Pno.

Largo

ff

**Allegro**

6

Pno.

**Largo** **Allegro** **Largo**

7

*f* *mf*

Pno.

**Allegro** **Largo** **Allegro** **Largo** **Allegro** **Largo**

10

*mp* *p* *pp*

Pno.

**Moderato**

17

*p*

Pno.

21

*mp*

Pno.

24

Pno.

28

Pno.

**Allegro** **Largo** **Allegro** **Largo** **Allegro**

*p* *mp*

33

Pno.

**Largo** **Allegro** **Largo**

*mf* *f*

36

Pno.

**Allegro**

37

Pno.

**Largo**

*ff*

APPENDIX C: SCORE FOR SCENE II: "STANDING ALONE"<sup>26</sup>

# Standing Alone

Largo ad libitum ♩ = 56

Yan Pang  
Alex Lubet

The score is written for Dulcimer and Dulciana (Dul.) in 4/4 time. It begins with a Dulcimer part (measures 1-5) marked *mp* and *MV*. A large crescendo covers measures 6-11, reaching *ff*. The Dulciana part enters at measure 6 with *mf*. The score includes dynamic markings such as *sfpp*, *sf p*, *mp*, *mf*, *p*, *mf*, *mp*, *p*, *f*, *mp*, and *fff*. Performance instructions include *A piu mosso* at measure 12 and *Lento* at measure 23. The piece concludes with a *fff* dynamic at measure 43. The Dulcimer part features several *MV* markings and a final *MV* marking at the end.

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<sup>26</sup> Arranged by Alex Lubet

50 Dul.

55 Dul.

60 Dul.

65 Dul.

70 Dul.

74 Dul.

80 Dul.

85 Dul.

88 Dul.

3x: Last time high D's in unison, muted, diminuendo to *pp*.

APPENDIX D: SCORE FOR SCENE III: "UNDER THE CLOUDY MOUNTAIN"

Under the Cloudy Moutains

Yan Pang

**Adagio** ♩ = 86

Voice

*p*

wu way wu way

Dulcimer

sempre vibrato on all fretted notes  
D A d

*p mp p mp*

9 *sf* yo *pp* wu way *mf* wu way *p* wu way

mute *sf p mp p*

18 *p* wu way *mf* wu way yeah yee *p* yeah yee

*p mp mf p*

25 *sf* yo kan na  
看那

*mute sf mf p*

31 vocal solo + acting

ye se hao mei yeah  
夜 色 好 美 咗

34

yuan fang ke ren ni ley yo duan chee ga na ya cha bei yeah  
远 方 客 人 你 来 哟 端 起 嘎 那 呀 茶 杯 咗

39 Dulcimer solo + acting

43

49

53



58 whisper freely  
*mf*

zhu ren                      yo      cha                      whoan  
 主人                      有      茶                      欢

64

jean                      she

今                      夕

*p*                      *mp*

71 freely

*mf*                      *mf*

hey hu      hey ley wah                      ley yee bey  
 嘿 呼      嘿 来 哇                      来 一 杯

*p*                      *mp*                      *mf*

77

*f*                      *ff*                      *mp*                      *pp*

hey                      ley yee      bey  
 来 一      杯

*p*

APPENDIX E: SCORE FOR “AT A PLACE FARAWAY”<sup>27</sup>

At a Place Faraway

Chinese Folksong

Setting by Alex Lubet

$\text{♩} = 80$   
DAc

Dulcimer

4  
Dul.

8  
Dul.

11  
Dul.

14  
Dul.

17  
Dul.

21  
Dul.

26  
Dul.

*sounding pitches*

III D A D

MV

I II II I

D

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Dul. 50

Dul. 55

Dul. 60

Dul. 65

Dul. 70

Dul. 74

Dul. 80

Dul. 85

3x: Last time high D's in unison, muted, diminuendo to *pp*.

*sfpp* *ff* *mp*

Dul. 88

APPENDIX F: SCORE FOR SCENE IV:  
"PAST MEMORIES OF FUTURE RIVERS"

Past Memories for Future Rivers

For Minsun Song and Maja Radovanlija

Yan Pang

Freely ♩ = 68      breathy & distance

Flute

Guitar

7

Fl.

Gtr.

13

Fl.

Gtr.

18

Fl.

Gtr.

Molto Vibrato   Molto Vibrato

3 mf f

23 microtone trill

Fl. *mp*

Gtr. *mp*

27

Fl.

Gtr.

29

Fl. *f*

Gtr. *f*

31 **A** ♩ = 140

Fl. *mf*

Gtr. *mp*

\* play tremolo with flash of i finger

33

Fl.

Gtr.

35

Fl.

*p*

Gtr.

37

Fl.

Gtr.

40

Fl.

**rit.**

Gtr.

43 **B** ♩ = 92

Fl. *mf* *mp*

Gtr. *mp* *mf*

48 ♩ = 72

Fl.

Gtr. *mp* *mp*

51

Fl. *pp*

Gtr. [ III ] [ I ]

53 rit. rasg. rasg.

Fl.

Gtr.

55 **C** ♩ = 132

Fl. *pp*

Gtr. *f* *mp* 6 6 6 6

58 *tr*

Fl. *fp*

Gtr. 6 6 6 6 6 6

61 *(tr)*

Fl. *f*

Gtr. 6 6 6 6

63 *tr*

Fl. 3

Gtr. 6 6 6 6



65

Fl. *mp* *tr*

Gtr. 8

68 (tr)

Fl. *tr*

Gtr. 8

71 (tr)

Fl.

Gtr. 8

73

Fl. vary speed of trill ad. lib. *tr*

Gtr. 8

**rit.**  
75 (tr)

Fl.

Gtr.

77 **D** Freely pitch bend

Fl.

Gtr.

82

Fl.

Gtr.

87 **E** ♩ = 118

Fl.

Gtr.

93

Fl.

Gtr.

8 *rasg. f*

*rasg.*

97

Fl.

Gtr.

*rasg.*

*rasg.*

*rasg.*

*rasg.*

101

Fl.

Gtr.

*ff*

*ff*

*accel.*

104

Fl.

Gtr.

*sf*

*sf*

III

APPENDIX G: SCORE FOR SCENE V: "THE OTHERS"

The Others

Yan Pang

Cantabile  $\text{♩} = 64$

The musical score is written for four instruments: Flute, Trumpet in Bb, Violin, and Violoncello. The time signature is common time (C). The tempo is marked 'Cantabile' with a quarter note equal to 64 beats per minute. The Flute part consists of five measures of whole rests. The Trumpet in Bb part begins with a 'cup mute' instruction. It starts with a half note G4 (marked *pp*), followed by a quarter rest, then a sixteenth-note triplet of G4, A4, and B4 (marked *p*), which crescendos to a sixteenth-note triplet of G4, A4, and B4 (marked *f*). The piece concludes with a quarter note G4 (marked *p*). The Violin part features a sustained chord of G4 and B4. It begins with a half note (marked *ppp*), followed by a quarter note (marked *pp*), then a half note (marked *ppp*). The piece ends with a half note (marked *ppp*). The Violoncello part starts with a half note G2 (marked *mp*), followed by a quarter rest, then a half note rest. It then plays a sixteenth-note triplet of G2, A2, and B2 (marked *pp*), followed by a sixteenth-note triplet of G2, A2, and B2 (marked *pp*). The piece concludes with a half note G2 (marked *ppp*).

6

Fl. *p* *niente* *mp* *mf*

Tpt. *niente*

Vln. *p* *pp* *ppp* *mp*

Vc. *pp* *ppp* *pp* *p* *ppp*

12

Fl. niente *ppp* poco

Tpt. *p* *spp* niente *pp* *mp* niente *mp* niente

Vln. niente *mp*

Vc. *poco mf* *mp* *mf*

A

17

Fl. *mp* *mp* *f*

Tpt. *p* *pp* *ppp* *f* *sfz*

Vln. *niente* *mp* *f* *sfz*

Vc. *f* *sul pont.*

Detailed description: This page of a musical score covers measures 17 through 20. It features four staves: Flute (Fl.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Violin (Vln.), and Viola (Vc.). Measure 17 is marked with a '17' above the Flute staff. The Flute part begins with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note. Dynamics range from mezzo-piano (*mp*) to forte (*f*). The Trumpet part starts with a rest, then plays a half note marked 'open' and *p*, followed by a half note *pp*, a quarter note *ppp*, and a quarter note *f*. The Violin part starts with a triplet of eighth notes marked *niente* and *mp*, followed by a half note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. Dynamics range from *f* to *sfz*. The Viola part starts with a triplet of eighth notes marked *f*, followed by a half note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. Dynamics range from *f* to *sul pont.*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

**B**

22

Fl. *sfz* *sfz* *pp* *mp* *p*

Tpt. *sfz* *sfz* *pp*

Vln. *sfz* *sfz* *p*

Vc. *sfz* *sfz* *sppp* sul tasto

Detailed description: This page of a musical score, labeled 'B' in a box at the top right, contains four staves of music. The first staff is for Flute (Fl.), the second for Trumpet (Tpt.), the third for Violin (Vln.), and the fourth for Cello/Vibraphone (Vc.). The music begins at measure 22, indicated by a dashed arrow and the number '22' above the Flute staff. The Flute part starts with a *sfz* dynamic, followed by a crescendo to *sfz*, then a decrescendo to *pp*, and finally a crescendo to *mp* and *p*. The Trumpet part starts with a *sfz* dynamic, followed by a decrescendo to *sfz*, and then a decrescendo to *pp*. The Violin part starts with a *sfz* dynamic, followed by a decrescendo to *sfz*, and then a decrescendo to *p*. The Cello/Vibraphone part starts with a *sfz* dynamic, followed by a decrescendo to *sfz*, and then a decrescendo to *sppp*. The instruction 'sul tasto' is written above the Cello/Vibraphone staff in the final measure. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and triplets.



27

Fl. *pp* *ppp* *mp*

Tpt. *p* *ppp* *pp* *p* *mp* *p* *pp* *p*

Vln. *pp* *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *mp* *mp*

Vc. *pp* *mp* *pp*

32

Fl. *mp* *p* *mp* *pp* *p* *mp* *poco mf*

Tpt. *mp* *pp* *ppp* *pp* *p* *pp*

Vln. *pp* *pp* *mp* *p* *pp* *ppp* *p* *mp*

Vc. *mp* *pp* *pp* *ppp*

Detailed description of the musical score: The score consists of four staves. The Flute staff (Fl.) starts at measure 32 with a dynamic of *mp*, followed by *p*, *mp*, *pp*, *p*, *mp*, and *poco mf*. The Trumpet staff (Tpt.) starts with *mp*, then *pp*, *ppp*, *pp*, *p*, and *pp*. The Violin staff (Vln.) starts with *pp*, then *pp*, *mp*, *p*, *pp*, *ppp*, *p*, and *mp*. The Viola staff (Vc.) starts with *mp*, then *pp*, *pp*, and *ppp*. All instruments feature triplet markings and various slurs and accents throughout the passage.

C

37

Fl. *pp* *p* *f*

Tpt. *f*

Vln. *ppp* *f* *sfz*

Vc. *p* *f* sul pont.

Detailed description: This page of a musical score contains measures 37 through 40 for four instruments: Flute (Fl.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Violin (Vln.), and Viola (Vc.). Measure 37 is marked with a dynamic of *pp* and features triplets in the Flute and Violin parts. Measure 38 has a dynamic of *p*. Measure 39 has a dynamic of *f* and includes a 'sul pont.' instruction for the Viola. Measure 40 has a dynamic of *sfz*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

41

Fl.

Tpt.

Vln.

Vc.

*sfz* *sfz* *pp* *ff*

*sfz* *sfz* *ff*

*sfz* *sfz* *ff*

*sfz* *sfz* *ppp* *ff*

sul tasto sul pont. pizz.

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for measures 41-44. The Flute part (Fl.) starts with a dynamic of *sfz*, has a triplet in measure 42, and ends with *ff*. The Trumpet part (Tpt.) starts with *sfz*, has a triplet in measure 42, and ends with *ff*. The Violin part (Vln.) starts with *sfz*, has a triplet in measure 42, and ends with *ff*. The Violoncello part (Vc.) starts with *sfz*, has a triplet in measure 42, and includes performance instructions: *ppp* (sul tasto) in measure 43 and *ff* (sul pont. pizz.) in measure 44. Dynamic markings are shown with hairpins indicating crescendos and decrescendos. A dashed arrow above measure 41 indicates a breath mark for the flute.

46

Fl.

Tpt.

Vln.

Vc.

*f*

arco

sul pont.

*f*

Detailed description: This page of a musical score contains four staves for Flute (Fl.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Violin (Vln.), and Viola (Vc.). The music is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 46 is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Flute part features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Trumpet part has a similar melodic line with slurs and accents. The Violin part consists of a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents. The Viola part has a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents. A dynamic marking of *f* is present in the Viola part. The Viola part also includes the instruction 'arco' and 'sul pont.'.

49

Fl.

Tpt.

Vln.

Vc.

*sf*

*sf*

*sf*

pizz.

*ppp*

The image shows a page of a musical score for measures 49 through 52. The score is arranged in four staves: Flute (Fl.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Violin (Vln.), and Violoncello (Vc.).

- Flute (Fl.):** Measure 49 starts with a dynamic marking of *sf*. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes with slurs and accents.
- Trumpet (Tpt.):** Measure 49 starts with a dynamic marking of *sf*. The melody features slurs and accents.
- Violin (Vln.):** Measure 49 starts with a dynamic marking of *sf*. The part consists of sustained notes with accents.
- Violoncello (Vc.):** Measure 49 starts with a dynamic marking of *ppp*. The part features a complex rhythmic pattern with slurs and accents.

Measure 50 continues the melodic lines for all instruments. Measure 51 shows the Flute and Trumpet parts ending with rests, while the Violin and Violoncello parts continue. Measure 52 features a *pizz.* (pizzicato) marking for the Violoncello part, which ends with a final note.

53 **Più mosso**  
a little quieter first time

Fl. *pp* *p*

Tpt. a little quieter first time *pp* *pp*

Vln. a little quieter first time *pp* *p*

Vc. a little quieter first time *f* arco 5

56

Fl.

*f* 5

Tpt.

*mp*

Vln.

*mp* 5

Vc.

*mp*



59

Fl. *mf* *f*

Tpt. *mf* *ff*

Vln. *f* *f*

Vc. *mf* *f*

**D**

A Tempo

62

Fl.

Tpt.

Vln.

Vc.

*ff* *sf* *pp*

*ff* *sf* *pp*

*ff* *sf* *pp*

*ff* *sf* *p*

on C

3

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for four instruments: Flute (Fl.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Violin (Vln.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The page is numbered 62 at the top left. The music is in 2/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score is divided into four systems, one for each instrument. The Flute part starts with a sixteenth-note triplet, followed by a repeat sign. The Trumpet part has a similar triplet and a repeat sign. The Violin part has a sixteenth-note triplet and a repeat sign. The Violoncello part has a sixteenth-note triplet and a repeat sign. The music is marked with dynamic changes: *ff* (fortissimo) and *sf* (sforzando) in the first two measures, and *pp* (pianissimo) in the third measure. The tempo is marked 'A Tempo'. There are also hairpins indicating crescendos and decrescendos. A '3' is written below the final note of the Flute and Violoncello parts, indicating a triplet. The word 'on C' is written above the first note of the Violoncello part in the third measure.

67

Fl.

Tpt.

Vln.

Vc.

*p*

*pp*

*p*

*niente*

*ppp*

*p*

*p*

*niente*

*mp*

*pizz.*

*niente*

*pp*

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for measures 67-70. The Flute part (Fl.) starts with a long note in measure 67, followed by rests in 68 and 69, and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 70. Dynamics include *p* and *pp*. The Trumpet part (Tpt.) has a melodic line in 67, rests in 68 and 69, and a triplet of eighth notes in 70. Dynamics include *p*, *niente*, and *ppp*. The Violin part (Vln.) has a melodic line in 67, rests in 68 and 69, and a triplet of eighth notes in 70. Dynamics include *p*, *niente*, and *mp*. The Viola part (Vc.) has a melodic line in 67, rests in 68 and 69, and a triplet of eighth notes in 70. Dynamics include *niente* and *pp*. The Viola part also includes a *pizz.* marking in measure 70.

73

Fl. *niente ppp* *p* *niente* *rit.*

Tpt. *pp* *p* *niente*

Vln. *pp* *pp* *p* *ppp* *p* *niente*

Vc. arco *p* *mp* *pp* *ppp* *niente*

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for measures 73-76. The Flute part (Fl.) starts with a *niente ppp* dynamic, followed by a *p* dynamic and a *niente* dynamic, with a *rit.* marking at the end. The Trumpet part (Tpt.) starts with a *pp* dynamic, followed by a *p* dynamic and a *niente* dynamic. The Violin part (Vln.) starts with a *pp* dynamic, followed by *pp*, *p*, *ppp*, *p*, and *niente* dynamics. The Violoncello part (Vc.) starts with a *p* dynamic, followed by *mp*, *pp*, *ppp*, and *niente* dynamics. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and triplets.