

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Abstract approved:

Steven Zielke

Music is a global tradition. Different cultures around the world have different musical traditions and histories, but all people create music for the same reason: the love of music and expressing oneself. In the spring of 2011, the Oregon State University Music Department entered into a cultural exchange program with the government of the Henan Province in China. During this tour, research was conducted considering the similarities and differences to be found between the music traditions of the United States of America and China. The Chinese approach to learning and performing music was revealed to have a different emphasis than the American or Western approach. While the Chinese approach emphasizes mathematical precision and a dramatic performance, the American approach emphasizes artistic integrity and a polished performance. However, these differences do not separate the Chinese and American music traditions. Music requires artistic integrity, mathematical precision and performances that are both polished and dramatic. This research confirms that although cultural practice does inform musical practice, all music traditions are united through a common love of song.

Key words: Music, China, America, culture, opera, folk

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A Comparative Study of Chinese and American Musical Traditions

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, University Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

Sarah Fine, Author

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INTRODUCTION: SPRING BREAK IN CHINA

During spring break of 2011, I traveled to China with the Oregon State University Chamber Choir. We explored Zhengzhou in the Henan Province, Chengdu in the Sichuan Province, and the capital Beijing. The Chamber Choir was able to tour in China because of the long-standing relationship the OSU Music Department has with the Henan government, as both Dr. Steven Zielke, the Director of Choral Studies and the conductor of the OSU Chamber Choir, and Dr. Marlan Carlson, the Director of Orchestras, Violin, Viola, Music History, and Aural Skills had previously traveled to the Henan Province to work with local choirs and symphonies. Due to this connection, the Chamber Choir was able to tour in China in 2011 as part of a cultural exchange. Corvallis was graced by the arrival and performance of the Henan Opera, and in return we sang at many different universities and with many different Chinese choirs. Through this experience, I feel I have a unique insight into the Chinese musical tradition juxtaposed against the American musical tradition. I believe that music is a uniting force, and by studying musical traditions we can find a nuanced and important way of understanding the way our two countries differ and, more significantly, can find common ground.

Before we left for China, the Chamber Choir prepared many pieces to perform, including “Cindy,” a traditional American folk song as arranged by Dr. Mack Wilberg, and “Usuli Boat Song,” a traditional Chinese folk song as arranged by Shui Jiang Tian. The theme of our trip was Chinese-American Friendship, and our song choices reflected this priority. Our trip was partially funded by The Culture Department of Henan Province and partially funded by Oregon State University, so from the beginning our trip was about bridging the gap between China and America through music. Though we do not eat the same food, speak the same language, or have the same national goals, we all made music. On our tour, Chinese and American musicians sang

and played together, and in the music we found plenty of common ground. I and many others in my choir found ourselves having very in depth “conversations” with the Chinese choral members we met and sang with using their limited English and hand-gestures. We were all there to sing together, and we were all excited to meet people our age who lived in such a far-away place yet were also studying music in college.

Not only did we musically prepare, but we were also prepared for the many cultural differences we would experience in China, such as applause time, artistic preferences, and the food. In China, as were we warned by Dr. Zielke, it is customary to applaud a very short amount of time after a performance is finished, perhaps three to five seconds rather than ten to fifteen seconds as is customary in the United States. He warned us of this cultural difference to prevent us from having our feelings hurt, as in the United States short applause means an unenthusiastic audience. However, this was not our experience at all. The Chinese audiences and fellow choirs were all so excited to have us perform for them after such a long journey that our receptions were always exuberant. In fact, throughout our entire trip we were met with excited welcomes and enthusiasm. Not only were we thrilled to be in China, most of us for the first time, but they were thrilled to be visited by Americans. It was a very successful fortnight for foreign relations.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF ARTISTIC PRIORITIES

While in China, we sang with several Chinese college choirs, and I was able to observe the way these choirs lead rehearsals and performed their songs and compare and contrast their methods with the methods I’ve experienced singing in high school and college choirs in the United States. What I observed was a singular mission of all choirs, to make beautiful and faithful renditions of different songs, and different methods of getting to the same place. The

only major difference in approach that I observed were the aspects of music Chinese choirs valued that Americans choirs found less important and vice-versa. The general theme I came from was a difference in focus: American choirs took an artistic approach to learn and perform music, while Chinese choirs took a mathematical approach. Both focuses lead to beautiful, moving performances, but different performance nonetheless.

All choirs focus on the same principles: rhythmic precision, tuning, blend, dynamics, memorization, and linguistic precision. In the west, the main priorities of these six are tuning the chords, dynamics, and linguistic precision/diction. Tuning requires all vocal parts to sing their notes accurately, for the parts to be balanced (no one note overwhelming the others) and for the sung vowels to match. If chords do not tune, the song will not be pleasing to the audience. Dynamics are the shifts from quiet to loud (*crescendo*), or loud to quiet (*decrescendo* or *diminuendo*), that make a song exciting to hear. Linguistic precision or diction ascertains that the words are pronounced correctly, no matter the language, that all breaths are taken in the proper grammatical places, and that the emphasis is placed on the correct syllables. As a whole, the goal for choirs in the west is to create beautiful, moving music that communicates the ideas of the pieces faithfully to the audience. Precision is often sacrificed for an exciting sound.

In China, the choirs demonstrated attention instead to rhythmic precision, note accuracy and linguistic precision/diction. Precision in general was the main goal. Whereas there were many songs the OSU Chamber Choir had memorized incorrectly but sang powerfully, the Chinese choirs were always extremely accurate, though perhaps gave less exciting performances than ours. I believe this is due to a difference in the general approach to teaching music, and that cultural differences do lead to different musical interpretations.

SHEET MUSIC: MATH VS. ART

While preparing to sing at the Henan Art Center for our first performance the second day of the trip, the Chamber Choir had the chance to chat and get to know the Henan Opera troupe with whom we were singing the Chinese opera Mulan with. Amidst the gestures and valiant struggles to communicate, the Chinese woman I was standing next to expressed a desire to see my American sheet music for the combined piece we were performing. Upon seeing my sheet music, she excitedly showed the sheet to a friend. Confused, I looked at her music and immediately understood. I always assumed that the staff notation we use in America was universal and only the language would change country to country. This was not the case. While the Chamber Choir's music was notated on a staff with note values represented with lines and dots on different levels, the Henan choir's music was notated with series of numbers divided by bars. The Chinese notation looks less like music and, surprisingly, more like math. Below is an example of Chinese musical notation (Yannucci, 2012):

Figure 1:

小燕子

$\underline{3\ 5}\ \underline{1\ 6}\ 5 - \underline{3\ 5}\ \underline{6\ 1}\ 5 - 1. \ \underline{3\ 2}\ 1 \underline{2\ 1}\ \underline{6\ 1}\ 5 - 3. \ \underline{5\ 6}\ \underline{5\ 6} 1\ \underline{2\ 5}\ 6 - $
小燕子，穿花衣，年年春天来这里，我问燕子你为啥来。
$\underline{3\ 2}\ 1\ 2 - 2\ 2\ 3\ 5\ 5 1\ \underline{2\ 3}\ 5 - \underline{3\ 5}\ \underline{1\ 6}\ 5 - \underline{3\ 5}\ \underline{6\ 1}\ 5 - 1. \ \underline{3\ 2}\ 1 $
燕子说，这里的春天最美丽。小燕子，告诉你，今年这里
$\underline{2\ 1}\ \underline{6\ 1}\ 5 - 3. \ \underline{5\ 6}\ \underline{5\ 6} 1\ \underline{2\ 5}\ 6 - 3. \ 1\ 6\ 5 \underline{3\ 2}\ 1\ 2 - 2. \ 3\ 5 - \overset{6}{\underset{3}{J}}$
更美丽。我们盖起了大工厂，装上了新机器。欢迎你
$1. \ \underline{3\ 2}\ 1 \underline{2\ 1}\ \underline{5\ 6}\ 1 - $
长期住在这里

This is an example of the familiar staff notation of the same song (Yannucci, 2012):

Figure 2:

WWW.MAMALISA.COM LITTLE SWALLOW
小燕子 Xiǎo yàn zi

The musical score is written in 4/4 time on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The lyrics are in Chinese characters with pinyin below them. The score is divided into four systems, each with five measures. The lyrics are as follows:

小燕子 xiǎo yàn zi	穿花衣 chuān huā yī	年年春天 nián nián chūn tiān	来这里 lái zhè lǐ	我问燕子你 wǒ wèn yàn zi nǐ
为啥来 wèi shá lái	燕子说 yàn zi shuō	这里的春天 zhè lǐ de chūn tiān	最美丽 zuì měi lì	小燕子 xiǎo yàn zi
告诉你 gào su nǐ	今年这里 jīn nián zhè lǐ	更美丽 gèng měi lì	我们盖起了 wǒ men gài qǐ le	大工厂 dà gōng chǎng
装上了 zhuāng shàng le	新机器 xīn jī qì	欢迎你 huān yíng nǐ	长期 cháng qī	住在这里 zhù zài zhè lǐ

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I learned that the numerical notation is called *jianpu*, and is considered musical shorthand. The numbers one through seven denote a solfege value (*do, re, mi*, etc.), and the characters underneath the numbers are the words to be sung. Other marking like underlines or arcs show note value (how long each note lasts, determined by note value like quarter notes or half notes in staff notation) and intonation. I assumed that additional markings must denote the key the song is to be sung in, giving value to the solfege numbers, but this it turns out that in much of China, like many countries, *do* is fixed rather than movable. In the United States, the

value of *do* depends upon the key of the piece. For example, in A major, *do* is A, *re* is B, *mi* is C#, *fa* is D, *sol* is E, *la* is F# and *ti* is G#. The solfege values change depending on the key. But in the Henan Province, *do* is equivalent to C. Therefore, the numbers one through seven are equivalent to the letters A through G, or in this case, C through B, in Chinese musical notation.

Noticeably, dynamic markings are completely absent from this shorthand notation. This does not mean, however, that no attention is paid to dynamics using Chinese musical notation. A conductor shows the choir the tempo, the cutoffs and the dynamics when leading a performance. However, it does show the obvious priorities of Chinese choirs: tonal accuracy, rhythmic accuracy, and linguistic accuracy, as the only information provided on the sheet music in Chinese shorthand notation is rhythm, notes and words.

There is much debate among the music community about whether fixed *do* or movable *do* is the better technique for teaching music. While movable *do* is easier to initially teach to novice music students, as it teaches students to hear keys early in their music education, fixed *do* promotes a musical understanding that is better for sight-singing and other advanced techniques. What these two systems reveal to me are two basic and very different emphases to teaching and performing music. In the American tradition, movable *do* promotes “hearing keys,” which emphasizes the relationship between notes. Therefore, tuning becomes top priority in a movable *do* system. If an SATB choir sings any given four-note chord, every chord should ring as both a single entity and as a representative of the key that the song is in. If the basses sing an A, the tenors sing a C#, the altos sing an E, and the sopranos sing a high A. In a movable *do* system, the chord created is both a 1-3-5 (tonic) chord and an A major chord, and should ring as such. All notes in a movable *do* system are cataloged in relationship to the tonic in order for the musicians to “feel” the key and operate within it.

But in a fixed *do* system, the relationships between notes in an octave scale that together are designated as a key are not important. What is important is tonal accuracy and intervals, with are the relationships between any two notes. Fixed *do* is less about feeling what the key is like in your body and mind and more about memorization and intellectual musicianship. Fixed *do* is a more complication system, and therefore harder to learn, but it creates a better understanding of music in the music theory sense, and can even promote the development of absolute pitch (Demorest, 2001).

This leads me to believe in a basic difference in emphasis between Chinese and American musical traditions. Though it would be incorrect to say that American music does not value precision, or that Chinese music does not value artistry, but the basic emphasis is present even in the way music is taught. From childhood American children are taught to sing “Do-Re-Mi” to learn about keys, and most Americans are unaware that the national anthem “The Star-Spangled Banner” is sung in many different keys depending upon the preference of the performer. Technical accuracy can fall by the wayside in favor of a better sound.

Fixed *do* seems to fit Chinese culture as movable *do* fits American culture. While American culture is described as “anything goes,” loud and emotional, Chinese culture is described as highly attentive to detail, precision and tradition. Fixed *do* promotes a mathematical sensibility to music, as it focuses on accuracy and the relationship between all notes. Even the absence of vibrato in Chinese singing adds to pitch accuracy, as vibrato is literally oscillating pitch. The numbers used to identify pitches in the *jianpu* musical shorthand, the fixed *do*, and the singing style all demonstrate a basic difference in emphasis for teaching and performing music between Chinese and American traditions. The Western tradition could be considered more artful, while the Chinese tradition is more mathematical. By examining the differences and

similarities between the traditions, one can reveal basic human tendencies in the way we think about and perform music. Music is both math and art, and is always made to express our deepest humanity.

THE SOUNDS OF OPERA

As part of the cultural exchange, the Henan Opera traveled to Oregon State University to perform a traditional Chinese opera, the title of which translates to The Orphan of Zhao. This opera was appropriately meaningful to the cultural exchange's theme of "Chinese-American Friendship," as it was the first Chinese opera or play to be translated in the West. The story is also often compared to a Chinese Hamlet, as it centers on an orphan boy raised in the house of his enemies, his true identity kept secret until he reaches adulthood and is able to avenge his slain family. It is a tale of revenge, duty and sacrifice, themes that both reflect the universal human condition and Confucian values of family and honor. In this way, The Orphan of Zhao is not dissimilar to a Western opera while still being firmly rooted in Chinese culture.

The Orphan of Zhao is also dissimilar to Western opera in the types of instruments used by the orchestra. A traditional Chinese opera, called Peking or Beijing opera outside of China and *jingju* or *jingxi* within it, uses a mixture of percussive and orchestral musical instruments. These types of instruments are also used in Western operas, but only with the addition of other types of instruments. Where a Chinese opera will have a mix of string instruments, woodwind instruments and percussive instruments, a Western opera will have a mix of string instruments, brass instruments, woodwind instruments, percussive instruments, and pitched percussive instruments. But it is here that the similarities cease. The instruments used in Chinese music may fit in the same categories as many Western instruments, but they look very different and produce very different sounds than their Western counterparts.

Leading the instruments of a Chinese opera is a two-stringed fiddle-like instrument played with a bow called an *erhu* (Rees, 2009). This wailing string instrument often doubles the melody sung by the actors, adding a quivering and plaintive quality to the music. The *erhu* is chosen to duplicate the singer's voice as it has a very similar tone quality to a singer using traditional Chinese vocal technique: it is narrow, wailing, piercing, and emotionally evocative in the same way that a human voice is. Added to the *erhu* could be different types of lutes with two, three, or four strings, or flutes or reed pipes. But always included in Chinese operas are different sizes of gongs and drums. These instruments are used to their loudest and fullest to add to the drama of the scene. The repetitive crashing of the gongs is most noticeably used between songs to add terror to fight scenes and intensity to important plot points. In general, the types of musical instruments used in Chinese opera are far less expansive than in Western opera, and are used to highlight and accompany the singer's voices and repeat common themes rather than to create complex harmonies for the singers to sing with and against like in Western opera.

Discussing the instruments used alone demonstrates the very different sounds found in Western versus Chinese opera. However, there are major differences to be found in vocal technique as well. In traditional Western opera, a good singer demonstrates good breath support and vocal maturity through vocal power and vibrato; good vocal technique through pitch control; accuracy and expansive vocal range; good understanding of the music through vocal expressivity; and a good ear through tuning with the orchestra and other singers. This leads to the traditional opera sound which is commonly represented in popular culture by the opera diva "Brunhilda," an aging fat woman outfitted in Viking garb who sings with intensity, great volume and wide vibrato.

However, this is not the ideal sound in Chinese opera. The ideal traits of a singer in the Chinese tradition are primarily vocal strength and good memory. A good singer should be able to sing loudly, very high, piercingly, and with great expressiveness. While Western ears are accustomed to darker vowels, the ideal sound being *chiascuro*, a mix of light and dark that produces a mature sound with good focus without being too muffled and dark or too narrow and bright, the proper Chinese sound is very bright, very focused, with very little vibrato (Rees, 2009). This leads to a completely different operatic sound than traditional Western Opera, though both practices are highly refined and regulated in their own manner.

In both Western and Chinese opera, there are several different categories of typical roles. In Western operas, these roles are designated by vocal part. There is the soprano role, which is the main female character with a high vocal range, the tenor role, the main male, often young, protagonist with a high male vocal range, the baritone role, often an older male character or male villain with a low vocal range, and the countertenor role, a child or woman played by a young boy or castrato. Of course, not all operas use all of these roles and neither are they limited to just these types, but they are the most iconic roles to be found in Western opera. There are also further stratification of vocal types like alto, contralto, bass and mezzo-soprano, but the primary classifications are the most iconic roles in Western opera.

In traditional Chinese opera, these roles are more strictly defined. The *sheng* role is the main male role; if the character is older, the performer sings maturely and carries himself in a dignified manner, and if the character is younger, the performer sings shrilly with vocal breaks to indicate adolescence. Other *sheng* roles require acrobatics and natural singing if the character is involved in combat. The *dan* role is the main female role; as with the Western tradition, in ancient times this role was always played by a man in female garb. The *jing* role is a painted

face male role that requires a strong voice and exaggerated gestures indicates strong emotions. Face painting is one of the hallmarks of traditional Chinese opera, and like the masks used in Greek plays, the different looks made by patterns and colors of face paint are used to indicate the personality of the character. Like the *sheng* roles, *jing* roles are sometimes required to sing, sometimes act dramatically, and sometimes perform acrobatics in scenes of combat. The final type of role is the *chou* role. This is the role of the ugly male or clown, and is the comic relief of the operas. Similar to a Falstaff character in the Shakespearean tradition, the *chou* role connects to the lower classes in the audience with low-brow humor and wild antics (Wichmann, 1991).

In both Western and Chinese opera, vocal type and range are intertwined with character type and personality, allowing the audience to evaluate a character primarily by how they sound. It is interesting to note the names for Western opera roles are categorized by vocal part and are the same classifications used in other vocal setting like solo or choral work, while Chinese opera role names are only used in opera and are categorized by character type. Again, the Western method concentrates one half of the musical mission while the Chinese method concentrates on the other. In this case, opera is half acting and half music, and though both Chinese and Western opera traditions require excellent singing and acting, the different emphases reveal the different cultural needs of the audience. The focus on music in Western opera, with the large orchestra and bold vocal parts, reveals an audience intent on a dramatic concert. The musical art comes before the performance art. The focus on drama in Chinese opera, with the small group of instruments, dramatic makeup, acrobatics and bold dramatic characters, reveals an audience intent on drama set to music. The performance art comes before the musical art. In the end, both audiences are there to see operas, but the difference in emphasis accounts for the different results.

Operatic tradition is a model for comparing the sound of Western and Chinese vocal traditions because operatic technique is the most highly refined and demanding type of singing in all cultures. In opera the rules of vocal technique are the strictest and therefore better for side-by-side comparison, as their rules are strict and unbending. But when discussing other types of music, especially folk music, the lines become more blurred, even within a single tradition.

Western operatic tradition and Western music tradition are alike in that a prevalent mellow tone is overlaid by a strong voice with shimmering vibrato and an expressive tone. In China, the similarities between the general music tradition and operatic tradition are a high range, a narrow rather than piercing placement, relaxed vocal control, good memory, and great vocal strength (Rees, 2009). In both cultures, musical sounds are mellower than their operatic counterparts while still displaying the vocal priorities of the culture. The ideal Western sound tends toward maturity, emotion and strong beauty, while the ideal Chinese sound tends toward youthfulness, intelligence and effortless beauty.

CHINESE AND AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC

Folk music, no matter its origin, is made to tell stories. Before there were written languages, there were songs to teach the next generations tales of cultural importance. Folk songs can be about love, lust, loss, war, work or weather, but all are culturally significant. Folk songs are also notable for having no known author, as they are passed down from generation to generation in the oral tradition. Besides being useful for telling tales, folk songs are often sung to pass the time during a hard day's labor. This is likely the way the high and piercing Chinese vocal tone became favored: it was used in the dialogue songs in the *shan'ge* tradition, or mountain song tradition, that were sung by workers in fields tending crops or herding animals

because the sound was easily understood over long distances (Rees, 2009). Whereas American folk songs were sung in solo or tandem, leading to rhythmic songs with easily memorized melodies that make days of hard work pass more quickly, Chinese folk songs were used as conversation to alleviate loneliness. Lines were sung back-and-forth, often improvised, and sung in the high piercing tone that allow words to be understood and replied to from far away. Also indicative of this dialogue tradition are the repetitive tunes of Chinese folk songs. With so many of the songs improvised and the main focus on lyrics, as well as the vocal range being restricted to the higher notes, Chinese folk songs mostly center around a main melodic theme that is repeated with slight variations throughout (Rees, 2009). But at their core, both styles of folk songs are easily learned and memorized, both found deep roots and pervasive success among people doing hard labor, and both preserved the cultural inheritance of times gone by.

Also influential to the style of folk music in both the United States and China are speech patterns. Folk music is about words, so it is natural to find that local manner and speech affects the way people sing in the lyric-intensive genre. This is especially important in Chinese music, as different tones are part of the proper pronunciation of the language. As there are many different dialects in China, for simplicity I will explain the tonal rules for Mandarin Chinese.

In Mandarin Chinese there are four vocal tones: straight tone, rising tone, falling tone, and falling then rising tone. The different tones are critical to utilize correctly as the vocal emphasis is part of the meaning of words. For example, the word *ma* (as written in *pinyin*, the Romanization of written Mandarin Chinese) has four different meaning depending on which vocal tone is used. *Mā*, said with straight tone, means “mother,” *má*, said with rising tone, means “hemp,” *mǎ*, said with falling then rising tone, means “horse,” and *mà*, said with falling tone,

means “scold.” Chinese songs must include these tones in the melody in order for the words to be understood by the audience.

In English, however, there are no such vocal tones. Integrated into our folk songs are speech patterns and rhythms, notably in the Appalachian and Southern locals. In the Appalachian Mountains the tradition of folk songs flourished, likely due to the harder life of mountain folk. Also unique to the area is a lilting, thickly accented dialect of English that heavily influenced the rhythms commonly found in its folk music, the most iconic type of folk music in America. This lilting speech pattern that is so central to the Southern drawl also created the “swung” rhythm of folk music in the South, where in pairs of notes the first note lasts about twice as long as the second (Fleischhauer & Jabbour, 2011). The rhythmic pattern that became a hallmark of Appalachian and Southern folk music was less about clarity found in the Chinese tones and more about speech preferences and vocal habits.

A major difference between American and Chinese folk music is religion. God and faith is often the centerpiece of Americana, while religion plays a background role in Chinese folk music. Besides hymns of prayer, which did not translate to folk music, the only Chinese religious-related songs were songs meant to be sung during religious festivals. These eventually fell out of favor and memory faster than other types of folk songs due to two cultural shifts: the rise of communism in the 1950s and Mao Tse Tung’s Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976.

The move to a communist government and the Cultural Revolution in China were both aimed to wipe out all capitalist, Western, and generally undesirable attributes from Chinese culture. By 1949, many folk songs were forbidden, as they were seen as *huangsede*, meaning yellow or pornographic (Rees, 2009). The many songs about love and lust were banned to prevent the spoiling of youth, and in the Cultural Revolution, all songs that were not political

propaganda supporting Mao's government were also banned. Musicians were considered a "bad element," a category in Mao's nine classes of enemies. The nine enemies of China were landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements, rightists, traitors, foreign agents, capitalist roaders and intellectuals. These categories represented the very worst of the bourgeois, and stood against the most basic communist ideals. Mao Tse-dong's mission was to cleanse China of the "Four Olds:" Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits and Old Ideals. Many artifacts of cultural significance were purposefully destroyed by Mao's Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution to make way for a new, communist China (Ebrey, 1981). Because musicians were targeted by the Red Guard as bad elements, opera groups were disbanded, all sites of religious worship shut down, and people stopped singing anything that wasn't political propaganda if they dared sing at all (Rees, 2009). Because folk songs are remembered and recounted through the oral tradition, it is unknown how many songs were lost to time and forgotten in those decades of musical silence. After Mao's death in 1976, the ban on music was lifted, and by the 1980s it became a cultural mission to unbury and record folk songs for the preservation of Chinese culture. But those lost years exacted a heavy toll on Chinese folk music, and though much of it still exists today, it is less preserved in modern Chinese consciousness than American folk music in our culture.

At the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., there are preserved copies of culturally significant movies, books, and music recordings from all fifty states and every sub-culture. For West Virginia alone the *catalog* of recording collections of folk music is twenty-five pages long. The genres included of only folk music range from hymns to blues to sea chanties to British-American ballads to even the inauguration of President Coolidge (Howard, Jenkins, Prouty & Shambaugh, 2011). Music has always been a very important part of American culture that

permeates every aspect of daily life. Unlike China, whose Confucian then communist cultural upheavals in the twentieth century yearned to de-emphasize music as adverse to hard work, America has never swayed from music's side. This may not seem a fair comparison, as China is thousands of years old and America has only been a country since 1776. But both Native American cultures and European cultures that pre-date America by centuries put an emphasis on music as an art, religious experience, mode of self-expression and way to tell culturally significant stories. In fact, the Native American flute, the hallmark of Native American music even today, is one of the oldest instruments in human history. In fact, it's the world's third oldest type of instrument behind only the drum and the shaker (Looking Wolf, 2005). So where China has had to play cultural catch-up to preserve and catalog their musical history, America has plowed full steam ahead, allowing America to have a denser folk music history that is far more culturally relevant in modern times. The major loss of Chinese culture that occurred during the Cultural Revolution is something that China has had to grapple with and overcome, but having been to China in 2011, the sheer amount of ancient Chinese history the country has preserved for the current generation and generations to come was remarkable. In museums and cultural theme parks we saw artifacts that were tens of thousands of years old and learned about customs that were at least as ancient. Though the country did experience losses, so much was saved and recovered to inform their citizens that perhaps those dark years were nothing more than a bump in the road.

In China, the Oregon State Chamber Choir sang two folk songs as a part of our tour repertoire: "Usuli Boat Song," a Chinese river folk song, and "Cindy," an American Appalachian folk song. Both songs in the same set demonstrate "Chinese-American Friendship," the theme of

the cultural exchange, showed the equal respect we held for our two cultures, and represented the similarities between our two cultures.

The lyrics to the Mack Wilberg arrangement of “Cindy” are below (Wilberg, 1989):

I wish I was an apple a hangin’ on a tree.
And ev’ry time my sweetheart passed, she’d take a bite of me.
I wish I had a nickel, I wish I had a dime.
I wish I had a pretty girl, to love me all the time.

I wish I had a needle, as fine as I could sew,
I’d sew that girl to my coattail and down the road I’d go.
You ought to see my Cindy, she lives a way down south,
An’ she’s so sweet the honey bees, all swarm around her mouth.

Get along home little Cindy,
Get along home little Cindy,
Get along home little Cindy,
I’ll marry you sometime.

The first time I saw Cindy, she was standing in the door,
Her shoes and stockings in her hand, her feet all o’er the floor,
She took me to her parlor, she cooled me with her fan,
She swore that I’ze the purtiest thing in shape of mortal man.

Get along home little Cindy,
Get along home little Cindy,
Get along home little Cindy,
I’ll marry you sometime.

Now Cindy hugged and kissed him, she wrung her hands and cried,
She swore he was the purtiest thing that ever lived or died.
She told him that she loved him, she called him sugar plum,
She throwed her arms around him, he though his time had come.

Get along home little Cindy,
Get along home little Cindy,
Get along home little Cindy,
I’ll marry you sometime.

Now Cindy went to the preachin’, she swung around and round,
She got so full of glory, she knocked the preacher down.
My Cindy in the springtime, my Cindy in the fall,
If I can’t have my Cindy, I’ll have no girl at all.

Get along home little Cindy,
 Get along home little Cindy,
 Get along home little Cindy,
 I'll marry you sometime.

When Cindy got religion, she thought her time had come,
 She walked right up to the preacher and chawed her chewin' gum.
 Now Cindy got religion, she'd had it once before,
 But when she heard my banjo she's the first one on the floor.

Get along home little Cindy,
 Get along home little Cindy,
 Get along home little Cindy,
 I'll marry you sometime.

Following are the lyrics of "Usuli Boat Song," poetically translated in English (Tian, 1998):

A ha lang he he ni na,
 A ha lang he he ni na,
 A ha lang he ni na,
 He he lei he ni na,
 A ha lang he ni na, he lei, gei gen.

The Usuli River is long;
 Waves appear on the blue water.
 The Hezhe people spread a thousand nets;
 The boats are filled with fish.

A lang he lang he ni na lei ya,
 He la na ni he ni na.
 Ah he he na lei he ni na,
 He la ni he lei, hei gen.

White clouds float over Dadingzi Mountain;
 The golden sun shines on the boat sails.
 They row briskly and hold the rudder firm;
 They reap a good harvest working with their hands.

A lang he lang he ni na lei ya,
 He la na ni he ni na, gei gen.
 He a lang he ni na lei ya, he he ni na,
 He a lang he ni na lei ya,
 He la he ni na, he ni na lei, he ni na lei, he ni na lei.

The woods are filled with white birch;
 The mountains are covered with red azaleas.

The Hezhe people are very happy;
There will be plenty in the years ahead.

A ha lang he he ni na,
A ha lang he he ni na,
A ha lang he ni na,
He he lei he ni na,
A ha lang he ni na, he lei, gei gen.

Clearly, both songs incorporate typical folk song themes: pretty girls and fishing. Both songs repeat the chorus multiple times, and both sets of lyrics are uncomplicated and easy to memorize. Although the chorus for “Cindy” uses words while the chorus for “Usuli Boat Song” uses patterns of different neutral syllables, both choruses are catchy, repetitive and simple. The similarities do not cease at the lyrics. Even the pattern of each song is similar. The verse has a repetitive melody with slight variance every second line, with a triumphant sounding, short chorus. Both songs are easy to sing and memorize with simple, pleasing harmonies, and both were consistent crowd-pleasers during our performances. No matter the country of origin, people idealize to folk songs. The melodies are pleasant and repetitive, the subject matter is down-to-earth, and the tune is easy to sing no matter one’s musical ability.

Even though Cindy emerged from an American folk setting and Usuli Boat Song emerged from a Chinese folk setting, both songs reflect far more about the human condition than their respective cultures. That is the beauty of folk songs; they preserve and discuss the topics most important to the “regular folk” of the world. In the end, every person wants a good home, a loving relationship with a person to fall asleep next to at night, good and plentiful food to eat, a family that has a bright future ahead of them, and a little free time to enjoy life’s simple pleasures like music. These facts transcend culture and geographical location, and show us that no matter where we call home, we all share something very important: humanity.

WHAT CAN BE CONCLUDED

During my time in China I was able to experience a new way of understanding music. More importantly, I was able to bond with groups of my peers using music as our primary source of communication. Even though Chinese culture and American culture are worlds apart, we were able to form genuine bonds by singing together. Our trip was a cultural exchange for both the Oregon State University Chamber Choir and the Henan Opera, and was meant as a cultural public relations trip. It was partially funded by the Henan Province government and partially funded by Oregon State University, literally representing the cooperation and friendship between our two countries. We found no reason to allow the current political tension between our countries to prevent us from enjoying each other's country and culture, and were rewarded with the trip of a lifetime.

In China, music is taught and performed with a different emphasis than in the United States. But when the Chinese and American choirs performed together, we weren't concerned with our different tones or techniques. No matter our country of origin, we were all music students. Music is not a practical path of study in college, so the people who do pursue music in college do so because they love to sing or play. At the end of the day our shared passion was the only important factor in finding common ground between us.

Singing is about both art and mathematics, interpretation and precision, emotion and music. The American and Chinese musical traditions do emphasize different aspects of creating music, but that does not alter the fact that we all make music for the same reason: we are human, and we love to sing and play.

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