

Comparison of Solo Music for the Western Lute and Chinese Pipa

By

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in School of Music and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music in Musicology.

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Date Defended: 12 May 2015

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Date approved: 10 June 2015

Abstract

This thesis is a comparison between the Western lute and Chinese pipa in terms of their history, construction, playing techniques, and examples of their solo repertory. This thesis has six chapters in total. The first chapter is an introduction to the Western lute, including aspects of its history and playing techniques. The second chapter considers the same aspects of the Chinese pipa. The third, fourth, and fifth chapters are descriptions of three solo pieces for these instruments: Luis de Milán's *Fantasia XII del tercero quarto tono* as a solo piece for lute, and then the contrasting *Ambushed from Ten Sides* and *Moonlit River in Spring* for pipa. The last chapter is a comparison between Milán's *Fantasia XII* and the two Chinese works, demonstrating how each is an example of its culture and that there are similarities and differences in the way that the composers of each approached various musical elements.

Acknowledgments

First, my deepest thanks go to my thesis committee members. Thank you to Dr. Alicia Levin and Dr. Bryan Kip Haaheim for not only spending their valuable time reading my thesis, but for also offering invaluable insight that significantly improved the final product. And, my thanks go to all people, who assisted me my thesis, to help me finish the final product of my degree.

Finally, I must extend the greatest level of appreciation to my thesis committee chair, Dr. Paul Laird, who has always set the highest of standards for me throughout the pursuit of this degree. His brilliant direction, infinite wisdom, and unwavering support kept me focused and motivated throughout this process. I am eternally grateful for his guidance and mentorship.

Chapter 1: Introduction of the Lute

The History of the Lute

The lute is a plucked string musical instrument that was first introduced into Europe in about the ninth century, and it continues to be relevant today, especially in the performance of music from the Renaissance and Baroque and in period projects involving theater and other arts. The lute originated in the Arab world, probably entering Europe through its presence with the Moors in Spain or through Spanish travelers who had observed it being played in Arab societies. The original lute was much simpler than the modern European lute; the original structure was subject to many changes and improvements by generations of musicians and artisans. Its period of greatest popularity was from the late Middle Ages to the Baroque, but it became less important in the eighteenth century when the functions for which it had been used were performed more often on keyboard instruments, such as the harpsichord. The plucked string instrument that replaced the lute was the guitar, which of course functions in many roles in the modern world. A fascinating, recent use of the lute was by the British musician Sting, who recorded songs by John Dowland (1563-1626) on his 2006 album *Songs of the Labyrinth*.¹ When interest in the lute began to revive in the twentieth century as part of the greater interest in early music, there was a dearth of published materials on it, complicating efforts to learn to play it. The purpose of

¹ Glen T. G., *The Lute of Old in the Contemporary Music World* (London: Simon and Shutter, 2014.)

this part of the thesis is to define, describe, and offer a brief history of lute as an instrument.

Structure of the Lute

The word *lute* refers to a family of instruments that was among the most important in European music-making for several centuries. It somewhat resembles both the European guitar and Chinese pipa in terms of appearance. The lute is constructed with a rounded-ovoid body, which is made up of thin strips of bent wood, attached together along the edges. The body of the lute is enclosed by a wooden table or soundboard, to which is attached a bridge. All of the lute strings are tied on the bridge and stretched across the soundboard and then along the neck to the fingerboard—which is fixed with several frets—and tied to a peg in the peg box. The strings are tuned by adjusting the tension. The player adjusts pitch on each string by placing a finger on the left hand behind a fret and plucking the strings near the bridge with the fingers of the right hand.

In most cases, lute strings are arranged in courses, or groups of strings, usually with two in each course, but with only one on the highest pitches, known as the *chanterelle*. The *chanterelle* is also the name that the French gave to the E string on the violin for its soprano singing color.² The violin, the viola, the cello, the lute, and the hurdy-gurdy all have their own *chanterelles*, but the term today is applied most often to the violin, lute, and banjo. In the hurdy-gurdy, the chanterelle is one or two strings that may be stopped by keys and on which melodies are played. The pair of strings in most courses on the lute is tuned to unison, but the strings of the lowest-

² Hellwig Friedemann, “Lute Construction in the Renaissance and the Baroque,” *The Galpin Society Journal*, Vol. 27 (1974): 21-30.

pitched course are tuned to an octave. The lute can also be built based on the buyer's specifications in terms of the number of strings. In addition, the lute is expensive and fragile and must be treated with care and delicacy.

History of the European Lute

Although it is not clear how the European lute changed from the Arabic lute in those distant centuries since the lute entered Europe as the Arabic *'ud* (oud) through the Moorish presence in Spain from the early eighth century, the progression of paintings since the fourteenth century shows changes in forms of lutes. During the fourteenth century, the lute appears to have had only four courses. However, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the lute increased to about five courses. Then, six-course lutes developed by the mid-fifteenth century.³

During the course of the Middle Ages the lute became one of the most common musical instruments in the European culture, and its presence was even broader, because the Arabic *'ud* was introduced into Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. The Arabic phrase *al 'ud* means "the wood," and the name transformed into *lute* in English, *liuto* in Italian, *luth* in French, *Laute* in German, and similar names in other European languages. The *'ud* had four pairs of strings that were plucked by using a plectrum, similar to the European lute. Also, the European lute has been changed in shape; the *'ud*, for example, had a circular peg box.

There were important changes in how lute was played. People who played the lute abandoned the use of a plectrum, and they started plucking it by using their fingertips, often playing the instrument polyphonically, plucking more than one note

³ Douglas Alton Smith, *A History of the Lute from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Lexington, Va: Lute Society of America, Inc., 2002).

at the same time. With polyphonic performance standard on the instrument, musicians began to intabulate choral music and other musical works, which became a key part of the lute's repertory. Intabulations for keyboard instruments appear in the earliest sources of keyboard music such as the Faenza, Robertsbridge, and Reina manuscripts from the fourteenth-century. A large manuscript of intabulations is the Faenza, copied about 1400, and including a fourteenth-century repertory that is almost 50 percent intabulations, some of it written by important composers such as Guillaume de Machaut and Francesco Landini.⁴ Intabulations continued to dominate the repertory of fifteenth-century music. Especially, the important and very large *Buxheimer Orgelbuch* is primarily intabulations of works, which were created by leading composers of the time such as Gilles Binchois, Walter Frye, Guillaume Dufay, and others.⁵ In the seventeenth-century, dance and dance-related forms, which in some cases were intabulations of lute pieces, dominate the repertory of French lute and keyboard music. The notational standard for Baroque harpsichord music, however, became staff notation. The three most important composers are Jacques Champion de Chambonnières, Louis Couperin, and Henri d'Anglebert.⁶ At a time when tablature was so prevalent in keyboard music, there were three main kinds of tablature especially for lute. They were developed in France, Italy, and Germany.

There are some manuscripts from the middle of the fifteenth-century that explain the lute's construction. As a matter of fact, not a single lute from this period

⁴ Alice Clark, "Guillaume de Machaut: Secretary, Poet, Musician," *Plainsong & Medieval Music*, Vol.22 (2013): 105-107.

⁵ Levi Sheptovitsky, "The Cracow Lute Tablature (Second Half of the 16th Century): Discussion and Catalogue," *Musica Disciplina*, Vol.48 (1994): 69-97.

⁶ F. E. Kirby, *Music for Piano: A Short History* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus, 2003), 26-27.

of time managed to survive. However, the construction of the lute from that time can be discovered from Arnault's manuscript, which was written approximately in the 1450s.⁷ This source loosely describes the instrument, including its size, stringing, and shape. The lute's shape, numbers of strings, size, and tuning have developed over time. As the instrument changed, there were some changes in the playing technologies. To be more precise, talking about the beginning of Renaissance (fifteenth century), the lute of that period of time was characterized by six courses with the single top string while playing the single melodic notes with a plectrum continued. During the second half of the century a significant change took place: playing with the fingertips made it possible to play the polyphonic melodies. At the end of the fifteenth century, both finger and plectrum techniques were widely practiced. Lutenists could negotiate four parts at a time, probably in this case when playing with the fingertips. In addition, the adoption of the finger technique influenced the position the lutenist took while playing. To be more precise, sitting position was implemented. While before, the common position was a standing one.

The earliest music books, music tutors, and published materials for the lute were introduced all over Europe in the sixteenth century. The lutes that have six strings and often more than one string per course were pear-shaped and contained between nine and eleven hardwood ribs. However, only a few lutes made during this period still exist. The first lute that had seven courses was produced in 1511 while the first published musical guide was introduced in 1580.⁸ Moreover, new strings, which

⁷ Hellwig Friedemann, "Lute Construction in the Renaissance and the Baroque," *The Galpin Society Journal*, Vol.27 (1974): 21-30.

⁸ Robb, Arthur. *History of the Lute*. <http://www.art-robb.co.uk/hist.html>, accessed 6 October 2014

were called “cat-lines” that applied the technology of roping the gut of sheep intestines, were introduced.

In the period of late Renaissance, many people became interested in the lute and began to study the instrument. In addition, the number of people who owned their own lutes increased, and in Europe, many lute workshops appeared. In this period, the favored model of the lute was rounder, not as long as previous versions of the instrument. The number of courses per lute increased to as many as twenty during the Baroque as playing techniques developed to make use of that many strings. The Baroque lute appeared in the seventeenth-century, when luthiers made instruments with more than thirteen notes, and the top six notes were tuned into minor chords such as f[♯] - d[♯] - a - f - d while the seventh string was tuned to D or E.⁹ In addition, most lutes were built to accommodate more and longer strings.

There were 13 types of the lute that were produced in the seventeenth century, such as the lute with eleven courses and another one with two peg boxes. In addition, for example, in seventeenth-century Italy, the bent-neck lute was soon replaced by the archlute, which had extended bass strings that did not pass over the fingerboard, and the *theorbo* and *chitarrone* were similar instruments with even longer extended bass strings. The theorbo became the preferred accompaniment instrument of the era. By the eighteenth-century, Sylvius Weiss added two more courses to the bass register of the lute, creating a 13-course lute.¹⁰ The lute became less important in the eighteenth century. The reasons for the decline could be the following. The orchestras started to rely upon such instruments as piano and harpsichord, which were bigger and louder.

⁹ James Haar, *European Music, 1520-1640* (Woodbridge, UK and Rochester, New York: Boydell Press, 2006).

¹⁰ Douglas Alton Smith, “Sylvius Leopold Weiss,” *Early Music* 8/1 (January 1980): 47-58.

Also, keyboard instruments began to fulfill what had been the lute's functions in smaller ensembles, and instruments like the harpsichord and piano were more important as solo instruments. Moreover, the professional and highly-skilled lute players, who retired during the times of Haydn, did not seem to be replaced. Correspondingly, such trends provoked a deep decline of interest in the lute.

Revival of Lutes in the 20th Century Onwards

The revival of lutes in the twentieth-century was a part of the renewed interest in early music, and it was assisted by research, paintings, music, and some surviving lutes. During the early twentieth-century, lute music remained most significant in amateur, home music-making. In the first half of the twentieth century, the guitar was far more popular among both amateur and professional musicians in a number of different musical styles. Starting especially in the 1960s, interest in early music increased in Europe and the Americas, causing renewed enthusiasm for the lute. Also, during this period, good affordable copies of lutes became available. When the lute gained popularity, more and more talented lute performers appeared such as Diana Poulton, Joseph Iadone, Susana Bloch, and Eugen Dombois. Diana Poulton was an English lutenist that studied with Arnold Dolmetsch, who was a famous lute maker and researcher of ancient and old tablatures in London, and his book *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVII and XVIII Centuries* (1915) proved to be a significant asset to the performance, the authenticity, and the development of the early music.¹¹ Diana Poulton's contribution of the lute music revival can be found in her

¹¹ Arnold Dolmetsch, *The interpretation of the music of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries revealed by contemporary evidence* (London: Novello and Company, Limited; New York: Novello and Company, Limited, 1915).

works *Lute Playing Technique* (1981)¹² and *A Tutor for the Renaissance Lute* (1991).¹³ Joseph Iadone (1915-2004) was one of the first musicians who made the playing of lute as his profession. He was a part of the famous New York Pro Musica ensemble, the Renaissance Quartet and his own Iadone Consort, but he also performed widely as a soloist. Another great example of an influential lute pioneer is Suzanne Bloch. Like Diana Poulton, Bloch was a student of Arnold Dolmetsch, and she is the daughter of the composer Ernest Bloch. All of these musicians are influential and important in the history of lute's revival and development.

Playing Technique of the Lute

The method for performing on the European lute is complex. The players who want to perform on it professionally must learn many playing techniques, and they need to practice them extensively. After centuries when the instrument was hardly cultivated, people who love the lute and its music now have many chances to hear it. This section of the thesis will focus on how players perform on this instrument, including a description of the primary playing techniques on the instrument.

Some musicians choose to hold the instrument in a vertical posture with the belly lying on the person's waist. However, the most common way of holding the lute is similar to that of the guitar. This is where the musician holds the instrument over the belly or chest with the neck extending horizontally towards the musician's left hand. The mode of holding the instrument can vary among different performers, depending on their own expertise and previous orientations of the musicians. Diana Poulton has described a typical hold for the lute as follows:

¹² Diana Poulton, *Lute Playing Technique* (Britain: The Lute Society, 1981).

¹³ Diana Poulton, *A Tutor for the Renaissance Lute* (London: Schott, 1991).

This can be done by a kind of four point grip with the front edge of the bottom of the lute tucked onto the left thigh, just behind the knee; with the top of the lute gripped by the right forearm; with the rounded bottom of the lute held against the inside of the right thigh; and the upper part of the body of the lute held against your diaphragm. It is essential to feel the grip between your right forearm and your left knee, as this is really the point at which the steadiness of the lute is controlled.¹⁴

While playing the lute, the left hand of the player is usually used to press down the strings over the frets to produce different pitches. The right hand plucks the strings with the tips of the fingers. However, the players have to coordinate the motions of their two hands. For example, the player's right hand plucks the string or strings when the left hand pushes down the strings behind the frets. This coordination is one of the most complicated aspects of playing the lute. Also, after the right hand plucks the string, it creates a sound with a particular pitch.¹⁵ The difficulty of the challenge also varies depending on the number of strings on that particular lute, the notes being played, and the prowess or creativity of the musician involved. The European lute can produce a variety of timbres, especially when competent and veteran performers play it.

There are five basic steps of playing lute. First of all, the lute should be placed on the player's lap with the lute's neck facing the left. The player then should place the little fingers on the lute's fingerboard and soundboard, so as to find the correct hand position. The player plucks the strings by using the finger pads, not the

¹⁴ Diana Poulton, *An Introduction to Lute Playing* (London: Schott & Co. Ltd., 1961), 6.

¹⁵ Smith H. Dorman and Eagleson Laurie, *Guitar and Lute Music in Periodicals* (Berkeley, California: Fallen Leaf Press, 1990).

fingernails. This will produce the sound of a plain, single note.¹⁶ The player should use the fingers of left hand to press down the strings. In addition, he or she should press the strings behind the frets. Frets that produce higher pitches will necessitate that the player moves the left hand downward on the neck. Finally, the player should pluck the instrument with his or her thumb when music requires it. The player moves the thumb transversely with a number of strings, and playing each of them at the same time. Also, when the players perform chords, they play the lowest note with the thumb. Diana Poulton has described the relationship of playing technique between the thumb and other fingers as follows:

Before making any sound, place the thumb and three fingers in position on the strings, and then play the notes with a kind of gripping movement with the thumb coming forward to meet the fingers and the fingers coming backwards to meet the thumb.¹⁷

As is the case with playing of all stringed instruments, proper positioning of the hands is important in playing the lute. The hands need to be in particular postures to be able to make the best sounds with the instrument.¹⁸ The left hand holds onto the head of the lute, which is lifted at a particular angle. The left hand contacts with the back of the instrument's head, and it acts as a support to make sure that the lute does not fall. "The left hand should be held at a right angle across the strings, parallel with the frets, and should never be turned sideways with the fingers pointing down the

¹⁶ Tess Knighton, *Companion to Medieval and Renaissance Music* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1992).

¹⁷ Poulton, *An Introduction to Lute Playing*, 6.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Kenny, "Revealing Their Hand: Lute Tablatures in Early Seventeenth-Century England," *Renaissance Studies* 26, no. 1 (2012): 112-137.

strings towards the bridge.”¹⁹ The right hand is at a lower angle than the left hand. The reason for this requirement is, with the raised nature of the lute’s head, the body of the instrument will be tilted at a particular angle. The right hand will pass over the lute’s body, with it resting under the arm. This will allow for the lute’s strings to be reached with all fingers. Therefore, the posture will require that the body of the lute be placed on the surface of the player’s arm to make sure that it does not fall. This will require the use of a strap. The player’s fingers of the right hand must be able to create all the desired sounds while plucking the instrument. For the pair of strings that are in the same course, plucking both of them will produce unison.²⁰ For the upper courses, the tuning is in thirds and fourths, but may also be stepwise for instruments with over six courses. Some performers pluck the strings directly with their fingers, but some performers use special tools such as plucking rods and plectra.

¹⁹ Poulton, *An Introduction to Lute Playing*, 6.

²⁰ R. McFarlane, *A Brief History of the Lute*. Carr Designs, 2009.
<http://www.ronnmcfarlane.com/a-brief-history-2/> , accessed 16 October 2014.

Figure 1: Typical Position for Playing the Lute, “The Lute Player” by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio. (Image in the public domain.)



Unlike the normal staff notations, which show the pitches that a player should play, tablature, which is written in a special notation for all lute music, offers only the fingers' positions. As noted above, there are several types of tablature: French, Italian, and German. However, the most common type is French tablature, used widely as well by English lutenists. French tablature has a six-line staff that shows the six main courses of the lute. For example, the top line of the staff is used for the top course of the lute, which has the highest pitch. The second line is used for the second course, the third line for the third string, etc. There are some letters in the tablature, and they are placed in tablatures on or between the lines. However, for the French tablature, these letters are usually placed above the lines, and they are used to show the positions of the fingers that are placed on the strings and frets. For example, the letter *a*, is used to show all the open strings. The letter *b* is used to show all strings that are stopped on the first fret. The letter *c* is used to show all strings that are stopped on the second fret. And, therefore, the letter *f* is used to show all strings that are stopped on

the fifth fret. These different letters can give the players the idea of where the left hand's fingers are placed and which strings are played by the right hand. Before the players begin to play lutes, they must know that how to read this special notation. The skill of reading tablature is a basic and important technique for the lute player.

Chapter 2: Introduction of the Pipa

The History of the Pipa

The pipa is also called the Chinese lute. It is a traditional Chinese musical instrument with four strings, belonging to the category of plucked chordophones. The instrument's body is in the shape of pear, and it is made with wood. The modern pipa is a stringed instrument with a fretted soundboard of between twenty and twenty-five frets and four strings. In ancient China, especially in Han and Sui Dynasties, the term *pipa* was employed to characterize any musical instrument that was played by plucking strings.²¹ Pipa strings were originally silk thread. Nowadays, the four strings are always made from steel wire, steel rope, and nylon. The pipa appears as a solo instrument, in vocal accompaniments, and in instrumental ensembles. In China, the pipa is also called “the king of plucked instruments.”²²

The name *pipa* describes the sounds produced by the instrument and the movements made while playing it. It speaks of two actions in the Chinese language, *pi* and *pa*. *Pi* refers to the plucking of the string in a forward motion with player's right hand. *Pa* refers to the plucking of the string in a backward motion with the left hand. In China, the pipa has a long history. The earliest mention of pipa in Chinese texts appeared in the Han Dynasty around second century BCE. The translation of the text is: “Pipa, originated from amongst the Hu people, who played the instrument on horseback. Striking outward with the hand is called “pi,” plucking inward is called

²¹ Yunbo Liu and Gao Ming, *The pipa & other Ming dynasty stories* (Singapore: Federal Publications, 1991), 178.

²² Ying Xiao, *The king of Chinese Instrument: Pipa*. Tuta Designs, 2014.
<http://www.fututa.com/guoxue/carefree/ar/4266.html>, accessed 21 April 2015.

“pa,” sounds like when it is played, hence the name.”²³ Although it is mostly related to China, it was not native-born to the country. It was introduced through Asia Minor into China over two thousand years ago. Owing to its foreign origin, similar instruments in the forms of mandolins and lutes can still be found in Western and Central Asia.²⁴

Chinese civilization had already experienced a sophisticated and abundant musical life by the time the pipa and other kinds of lute became common in China. At the close of the Sui Dynasty, in 617, the assimilation of the pipa was well underway. So, as to develop a deeper understanding of this period, the term *pipa* refers to all plucked lutes, as it did until about 1000 AD. The term pipa was the name for many kinds of instruments throughout the Qin Dynasty, which were wooden-sided, pear-shaped, round-shaped, long-necked, and skin-sided, among others. For example, people gave the name “pipa” to *yueqin* and *ruan* at that time.

The earliest pipa was called the “Qin pipa,” which was named after the period of Qin Shihuang, who was the emperor (221 – 207 B.C.). The Qin pipa was made by adding strings to the *taogu* (鼗鼓). The *taogu* is a percussion instrument with a long handle, and it has flexible small ears on both sides of the drum. Scholars have come to the conclusion that all future versions of the pipa were derived from this Qin dynasty pipa.²⁵

²³ Translation by the author: <释名·释乐器>by Liu Xi (刘熙). Original text: 批把本出于胡中，马上所鼓也。推手前曰批，引手却曰把，象其鼓时，因以为名也。

²⁴ Qinghua Chen and Jienping Yang, “Vibration properties of the pipa. A Chinese musical instrument,” *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, Vol.80 (1986): S117.

²⁵ Joys H. Cheung and Wong King, *Reading Chinese Music and Beyond* (Hong Kong: Chinese Civilization Centre, City University of Hong Kong, 2010), 123.

The second pipa that arrived into China was known as the “Han pipa.” It is very similar to the modern pipa in the number of strings and shape. The Han pipa had four strings, and it was different from the Qin pipa, which had a round body in contrast to the Han pipa’s pear shape. The earliest evidence of the Han pipa is on a sculpture from Gandhara according to Shigeo Kishibe’s iconographic research. Gandhara was a kingdom that existed at a time approximately similar to that of the Han dynasty.²⁶ Traditional Chinese literature tells of two famous women associated with the Han pipa. Both women of the Han dynasty were in diplomatic marriages with neighboring kingdoms. Xijun was married to the Susun (a Turk), and Zhaojun was married to the Xiongnu (of the Tartars). Both women preferred to play the pipa or had someone play it for them to soothe their emotions. Zhaojun and her story have been described in instrumental pieces, songs, and paintings. For example, the pipa piece, *Lady Wang Zhaojun Goes Beyond the Frontier*, is a famous one in Chinese music.²⁷

The Wuxian pipa was the third and last pipa to be brought into China through importation. While evidence alludes to the Middle East as the origin of the long-necked, round-shaped lute, and Central Asia as the source of the short-necked, pear-shaped lute, both iconographic and literary records point to India as the source of the Wuxian.²⁸ The Indians used the terms *vina* and *veena* to characterize the lute at that specific time. This was the common term for all chordophones and although they had

²⁶ Cheung and King, 123.

²⁷ *Lady Wang Zhaojun Goes Beyond the Frontier* Performed by Liu Dehai, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5Adhn6MLBA>, accessed 22 April 2015.

²⁸ *Chinese Musical Instruments*. China Culture org. http://www.chinaculture.org/gb/en_madeinchina/2005-03/23/content_67372_16.htm, accessed 22 April 2015.

six strings, other features closely resembled the wuxian, especially the straight neck.²⁹ Cao Bolomen and Sujiva (Sujipo in Chinese) were two important Chinese musicians who both played the Wuxian pipa and significantly influenced Chinese music history. Cao Bolomen fathered generations of musicians who played the pipa and extended well into the Tang Dynasty.³⁰ Sujiva was well known as a pipa master who composed pieces of using the pipa.³¹ His pieces were very popular in the Sui Dynasty.

Many scholars believe that the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907) was the golden age of pipa. It was the most important instrument in folk music and the music of imperial court. During this period, there were changes in the methods of playing the instrument, in the way it was constructed, and in how composers wrote for it. In the aspect of performance methods, the most prominent reforms were the way the instrument was held and how it was plucked. Musicians changed from holding the instrument horizontally to vertically. And, instead of playing with the fingers they began to use a plectrum. Additionally, in terms of its structure, the traditional pipa was improved by combining the features of the foreign crook-necked pipa and the traditional straight-necked pipa. The reformed pipa retained the distinctive pear shape of the original crooked neck pipa. The most obvious change is augmenting the number of strings, from four to sixteen. Also, the pipa's neck became wider, and the bottom of the soundboard became narrower. This change gives the players more convenience for the left hand. The pipa of the early period had four frets on the neck, but later, some extra bamboo frets were added onto the soundboard to increase the instrument's range. During the Tang Dynasty, the pipa was played by ensemble

²⁹ John Myers, *The Way of the Pipa: Structure and Imagery in Chinese Lute Music* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1992), 338.

³⁰ Myers, 338.

³¹ Myers, 9.

leaders and used for the accompaniment of dancing. However, it was mostly used as a solo instrument because its timbre did not blend well with other instruments.

The number of popular pipa players rose in the Tang Dynasty compared to earlier times. For example, Caobao, who was an excellent pipa performer of the Tang Dynasty, lived in Changan. Both of his son, Caoqicai, and his grandson, Caogang, were famous performers on pipa. People adored them and the poets praised them. In addition, the pipa performer Peishenfu was the leading player of five-stringed pipa in the court of Tang Dynasty, and he was the king's favorite performer. Moreover, Kangkunlun, who introduced the pipa from Central Asia to Tang Dynasty, was considered one of the finest pipa players. Duanshanben was the famous Buddhist pipa player in his early career period; then, he became more popular as a court pipa player in his later career period. He Huaizhi, Lei Haiqing, and Li Guaner were mentioned as the famous pipa players from texts of the Tang Dynasty.³²

The pipa took on its standard structure with the developments from the Qin (221-206 BCE) to Ming (1368-1644) Dynasties. However, techniques and pieces continued to develop rapidly with new breakthroughs, especially in pipa performance and the composition of interesting scores. The *Dunhuang Pipa Pu*, which was found on Dunhuang cave walls and dated AD 933, was one of these early scores. The *Wuxian Pu* is another score composed for the five-stringed pipa and was probably created in the 10th century.³³ The pipa received significant reformation in the 1950s. Performers on the instrument began to use the Western scale system. The frets were increased to a total of at least twenty-four and six frets (*xiang*). Steel strings replaced

³² Liu Fang, *A Chinese Lute or Guitar, Its Brief History, Photos and Music Samples*. Philmultic Management & Productions Inc, 2000-2009.

<http://www.philmultic.com/pipa.html>, accessed 26 April 2015.

³³ Liu and Ming, 178.

the silk strings. The introduction of artificial acrylic fingernails improved pipa performance in areas such as technique, texture, dynamic range, and tonal color. The pipa came to be known as one of the most reformed instruments in Chinese orchestra and composers used the modified instruments for new compositions.

In the long history of more than two thousand years, the important instrument pipa changed a great deal on its structure, compositions and playing techniques. Also, there are many recordings of the literature, and they show the importance of pipa in music. Many pipa players were famous in their own periods. These players were largely responsible for the instrument's development, and also contributed in a larger sense to the development of Chinese music.

Playing the Pipa

The Chinese people use the pipa for most performances of traditional music. Today, musicians who perform different genres of music such as rock, contemporary music, and music with electronic components also use the pipa. In conservatories of music, more and more students choose the major of pipa, and learn how to play it with professional skills.

The way that the pipa is played has changed since its appearance in ancient China. Originally, the instrument was held in the same manner as the guitar. The silk strings were plucked with a large plectrum held in the right hand. Fingers could be used to play the pipa if the plectrum was not available. However, in the contemporary world, people use the nylon and steel strings instead of the silk. Nylon strings are easier to handle when plucking with the fingers. The silk strings that were used before also are expensive today. Today, players hold the pipa vertically, that is in the opposite direction as the guitar. Also, players tend to pluck the strings rather than use plectra.

The pipa has twelve methods for tuning strings, and the most common is to tune the four strings as $a-d^1-e^1-a^1$ (5-1-2-5, the Chinese method for designating pitches when starting on a D). The classical pipa may be played by strumming in two different directions: down and up. The first division is called the *pi*. This part is normally played by striking down with the right hand. The *pa* that is the second section is played as the hand moves towards the inside part of the palm.³⁴

³⁴ Chen Yi-Huei and Huang Chih-Fang. "Sound Synthesis of the Pipa Based on Computed Timbre Analysis and Physical Modeling. Selected Topics in Signal Processing." *IEEE Journal of 5.6* (2011): 1171.

There are many techniques for the right hand, such as *tani*, *tiao*, *lunzhi*, *mo*, *ti*, and *fei* (see Table 1 for definitions). The *tan* and *tiao* are the basic and the most important techniques for the right hand; related to them are *shuangtan* and *shuangtiao*. The other techniques are based on the *tan* and *tiao* but incorporating some changes, including *fei*, *mo*, and *ti*. *Lunzhi* is a special technique, and it is considered to be the most difficult technique to learn for pipa players.

Figure 2: Typical Position for Playing the Pipa



Table 1: Definition of *Tan*, *Tiao*, *Shuangtan*, *Shuangtiao*, *Fei*, *Mo* and *Ti*

Tan: touching the string with right index finger nail and striking to the left.

Tiao: touching the string with right thumbnail and plucking to the right.

Shuangtan: touching two strings that are next to each other with right index finger nail and striking to the left at the same time.

Shuangtiao: touching two strings that are next to each other with right thumbnail and plucking to the right at the same time.

Fei: touching the string with the third finger and striking to the left.

Mo: touching the string with the middle finger and plucking to the right.

Ti: touching the string with the middle finger and striking to the left.

Lunzhi is a unique playing technique on the pipa. All of the right hand's fingers and the thumb take turns touching the strings with similar volume and uniform rhythm. This skill produces the tremolo that is a special sound for the pipa. *Lunzhi* is one of the most important techniques for the right hand, and players need to use it in almost every piece of pipa music. There are many kinds of *lunzhi* techniques, including *dailun*, *saolun*, and *manlun*. Bai Juyi, who was a famous poet of the Tang Dynasty, wrote *Pipa xing* to describe the *lunzhi* with beautiful Chinese words "Original text: 大珠小珠落玉盤. [Translation: As pearls, large and small, on a jade plate fall.]"³⁵

Pipa has three main left-hand techniques, including *na*, *dai*, and *shu*. Players use the left-hand techniques in order to bring out pipa's softer qualities, a lower volume than the sound that comes from plucking with the right hand. The left-hand

³⁵ Gan Siowck Lee, *Pipa Xing*. June 2009. <http://gansiowcklee.blogspot.com/2010/12/pipa-xing-by-bai-juyi-tang-dynasty.html>, accessed 23 April 2015.

techniques produce different timbres like some of those heard from the violin and guitar.³⁶ *Na* is also called *yin*. The fingertip presses the string on the fret to produce a faint sound. *Dai* means “the followed sound.” After the right hand plays the string, the left hand plucks it to the left, and produces another sound. *Shu* is also called *sao*. The finger of left hand presses the string on the fret, then the middle finger or the fourth finger scratches the string to produce the sound. When playing the pipa, the right hand always produces a stronger sound, but the left hand brings some subtlety to the instrument with softer sounds and different timbres. Players use these different sounds in the same musical work to produce many wonderful musical ideas, allowing the player to perform different motives in the piece with varied techniques, a sort of development of that motive. Therefore, the left-hand technique is an important part of the playing of pipa.

³⁶ Laurence Picken and Nickson Noel, *Music from the Tang Court*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Chapter 3: Luis de Milán's *Fantasía XII*

For both pipa and lute, the solo is a basic and the most important method of performance. In this part, first of all, I will provide a brief introduction and detailed description of the *Fantasía XII del tercero quarto tono* by Luis de Milán that is actually for the instrument of vihuela, a type of lute popular in Spain. Then, this will be followed by descriptions of two pipa pieces: *Ambushed from Ten Sides* and *Moonlit River in Spring*, which are two of the most famous examples of Chinese classic instrumental music. Even to the present day the names of the composers of these works are unknown because they date from the ancient age of China. *Ambushed from Ten Sides* is a typical Wu style of pipa's solo music, and it is based on a story of a Chinese war. *Moonlit River in Spring* is a typical Wen style of pipa's solo music, and it is based on a famous poem of Tang Dynasty. Finally, I will compare these works as examples of Western and Chinese traditions.

Luis de Milán (c. 1500-c. 1561) was a famous Spanish Renaissance singer, composer, poet, and vihuela player. He was also the author of the first collection of the Spanish instrumental music, a collection of lute tablatures, *El Maestro*, which was published in 1536.³⁷ *Fantasía XII del tercero quarto tono* belongs to the collection, *El Maestro*, in which a number of the pieces are Fantasías. The word "Fantasía" here identifies the piece's genre and at the same time is a one-word description of its essence, which means the composers could bring a freedom of ideas to their music. For example, the composer could write a piece without any settled form, and the remainder of the musical content did not have to subscribe to more than general

³⁷ Luis Gásson, *Luis Milán on Sixteenth-Century Performance Practice* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996).

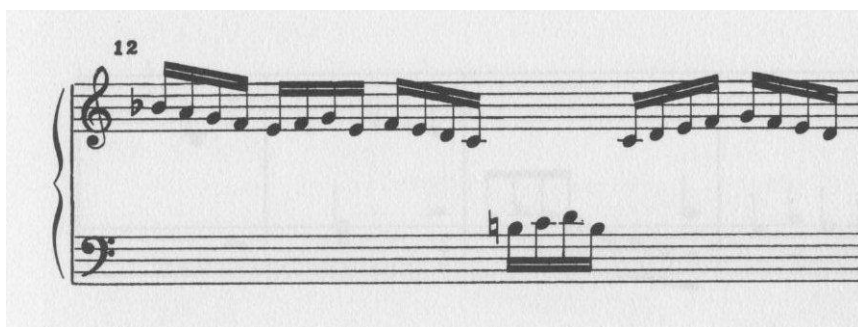
expectations concerning the music of the period. This piece can be played on vihuela or lute. The *Fantasia* will serve here as a typical example of the lute's solo music.

The melody of *Fantasia XII del tercero quarto tono* can be complicated and appears in various ranges. However, because the texture of *Fantasia XII* is so contrapuntal, at times it is hard to say what the most important melodic voice is. For example, in mm. 40-41, the composer wrote counterpoint (example 1), primarily with stepwise melodies, and in m. 40 both the soprano and bass voices show melodic importance. There are few skips of more than a third. Another place where Milán's melodic motion is primarily stepwise is m. 12 of part A' (example 2).

Example 1, Luis de Milán, *Fantasia XII*, mm. 40-41³⁸



Example 2, Luis de Milán, *Fantasia XII*, m. 12



³⁸ Luis de Milán, "Fantasia XII del tercero quarto tono." *El maestro* (University Park Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971), 62-65.

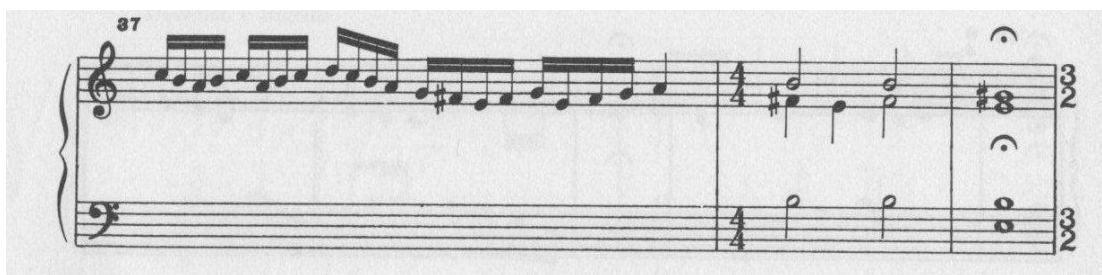
Fantasia XII is in the Phrygian mode, and it is from that scale that the composer derived the harmonies. The first cadence, which appears in m. 4, is a Phrygian cadence (example 3), with the descending half-step between the *f* at the end of m. 3 and the *e* in m. 4.

Example 3, Luis de Milán, *Fantasia XII*, mm. 1-4



The piece is in two meters, 4/4 and 3/2, which Milán interchanges. For example, at the beginning of part A, the meter is 4/4, then in the middle of part A', the meter changes to 3/2. But in the ending of part A', the meter changes back to 4/4. Also, there are some features of this piece's rhythm such as fast notes and ornaments. For example, in m. 37, the whole measure includes fast notes (example 4). Ornaments appear in this piece in mm. 13, 17, 24 and 45. Ornaments are musical twists that are not important to conveying the general line of the piece, but they serve to embellish or "trim" that musical line of the piece. Numerous decorative pitches sound around a focal note, as may be seen in examples 2 and 4.

Example 5, Luis de Milán, *Fantasia XII*, mm. 37-41



There are seven sections in this piece, which has 47 measures in total.

Table 2: Sections of Milán's *Fantasia XII del tercero quarto tono*.

A – mm. 1-4

B – mm. 5-8

A' – mm. 9-13

C – mm. 14-19

D – mm. 20-26

E – mm. 27-39

F (B') – mm. 40-47

For the form of this *Fantasia*, it is considered to be a free form, but there are musical ideas shared between the sections. In general, the composition's form is not based upon a logical pattern. For example, the A' part (mm. 9-13) that appears after

the B part has a melody that is similar to the first A section (mm. 1-4). And, the first three notes of part D (mm. 20-23) repeat the motive from the opening of this piece (example 6). Also, the last part F (mm. 40-47) is related to B (mm. 5-8) with a similar dotted rhythm (example 7). The similarities between the sections show no specific pattern, meaning that it is in the free form one associates with a *Fantasia*.

Example 6, Luis de Milán, *Fantasia XII*, mm. 18-21 & mm. 1-4



Example 7, Luis de Milán, *Fantasia XII*, mm. 40-41 & mm. 5-6





The most important features of Luis de Milán's *Fantasia XII* are the counterpoint and the use of various textures formed by the combination of these melodic voices. Some of the motives recur during the work, adding to the work's unity. The contrast in texture caused by the interaction between harmony and counterpoint, combined with the charm of the ornamentation that was characteristic of writing for solo lute and the contrasting sections, makes Milán's *Fantasia* a fine example of its genre.

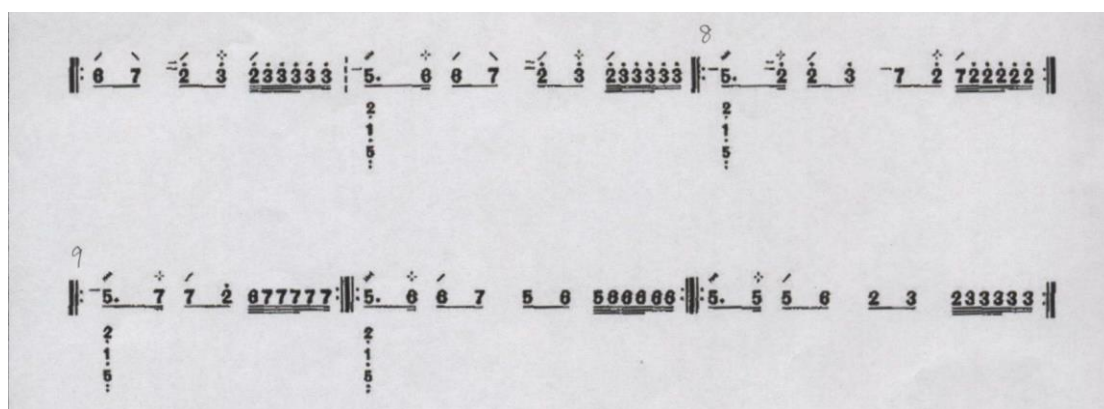
Chapter 4: Analysis of *Ambushed from Ten Sides*

Ambushed from Ten Sides is a masterpiece from the Han ethnic group, and it is one of the best-known pieces of archaic Chinese music. Scholars do not know when the work was composed or the identity of the composer. However, in 1818, this piece's musical score appeared in *Pipa pu*, which was edited by Qiuping Hua, who was a professional pipa player during the Qing Dynasty. This piece has thirteen sections in total, and its music clearly shows the desperate scenario when a force surrounded Xiangyu, who was a famous military hero in ancient period of China. The piece's program concerns the war between Han and Chu about 202 BC, and the Han's army used the method of battle that was called "ambushed from ten sides" to defeat Chu's army.

In the melody of *Ambushed from Ten Sides* there are many repeated notes. Especially, in the third and fifth sections (example 1), many repeated notes with the same rhythm create the scene of orderly troops. As may be heard in a performance, the melody is not very complicated, but its effect is very powerful and loud with the performer's vigorous fingering.³⁹ For example, there are occasions for the player to use *Lunzhi*. The player's right hand's fingers and the thumb take turns touching the strings with similar volume and uniform rhythm. The powerful melody is one of the main features of Wu style, which is one type of the solo music for the pipa. Also, one hears some larger intervals in the piece despite the fact that it is mostly conjunct (example 2).

³⁹ *Ambushed from Ten Sides* Performed by Liu Fang, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtrthXXmKgA>, accessed 3 February 2015.

Example 2, *Ambushed from Ten Sides*, section 6, mm.8-9



For the harmony of this piece, it is the second of the Chinese five tones, called *Shang*. The five tones is a traditional part of Chinese music, which has five pentatonic pitches. They are: C, D, E, G and A. The *Shang* means that the tonic is D, and the style tends to be grand and strong. It is the second tone because it begins on the pitch D.

Ambushed from Ten Sides has varied a varied sense of rhythm. For example, in the first section, the rhythm changes from slow to fast (example 3). And, in the whole piece, the rhythm changes obviously. The slowest rhythm of this piece appears in the fourth section, and it shows the scene of preparing to fight a battle. The fastest rhythm of this piece appears in the twelfth section, and it shows the excited scene of the final victory of the war (example 4). The meter of this piece changes from free meter to 2/4 and 4/4, then it returns to free meter. Overall, the whole piece tends to make more use of fast rhythms, another feature of the Wu style. There are many fast notes in this piece such as the third section (example 5). Some ornaments appear in the eighth section through the use of the *Lunzhi* technique (example 6).

Example 3, *Ambushed from Ten Sides*, section 1

1=D (5 1 2 5 弦) slow-fast 汪煜庭传谱
李廷松演奏

【一】列营 $\text{♩} = 60$ 渐快 $\text{♩} = 60-80$

Example 4, *Ambushed from Ten Sides*, sections 4 & 12

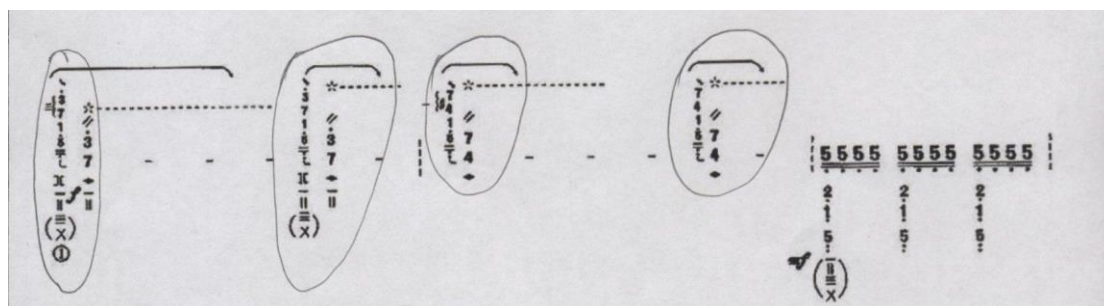
【四】排阵 $\text{♩} = 44$
慢起渐快

【十二】诸将争功 $\text{♩} = 152$ 渐慢 渐慢 $\text{♩} = 120$

Example 5, *Ambushed from Ten Sides*, section 3

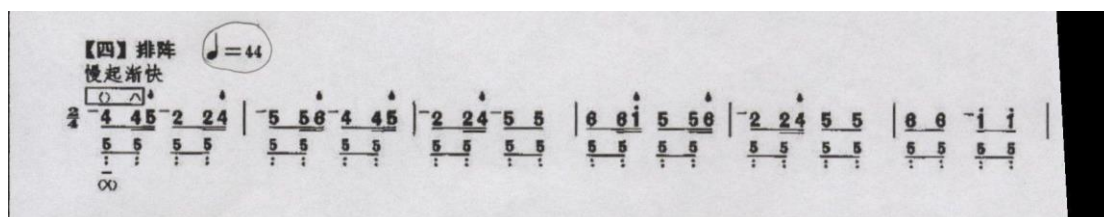
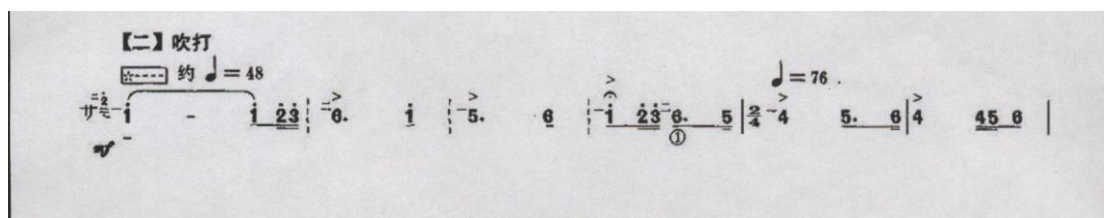
【三】点将 $\text{♩} = 76$

Example 6, *Ambushed from Ten Sides*, section 8



For the texture of *Ambushed from Ten Sides*, it varies from one part to four parts. For example, the second section has one part, and then it changes to two parts in the fourth section (example 7). When there is more than one part, the texture is homophonic. According to the title of these two sections, the second section's title is "Blow and Strike," and the music supports this in effect. However, the fourth section's title is "Setting Troops of Soldiers," so it has two parts to describe the orderly troops. At the ending of the eighth section, the texture changes to three parts. And, the fifth section has four parts to describe the soldiers' steps due to the title of this section (example 8).

Example 7, *Ambushed from Ten Sides*, sections 2 & 4



Example 8, *Ambushed from Ten Sides*, section 5

【五】走队 ♩ = 60 渐快

1 1 2 2 | 1 1 2 2 | 3 3 3 3 | 3 3 5 5 | 6 6 2 2 | 5 5 6 6 | 1 1 2 2 3 3 |

5 5 5 5 | 5 5 5 5 | 5 5 5 5 | 5 5 5 5 | 5 5 5 5 | 5 5 5 5 | 5 5 5 5 |

1 1 7 7 | 6 6 7 7 | 6 6 2 2 | 2 2 1 1 | 2 2 3 3 | 2 2 3 3 1 1 | 2 2 3 3 1 1 |

5 5 5 5 | 5 5 5 5 | 5 5 5 5 | 5 5 5 5 | 5 5 5 5 | 5 5 5 5 | 5 5 5 5 |

The form of *Ambushed from Ten Sides* is the Chinese traditional *dataoqu* (“large divertimento”), which has several different sections with their own topics. This piece has thirteen sections, and they can be divided into three big parts. The first part, being slow, describes the preparatory works before the war, including *Lieying*, *Chuida*, *Dianjiang*, *Paizheng* and *Zoudui*. For example, *Lieying* means “the soldiers come to attention and shout.” *Zoudui* means that “the soldiers walk together in one line to show their powerful vigor.” Both of them have the same slow rhythm that is a quarter note equal to 60 beats per minute. The second part, which is faster, describes the battle’s process, including *Maifu*, the little battle of Jiming Mountain and the big battle of Jiuli Mountain. These sections have the faster rhythm, which is a quarter note equal to 92 or 136 beats per minute, to show the furious battles, and they are the most famous sections in this piece. The last part talks about the result of the battle, including Xiangyu’s losing, and Xiangyu’s suicide after losing the war. There are three sections as the ending of this piece.

Chapter 5: Analysis of *Moonlit River in Spring*

Moonlit River in Spring is another famous solo piece for pipa. It is totally different than *Ambushed from Ten Sides* because *Moonlit River in Spring* is in the Wen style, which contrasts to Wu style that is more rhythmic. Wen style is more lyrical than the Wu style. Its melody is more peaceful and the rhythm is slower. Wen style always involves the natural landscape, but the Wu style includes stories of wars. *Moonlit River in Spring* is also called *Xiaogu in Sunset* or *The Music of Xunyang*. The first musical score of this piece appeared in the *Xianxuyouying*, a book of pipa scores published around 1860.⁴¹ The composer of this piece is not clear, but it is based on the poem that has the same name as the piece. Zhang Ruoxu, who was a famous poet in Tang Dynasty, wrote this poem. *Moonlit River in Spring* is a representative of the Han ethnic group in Chinese classical folk music. This piece talks about the Xunyang River's moonlit night, and represents the magnificent and beautiful natural landscape of China. It is like an elegant tonal painting of a landscape, with its fine brushwork and soft colors. Therefore, *Moonlit River in Spring* is a typical solo piece in the Wen style, and it is one of the most important pieces of Chinese music for pipa.

Overall, this piece's melody is complicated and varied. The melody combines passages with repeated notes with segments with more diverse pitch content. Both of them help the piece create a contrasting and lovely natural scene. For example, the introduction has repeated notes to describe the peaceful scene before the moon rises

⁴¹ Jensen Liu, *A Moonlit Night On The Spring River: Music Is Poetry*. The Bluegrass Special, 2010. <http://thebluegrassspecial.com/archive/2010/october10/border-crossing-october-2010.php>, accessed 26 April 2015.

(example 1). And, according to the title of the seventh section (described below), there are many repeated notes in this section to describe the shaking repeatedly when boating (example 2). However, in the fifth section, the melody has various notes to describe the happy scene of singing and boating (example 3).

Example 1, *Moonlit River in Spring*, Introduction

The image shows a musical score for the introduction of 'Moonlit River in Spring'. It is written in G major (1=G) and includes the title '古曲 刘德海演奏谱'. The score is divided into two systems. The first system features a melodic line with repeated eighth-note patterns (3 3 3) and a final triplet (3 3 3). The second system shows a bass line with notes 1, 0, 1, 0, followed by a melodic line with notes 1, 2, 1, and 6, 6, 6, 6, 6. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and fingering numbers.

Example 2, *Moonlit River in Spring*, mm. 25-39

The image shows a musical score for measures 25-39 of 'Moonlit River in Spring'. The score is written in G major and features a melodic line with repeated notes (2 2, 2 2, 2 2, 2 2, 2 2) and a bass line with notes 3 5, 6 1, 5 6, 5 6, 5 6, 3. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and fingering numbers.

Example 3, *Moonlit River in Spring*, Section 5, mm. 1-17

In the whole piece, the melody is not only stepwise, but also has big intervals. For example, at the beginning of the second section, from m. 1 to m. 6, these notes of small intervals are used to describe the peaceful scene of the river (example 4). However, at the beginning of the first section, there are some larger intervals (example 5). These notes of big intervals are used to describe the lower mountains and the moon that is in the higher sky.

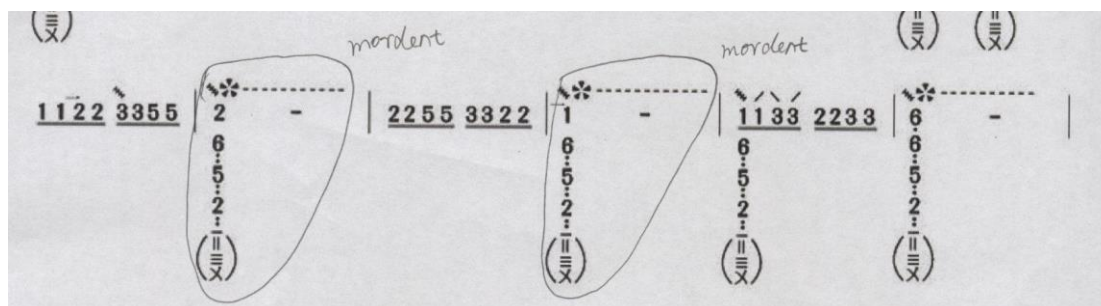
Example 4, *Moonlit River in Spring*, Section 2, mm. 1-6

Example 5, *Moonlit River in Spring*, Section 1, mm. 1-5

Concerning the melody and harmony of *Moonlit River in Spring*, it is in the mode of *Zhi*, which is the fourth of the Chinese five tones. *Zhi* means that the tonic is G, and according to the recording, we can hear that the style of *Zhi* tends to be graceful and pleasant.⁴² Overall, the whole piece has a uniform meter that is 2/4. However, the beginning part of introduction is in a free meter, which is called *Sanban*. The Chinese *Sanban* is similar to *Senza misura* of the Western classic music (example 1).

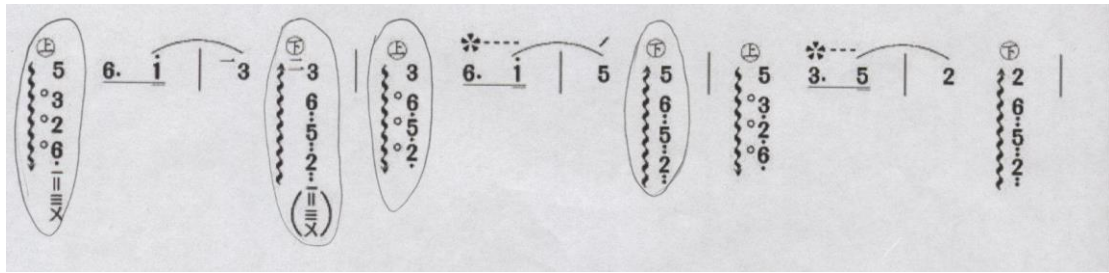
There are many ornaments in this piece. For example, the introduction has a trill, rising glissando, and appoggiaturas (example 1). According to the title of the sixth section, there are some mordents with *Lunzhi* in this section to describe the scene of “Water’s Lapping onto the Shore” (example 6). Also, the seventh section has rising glissandos and falling glissandos to describe the scene of “Undulating Boat on the River” (example 7).

Example 6, *Moonlit River in Spring*, Section 6, mm. 7-12



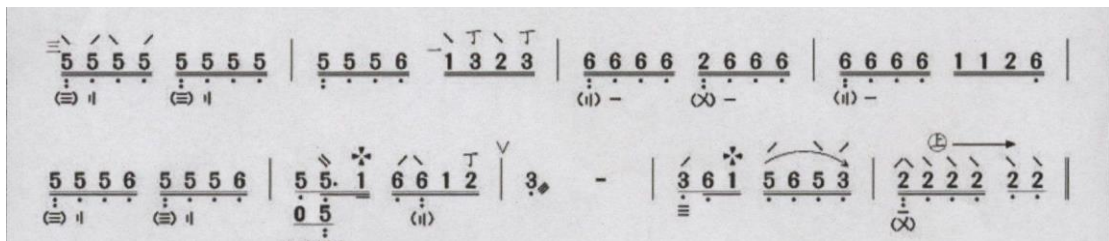
⁴² *Moonlit River in Spring* Performed by Liu Dehai, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVAI7C4C9Eg>, accessed 8 February 2015.

Example 7, *Moonlit River in Spring*, Section 7, mm. 6-11



Moonlit River in Spring is a piece of Wen style, which has a slower rhythm as one of the main features. However, it still has some fast notes, which appear in the ending measures of the fourth section with a lot of eighth notes (example 8).

Example 8, *Moonlit River in Spring*, Section 4, mm. 26-34



For the texture of this piece, most sections have one part. However, the only section that varies from one part to two parts is the seventh. Also, there are some variations in small areas such as the sixth section, which has four parts in the beginning of m. 6, and then it decreases to one part.

The form of *Moonlit River in Spring* is multi-sectional with variations, which is used frequently in Chinese instrumental music. This piece has seven sections with one introduction and one coda. Each section describes different views with their own topics and names:

Table 3: Seven Sections of *Moonlit River in Spring*

Section 1: Moon on the Mountain

Section 2: Sun on the Water

Section 3: Wind with Flowers

Section 4: View of River's Night

Section 5: Singing on Boat with Night View

Section 6: View with River Bank

Section 7: Boat in the Sunset

They are independent sections, but they do share musical material. For example, the first, second, fifth and sixth sections each have the same ending melodic phrase (example 9).

Example 9, *Moonlit River in Spring*, Section 5 & 1

The image displays two staves of musical notation in a traditional Chinese notation system. The notation consists of numbers (1-6) and dots, often grouped with horizontal lines and various symbols like asterisks, arrows, and vertical lines. The first staff shows a sequence of notes: 1. 2 3 5 | 1 2 3 2 1 6 | 5 5. 6 | 5 5 6 6 1 2 | 3. - | 3 6 1 5 6 5 3 | (2 0 3 | 2 0). The second staff continues with: 3 6 1 5 6 5 3 | 2 2 2 2 2 1 2 5 | 3 5 | 6 6 1 | (2 2 | 2 2) | 0 3 | 2 - || (共→). The notation is dense and includes many small symbols and markings, such as vertical lines above and below notes, and various symbols like asterisks, arrows, and vertical lines.

The variations appear not only between sections but also between phrases. For example, in the third section, the new phrase's opening note is the same as the last phrase's ending note, such as mm. 9, 11, 13 and 15 are the same notes as the mm. 8,

10, 12 and 14 (example 10). In Chinese music, this way of composing is called *Yuyaohe*, which means the last phrase connects with the last note to the next phrase as the first note. It makes the music's form and melody become more varied and independent, also they are related and close to each other.

Example 10, *Moonlit River in Spring*, Section 3, mm. 7-15

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Moonlit River in Spring". The score is written in numbered notation (1-7) and includes tempo markings (慢, 快, 慢) and performance instructions (rit.). The score is divided into four measures, with measure numbers 8, 10, 12, and 15 indicated. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

According to these musical elements of *Moonlit River in Spring*, it is easy to understand that this piece is a typical solo piece of Wen style, which has graceful melody and soft rhythm.

Chapter 6: Comparisons

A Comparison of *Ambushed from Ten Sides* and Milán's *Fantasia XII del tercero cuarto tono*

The backgrounds of these two pieces in terms of history and general playing techniques show similarities and differences. Both pieces represent the classical music in the respective cultures, and they are performed in the styles that are typical for the countries where each was created. Also, both are performed on plucked stringed instruments with the performers producing various sounds with fingers on instruments that are both part of larger lute family.

The two pieces represent varied aspects of the different cultures that bore them. *Ambushed from Ten Sides* is typical of East Asian music, while *Fantasia XII* belongs to the Italian classical music. Also, the Chinese piece is based on a program derived from Chinese history, while Milán's work is a *Fantasia* that is not based on a program and was written for a Renaissance court. The *Fantasia* is a more subtle work in terms of effect and playing technique, typical of the European Renaissance. Even more important, *Ambushed from Ten Sides* is a solo piece for pipa in the Wu style, based on a rougher and faster plucking, which makes the music sound more energetic, far different than the more restrained and subtle colors one hears from vihuela. Another difference is that the pipa is held in a vertical position, which is similar to the violoncello. However, the vihuela or lute is typically held in a horizontal position, which is similar to the guitar. While playing *Ambushed from Ten Sides*, the musician moves her hands away from the instrument, but while the *Fantasia XII*, the vihuelist

holds her hands close to the vihuela, and they constantly touch with the instrument, which makes the piece sound more continuous.

These musical elements heard in these two pieces, including melody, harmony, rhythm, texture and form, show common and different features. The melodies and textures of *Ambushed from Ten Sides* and *Fantasia XII* are quite different. The Chinese piece has many repeated notes and its melody is not very complicated, but the *Fantasia XII* includes more use of counterpoint and melodic complicated by rapid ornamentation. The piece for pipa has the usual powerful sort of melody associated with the Wu style, a strong contrast to the more delicate piece for vihuela. Also, Milán makes more use of stepwise motion with few skips of more than a third, but *Ambushed from Ten Sides* has more large intervals that help evoke scenes of war. In terms of texture, both pieces vary in numbers of music lines heard at any given moment. The piece for vihuela varies in numbers of music lines from one to four or five, while the piece of pipa varies in numbers of music lines from one to four. Both also include chordal sections.

The harmony and tonality of these two pieces are totally different. *Ambushed from Ten Sides* is traditional Chinese music in one of its usual modes called *Shang*, the second of five Chinese tones. *Fantasia XII* is in the Phrygian mode that is a mode of Western music. And, it is from that scale that the composer derived the harmonies.

The meter and rhythm of these two pieces has a common feature: both include varied meters. *Fantasia XII* is in the meters of 4/4 and 3/2, and they interchange. *Ambushed from Ten Sides* is in 2/4, 4/4 and free meter, which also alternate throughout the piece. In addition, both of these two pieces have fast notes. As previously noted, there are many fast notes in the piece for pipa because it is in the

typical Wu style. And, Milán wrote many fast notes to take advantage of the rapid ornamentation possible on the vihuela, such as in m. 37. While one hears ornamentation that sounds like turns and there are appoggiaturas at cadences in *Fantasia XII*, the Chinese piece includes some appoggiaturas.

The form of *Ambushed from Ten Sides* is the Chinese traditional large divertimento. It has thirteen sections, and they can be divided into three larger parts, each conveying its own programmatic topic. For example, the first, slow part concerns preparation for war, the second part is faster and describes the war itself, and the third is the most exciting and addresses the war's results. However, *Fantasia XII* has only seven sections and a total of 47 measures, and the form is free with some motives repeated in later sections, providing the piece with a small sense of unity.

A Comparison of *Moonlit River in Spring* and *Fantasia XII del tercero cuarto tono*

These two pieces' backgrounds, such as history and general playing techniques, have some common and different features. For the common features, first, both of these two pieces are solo works, which are performed with pipa and vihuela. Also, both of these pieces could be divided into four main parts, which are separated from each other by the segments that get louder. And we should underline that both of these two pieces are performed calmly. The *Moonlit River in Spring* is a typical Wen style piece of Chinese pipa music. In general, Wen style is more lyrical and slower in tempo than the Wu style. So, the *Moonlit River in Spring* and the *Fantasia XII* have a common manner of performing: the soft and calm fingering produce a mild melody on both pipa and vihuela.

For the different features between the *Fantasia XII del tercero cuarto tono* and the *Moonlit River in Spring*, first, one of them belongs to the style of Western Renaissance music. The other represents Chinese music. The sound of vihuela is milder than the sound that is produced by pipa. The cultural differences reflect on these pieces's styles in general. Also, according to the recordings, listening to the *Moonlit River in Spring* that is played by Liu Dehai, we hear several risings of the music and several parts, where the music could be called "cracks."⁴³ However, listening the *Fantasia XII* that is performed by Richard Labschütz, we can hear rare parts of crescendo with the music line.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Moonlit River in Spring* Performed by Liu Dehai, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVAI7C4C9Eg>, accessed 30 March 2015.

⁴⁴ *Fantasia XII* Performed by Richard Labschütz, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R02G4k0bTm0>, accessed 30 March 2015.

These musical elements heard in these two pieces, including melody, harmony, rhythm, texture and form, show common and different features. *Moonlit River in Spring* has complicated and varied melody, and the melody has some large intervals and combines passages with repeated notes with segments with more diverse pitch content. *Fantasía XII* has the common feature, which is the complicated and varied melody. But, it has more different features. *Fantasía XII* has small intervals and varied voices because it is contrapuntal and has few repeated notes.

The harmony of these two pieces is totally different because one of them is a typical Chinese music piece and the other one is typical Western music piece. The harmony of *Moonlit River in Spring* is in the mode of *Zhi*, which is the fourth of the Chinese five tones. As described before, *Zhi* means the tonic is G, and the music of *Zhi* tends to be graceful and pleasant. However, *Fantasía XII* as a piece of traditional Western music is in the Phrygian mode, and it is from that scale that the composer derived the harmonies.

The common rhythmic features are ornaments and fast notes. For example, *Moonlit River in Spring* has some ornaments such as trill, rising glissandos, and appoggiaturas in its section of introduction to describe the scene of beautiful spring night with moon. Also, the seventh section has rising glissandos and falling glissandos to describe the scene of the undulating boat on the river. And, *Fantasía XII* has fast notes in a whole measure that is m. 37. However, these two pieces' meters are different. *Fantasía XII* is in two meters, 4/4 and 3/2, which Milán interchanges. *Moonlit River in Spring* has a uniform meter that is 2/4 with *Sanban* that is a free meter in Chinese music in the beginning part of introduction.

The texture of these two pieces is similar to each other. *Fantasía XII* varies in numbers of music lines from one to four or five. The pipa piece's most sections have

one music line, but the only section that varies in numbers of music lines from one to two is the seventh and varies in small areas of the sixth section.

As noted before, the form of *Moonlit River in Spring* is multi-sectional with variations, which is used frequently in Chinese instrumental music. This piece has seven sections with one introduction and one coda. Each section describes different views with their own topics and names, such as “Moon on the Mountain,” “Singing on Boat with Night View,” and “Sun on the Water.” They are independent sections, but they are related with the same ending phrase of melody and the way of composing that is called *Yuyaohe*, which means the last phrase brings the last note to the next phrase as the first note. However, the form of *Fantasia XII* is considered to be a free form, but it still has some relationships in melody, motive and rhythm. Therefore, the forms of these two pieces are quite different from each other.

Conclusion

It is evident that from early historical documentation, the origin and development of stringed instruments greatly impacted the social and cultural aspects of societies in the Western regions and in China. The discovery and embracing of stringed instruments gradually become an appreciated phenomenon in the world of music and entertainment, which has been felt in many different cultures all the way into the twenty-first century. Both the Western lute and the Chinese pipa are widely used stringed instruments, which have their roots in early historical settings and have managed to maintain their impact in today's musical world. These two instruments have created a remarkable legacy in the world of stringed instruments, and they share some similarities and show various differences. The comparison that is made in this document between the Western lute and the Chinese pipa was based on each instrument's history, playing technique and solo repertory.

The structure of the lute showed considerable development after its introduction in Europe in the early Middle Ages. Having originated from the Arab world, travelers are believed to have brought back the instrument from the Arabs, establishing its presence in the western region. The earliest lute is believed to have been a simple instrument. However, over time, the structure of the lute changed, affecting the way that it was played. The lute became a very popular instrument, owned and played by many people, professionals and amateurs.⁴⁵ With the increase in popularity of keyboard instruments such as the piano and harpsichord, which filled some of the lute's roles, its popularity declined. In the twentieth century, efforts of

⁴⁵ James A Millward, "Chordophone Culture in Two Early Modern Societies: A Pipa-Vihuela Duet." *Journal of Word History* 23.2 (2012): 240.

reviving the instrument were led by such figures as Arnold Dolmetsch, Diana Poulton, and Joseph Iadone.

On the other hand, the Chinese pipa is part of the rich traditions of the Chinese people. Classified as a plucked chordophone, the modern Chinese pipa differs from the original pipa in terms of the shape and the number and composition of strings used. The history of the pipa among the Chinese dates back to the second century.⁴⁶ The pipa became a popular instrument with various types of the early instruments such as the Qin pipa, Han pipa, and Wuxian pipa. Many of the technical developments occurred during the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907), as it was the golden era of musical performance in China.

The comparison and contrast of the *Ambushed from Ten Sides* and *Fantasia XII*, and the *Moonlit River in Spring* and *Fantasia XII*, which represent the solo repertoires of the two instruments, is a major part of the thesis. Although both plucked string instruments, they greatly differ in their origin and technique of playing and illustrate differences in musical elements such as harmony, texture, rhythm, and form. The Western lute and Chinese pipa open the pathway in understanding the earliest musical instruments and the impact on cultural and traditional elements in a given society. The comparison of the two instruments provides a rich and detailed outline on the appreciation of history and technical developments of the instruments over different generations as a means of preserving the unique and harmonic sounds of stringed instruments.

⁴⁶ Millward, 268.

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