

CHINESE MUSIC AS CROSS-CULTURE: A REVIEW OF THE 21ST CHIME INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN LISBON 2018

CHIME in Lisbon was my second participation in the European Foundation for Chinese Music Research Conference. Sponsored mainly by the Fundação Jorge Álvares, it was held from May 9th to 13th 2018 at the Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre (CCCC) in Lisbon, Portugal, and co-organized by the CCCC, the Ethnomusicology Institute of the New University of Lisbon, the Confucius Institute of the University of Lisbon, and the Confucius Institute and the Departamento de Comunicação e Arte of the University of Aveiro.

The theme of the conference was “Chinese Music as Cross-Culture.” In his welcoming address, Frank Kouwenhoven, president of CHIME, mentioned the use of “cross-culture” as a trope to address the complex of Chinese music phenomena in the modern day. My participation in this conference has deeply enriched my own understanding of this notion, through the papers, music performance, participations of the events, and the people and place of Lisbon.

The conference offered an innovative program that was diverse and dynamic. There were lectures, papers, panels, films, poster sessions and concerts that covered an extraordinary array of topics: sound studies, diaspora, cultural identities, gender studies, pan-Chineseness, contemporary composers, historical studies, musical instruments, tradition and modernity, China and its Asian neighbors, popular music, multi-media, and pedagogy. Many papers tackled the complex cross-cultural or inter/intra cultural phenomena of today, for example: Edwin Porras traced how *souna*, a double-reed folk instrument, was indigenized by the diverse cultural landscape in Cuba; Frederick Lau used *Ershou Meigui*, a celebrated Chinese rock band, to examine the concept of rock in contemporary China, and the impact of this transnational genre on Chinese youth culture; Huang Rujing applied the concept of “translocalization” to examine the use of Hindustani instruments on Chinese music reality shows, arguing the material as an important agency in claiming music exoticism; and Tan Shyr Ee investigates intersectional issues of sexuality, ethnic identity, artistic ‘authenticity,’ and class in the making of new Chinese musical femininities, discussed through two world-leading Chinese female pianists Yuja Wang and Zhu Xiao-mei.

I presented a paper, “Deep Listening in Chinese Guqin Music: A Discussion of Xi Shan Qin Kuang through the Lens of Ecomusicology,” in the panel of *Excursion in Qin Music, Chinese Music Philosophy, and Music Theory*, joined by Wu Zeyuan from Ohio State University and Chow Sheryl Man-Ying from Princeton University, and chaired by Alan Thrasher, Professor Emeritus at the University of British Columbia, who also gave one of the keynote papers on “Qupai in Sizhu: Intracultural Rejection of Prevailing Models”. In my paper, I bridged the “deep listening” in ancient Chinese guqin music with the interdisciplinary field of ecomusicology to explore a cross-cultural understanding of humans, nature, and cultures in the contemporary world. By the same token, Lee Mei-Yen traced the Western scholarship on the guqin, and delineated the different perspectives on the guqin culture between the contemporary European and Chinese scholarships. In addition to the guqin, Qi Burigude presented an insightful paper on Mongolian matouqin music; Hu Qifang examined both the elite and folk pipa traditions in the last century; and Li Cheong discussed the improvisation tradition on the *erhu* through his own performer-scholar perspective.

If the academic feast was not enough, the musical intermezzos and concerts organized by the committee created a sonic festa in celebrating Chinese music as cross-culture. The solo performance of guqin player and vocalist He Yi from Beijing integrated both Chinese and Western elements in her unique singing style. In addition to her collaborations with the American cellist Jonathan Kramer and Swedish guitarist Johannes Möller, I was particularly enamored by her innovative interpretation of *Yang Guan San Die*; her timbral subtleties added layered dimensions of sound on the guqin. Johannes Möller transformed the audience through his own deliberate and soulful interpretation of Chinese music on guitar. The tap dancer Jiang Xiaofeng from Yunnan, with his rich body vocabulary, accentuated the music counterpart played by the Beijing pipaist Xia Yuyan, exciting the audience to a new level.

The above-mentioned musicians were all onstage at the public concert in Universidade de Lisboa, where the Canadian group Red Chamber was also featured. Led by the performer/scholar Mei Han, there are five virtuosos in this group: Liu Guilian (pipa), Yu Zhimin (ruan), Jiang Geling (multi-instrumentalist), and Randy Raine-Reusch (composer, multi-instrumentalist.) The program reflected both the musicians' harnessing of tradition, and a high degree of individual creativity and cultural hybridization. It would be mistaken to box their music into the category of Chinese music since their soundscape is both Canadian and global. The musical festa of the conference culminated with the second concert, the Silk Road Concert, held at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Pipaist Gao Hong from Minnesota and Arabian oud player Yair Dalal captivated the audience with their masterful and spontaneous collaboration. Both of the musicians fully displayed the different characteristics of their instruments through intricate vibratos and extensive expressivity. Mongolian horsehead fiddler Qi Burigude transformed the concert hall into an imaginative grassland with the magical sounds of his *matouqin*.

My sense of Chinese music as cross-culture was definitely reinforced by the people and place in Lisbon. The Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre is a beautiful and tranquil museum located at the heart of the town. Conference attendants were pampered by the hospitality and wonderful food and drinks offered daily. In addition to the rich and exquisite collections in the museum, we viewed the colorful city and the River Tagus from the 4th floor. Special thanks to Enio de Souza and Frank Kouwenhoven who connected all of us from all over the world, to spend a few days together like a big family. To me, this collective effort in scholarship, musicianship, and friendship is the true meaning of Chinese music as cross-culture.

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