Three Dissertation Recitals and Document

by

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Abstract

The dissertation consisted of three recitals and a written document. The first Dissertation Recital was performed in Hill Auditorium on January 23, 2023, in collaborated with Clayton Farmer, organ, Anna Janowski, violin, Sitong Liu, soprano, Jackson Merrill, organ, and John Solari, piano; Sonata in D minor for Organ Four Hands, op. 30, Gustav Adolf Merkel (1827–1885); Ballade for Piano and Organ, op. 30, Marcel Dupré (1886–1971); Missa in Simplicitate, Jean Langlais (1907–1992); Capriccio for Violin and Organ, Naji Hakim (b. 1955); Rhapsody for Organ Duet, Naji Hakim (b. 1955).

The second Dissertation Recital was performed in Hill Auditorium on May 2, 2023. The program consisted of Fantasia and Fugue in G minor, BWV 542, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750); Nun komm der Heiden Heiland, BWV 659, Johann Sebastian Bach; Prière, op. 20, César Franck (1822–1890); Suite, op. 5: Prélude, Sicilienne, Toccata, Maurice Duruflé (1902–1986).

The third Dissertation Recital was performed in St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Ann Arbor on August 4, 2023. The program consisted of Canonic Fanfare on "Fölszállott a Páva," Bálint Karosi (b. 1979); Variations sur un thème de Clément Jannequin, Jehan Alain (1911–1940); Sonata in One Movement (on "Kalenda Maya"), Libby Larsen (b. 1950); Variations on a Folk Song (Peter, Go Ring Dem Bells), Florence Price (1887–1953); Prelude on an Old Folk Tune, Amy Beach (1867–1944); When the Mountain Sings, When the Children Cry, When the Skies Go Dark, Gu Wei (b. 1991); Toccata on a Hungarian Folk Melody "Által Mennék," Bálint Karosi (b. 1979).

The scholarly essay is an examination of contemporary organ compositions based on the topic of folk music. It examines works by both organist-composers and non-organist composers from diverse cultural backgrounds. It provides a music analysis of each composer's compositions and insights from the performer's perspective.

RECITAL 1 PROGRAM

FIRST DISSERTATION RECITAL

Mi Zhou, organ

Clayton Farmer, organ
Anna Janowski, violin
Sitong Liu, soprano
Jackson Merrill, organ
John Solari, piano

Monday, January 23, 2023
Hill Auditorium
8:00 pm

Sonata in D Minor for Organ four-hands, op. 30 — Gustav Adolf Merkel (1827–1885)
- Allegro moderato
- Adagio
- Allegro con fuoco. Fuga.

Clayton Farmer, organ

Ballade for Piano and Organ, op. 30 — Marcel Dupré (1886–1971)

John Solari, piano

Missa in Simplicitate — Jean Langlais (1907–1992)
- Kyrie
- Gloria
- Credo
- Sanctus et Benedictus
- Agnus Dei

Sitong Liu, soprano

Capriccio for Violin and Organ — Naji Hakim (b.1955)

Anna Janowski, violin

Rhapsody for Organ Duet — Naji Hakim (b.1955)
- Allegro molto
- Andante sostenuto
- Vivace
- Andante tranquillo
- Maestoso-Allegro molto

Jackson Merrill, organ

RECITAL 2 PROGRAM

SECOND DISSERTATION RECITAL

Mi Zhou, organ

Tuesday, May 2, 2023
Hill Auditorium
8:00 pm

Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor, BWV 542 — Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Nun komm der Heiden Heiland, BWV 659

Prière, op. 20 — César Franck (1822–1890)

Suite, op. 5 — Maurice Duruflé (1902–1986)
- Prélude
- Sicilienne
- Toccata

RECITAL 3 PROGRAM

THIRD DISSERTATION RECITAL

Mi Zhou, organ

Friday, August 4, 2023
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Ann Arbor
5:00 PM

Kodály Triptych: III. Canonic Fanfare on "Fölszállott a Páva"	Bálint Karosi (b. 1979)
Variations sur un thème de Clément Jannequin	Jehan Alain (1911–1940)
Sonata in One Movement (on "Kalenda Maya")	Libby Larsen (b.1950)
Variations on a Folk Song (Peter, Go Ring Dem Bells)	Florence Price (1887–1953)
Prelude on an Old Folk Tune	Amy Beach (1867–1944)
When the Mountain Sings When the Children Cry When the Skies Go Dark	Wei Gu (b.1991)
Toccata on a Hungarian Folk Melody "Által Mennék"	Bálint Karosi (b.1979)

Folk Music Elements in Contemporary Organ Music: Exploring Compositions from the United States, Hungary and China

My interest in folk melodies in contemporary organ music was inspired by a unique opportunity to contribute to the creation of new organ music. In 2019, I had the privilege to participate in the Student Commissioning Project sponsored by the American Guild of Organists, a venture actively promoting new organ compositions. For this project, I collaborated with Wei Gu, a composer then pursuing his doctoral degree at the Peabody Institute at Johns Hopkins University. Because we both come from a Chinese background, Wei Gu and I have been deeply influenced by Chinese culture since childhood and we have a strong affinity for Chinese folk music. In our collaboration, we thought it would be very interesting to integrate folk elements into organ composition. Our work together culminated in *When the Mountain Sings*, a piece that represents a fusion of a traditional Western instrument and Eastern aesthetics. This experience planted a seed in my mind and a growing interest in exploring folk tunes in contemporary organ music.

The incorporation of folk tunes into organ compositions is not a novel practice. Indeed, the practice was prevalent during the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Variations and *nöels* found in the organ repertoire during these periods commonly used folk tunes as a basis. Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621), a prominent Dutch composer from the end of the Renaissance and beginning of the Baroque eras, significantly contributed to secular variations rooted in popular folk tunes from various European countries. His output in this genre includes settings of *Est-ce Mars* ("Is it Mars") based on the French folk tune "air de cour" by Pierre Gueron; the German tune *Mein Junges Leben hat ein End'* ("My young life has ended"); and *Ballo del Granduca* ("The Grand Duke's Ball"), a dance song from Italy. In France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it became a tradition for organists to introduce variations on popular tunes during their

playing at Christmas Eve services, known as *noëls*. Louis-Claude Daquin's (1694–1772) collection of twelve *noëls* is a renowned example of this tradition. His *noëls* feature virtuosic passages of intricate French ornamentation. Transitioning from the Classical to the Romantic era, folk tunes became a significant resource for composers of art music, emerging as an important style of Romantic Nationalism. This style influenced the folk music revival in the United States, Hungary, and the United Kingdom in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For instance, African American spirituals were introduced into organ literature through the works of Florence Price (1887–1953) as she sought to integrate her cultural heritage, and her *Variations on a Folk Song* was inspired by a spiritual, "Peter, Go Ring Dem Bells." In Britain, an important representative was Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958), who contributed to this repertoire with his *Three Preludes on Welsh Hymn Tunes* of 1920.

On the other hand, composers of the 20th century began exploring adapting the riches of music from earlier centuries, such as the Middle Ages, Renaissance and Baroque periods. For instance, French composer Jehan Alain's (1911–1940) *Variations sur un Thème de Clément Jannequin,* based on a folk melody from the sixteenth-century song "L'espoir que j'ai d'acquérir votre grâce,"[1] ("The hope I have of gaining your favour") was written in a contemporary language to create a neo-Renaissance sound.

In the twenty-first century, the tradition of organ repertoire based on folk tunes has continued with works by an increasingly diverse range of composers. In my research, I focused on several works in this genre written by three contemporary composers. The first is *Sonata in One Movement* (1983) by American composer Libby Larsen, based on the troubadour song *Kalenda Maya* ("The Month of May"). The second composer is Hungarian composer and organist Bálint

[1] Jean-Baptiste Robin, liner notes for Jehan Alain, *Alain: Complete Organ Works*, performed by Jean-Baptiste Robin, organ, recorded 2008, Brillant Classics 94233, September 2011, CD.

Karosi, *Canonic Fanfare on "Fölszállott a Páva,"* and *Toccata on a Hungarian Folk Melody "Által Mennék,"* both based on Hungarian folk tunes. Lastly, I have included three works completed by Gu Wei for this project, all based on traditional Chinese folk tunes: *When the Mountain Sings* (2019), *When the Children Cry* (2022), and *When the Skies Go Dark* (2023). Through the analysis of these works, I will examine how three living composers from different cultural backgrounds incorporate folk music into their compositions. Each section will provide a detailed musical analysis of a representative work from each composer, explore the composer's musical influences, and offer insights from the performer's perspective. By examining this diverse set of works, we will gain a comprehensive understanding of what unites the different traditions of folk music and their use in the organ repertoire.

American Composer

Libby Larsen (b. 1950) is one of America's most prolific contemporary composers. Her compositional output contains over 500 works for multiple genres ranging from vocal and chamber music to orchestral works and operas. Included in Larsen's massive output are several works written for the organ. She was encouraged to compose music for the organ by her organist friends while she studied at the University of Minnesota.[2] *Sonata in One Movement* was Larsen's first published solo organ piece in 1983.[3] She adapted a troubadour folk song *Kalenda Maya* by poet Raimbaut de Vaquiras (1180–1207). Raimbaut de Vaquiras composed the poem to fit the pre-existing tune which he had heard played on the fiddle (a bowed string instrument) by two French

[2] Christopher S. Anderson, *Twentieth-Century Organ Music* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 257, https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.4324/9780203142233.
[3] Ibid., 257.

jongleurs (instrumentalists).[4] Troubadours were some of the most widespread disseminators of music and poetry in medieval Western vernacular culture.[5] The melody of *Kalenda Maya* ("The Month of May") is the earliest known example of an *estampie*, an instrumental form of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The text of *Kalenda Maya* is based on courtly love. The original song is written in verse-refrain form, with the verses varying in text and rhythm. The transcription of the melody from the original manuscript into modern notation is shown in Figure 1.1. Figure 1.2 demonstrates the application of a rhythmic mode to the melody. Starting with an upbeat, the melody follows a long–short rhythmic pattern, resulting in a dance-like rhythm. The melody used by Libby Larsen bears resemblances to this style.



Figure 1.**错误!使用"开始"选项卡将 0 应用于要在此处显示的文字。**.1: transcription of *Kalenda Maya* from the manuscript into modern notation.

[4] Robert Falck, "Raimbaut de Vaqeiras," in *Grove Music Online,* accessed July 20, 2023, https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000050117.

[5] John Stevens, Ardis Butterfield, and Theodore Karp, "Troubadours, trouvères," in *Grove Music Online,* accessed July 20, 2023, https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000028468.



Figure 1.**错误!使用“开始”选项卡将 0 应用于要在此处显示的文字。**.2: a rhythmic mode is applied in *Kalenda Maya.*

Larsen’s *Sonata in One Movement* presents a unique musical structure characterized by strong dramatic elements. In this piece, the term of *Sonata* refers to the compact structure and contrasting textures for solo keyboard writing. “The composition presents a sectional structure defined by contrasts in meter and tempo, relying on imitative contrapuntal texture, and immediate repetition or recapitulation of the opening section.”[6] In this piece, the opening section begins slowly with a simple line formed by a four-note motive from *Kalenda Maya.* These notes are repeated in various rhythmic patterns. In the second section, the melody is introduced in the pedal at a brisk tempo. The manuals echo this melody with an ornamented version. As the piece progresses, mixed meters emerge and the imitative passages create characterful transformations in different voice parts. Layers of melodies and rhythms result in a thicker texture and the music builds in intensity until a moment of interruption, where texture, volume, and rhythmic layering

[6] Sandra Mangsen, John Irving, John Rink, and Paul Griffiths, “Sonata,” in *Grove Music Online,* accessed July 23, 2023, https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000026191.

seem to bring the piece to an end. A rush of sound suddenly disrupts the calm and the music concludes quickly, returning to its initial calm statement.

Complex rhythms and unique harmonic colors give this work a distinctive style. Larsen explained that these rhythms were inspired by American English, saying that "several years ago I began examining rhythmic patterns, pitch range, tempo and phrase contour in American spoken English."[7] Syncopated rhythms and two-against-three rhythms appear frequently in this work. In addition, the work is full of dissonant harmonies that are the composer's signature musical language; and her music is built around tonal areas, reinforced by pedal tones in the bass. For instance, the introduction of the piece centers around A minor, while the middle section and the coda are centered around the parallel major key. Intervals also play a significant element in adding color to the work. A series of dissonant chord patterns stand out in the introduction at the measure 13–15, which creates a sense of mystery. Overall, the composer is inspired by *Kalenda Maya* to create distinct contemporary organ music.

In performance, precise rhythmic control and contrasting colors are crucial for interpreting this piece effectively. Employing a method of subdividing the rhythms helps connect seemingly fragmented melodic lines. For instance, the initial theme, written in quarter notes, can be mentally subdivided into eighth notes to establish a stable rhythmic foundation. The melody of *Kalenda Maya* exhibits a dance-like rhythmic character, which should maintain a joyful feeling throughout the piece, except for the introduction and the coda. The work presents strong dramatic contrasts of volume and tone colors between each section of the piece. To emphasize this, some registrations are indicated in the score while others are left to the performer through dynamic markings. For example, in the coda section, there are no specific registrations, but the rapid thickening and fading

[7] Libby Larsen, "Resources," Libby Larsen's Website, accessed July 20, 2023, https://libbylarsen.com/resources/on-music/.

of texture create a visual sense of sound that provides inspiration for the organist's choice of stops. I utilize two manuals with the full organ sound, generating an increase in volume through the coupling of manuals, and a decrease through the swell box. The performance interpretation above only expresses the writer's thoughts on specific aspects of the piece while seeking to showcase the possibilities of musical dramatization in the composition.

Hungarian Composer

Hungarian folk songs have had an important influence on the Hungarian musical style in the 20th century. This trend in Hungarian art music emerged at the turn of the century, drawing inspiration from the melodies, harmonies, and structural elements of the country's folk music.[8] Particularly, the contributions of two composers, Béla Bartok and Zoltán Kodály, played a pivotal role in forging a connection between authentic folk traditions and modern European art music.[9] Their efforts resulted in the development of a distinctive and recognizable Hungarian musical style that gained international recognition.

Bálint Karosi is a new-generation Hungarian composer who is currently active in the United States and Europe and is well-known as an organist and improviser. He received his music education both in the United States and Hungary, earning a composition degree from Yale University, and organ degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory and the Liszt Academy in Budapest. As a cultural inheritor, he brings Hungarian folk music into his organ music to create a collection called *Kodály Triptych*, which has three movements based on a Hungarian folk song. Karosi composed the composition for a competition organized by the Hungarian Philharmonia in 2022 to

[8] Gyorgy Kroo, "New Hungarian Music," *Notes (Music Library Association)* 39, no. 1 (1982):43.
[9] Ibid., 43.

celebrate the 140th anniversary of Zoltán Kodály's birth.[10] His *Canonic Fanfare on "Fölszallott a Pava"* is the final movement from the collection. It is a canonic fanfare that draws inspiration from "Felszállott a Páva" ("The Peacock Ascended"), the folk song that Kodály famously used in his orchestral work *Variations on a Hungarian Folksong "The Peacock" (1939)*.[11] The original folk tune was first published by Kodály as No. 12 of *Magyar Népzenei Gramofónfelvételek* (Hungarian Folk Music Recordings) in 1937.[12]



Figure 2.1: Kodály's *Magyar Népzenei Gramofónfelvételek*

This folk tune is in the most characteristic style of the traditional Magyar style.[13] It is formed by the use of the pentatonic scale, with a free rhythm and ornamented melody. It can be observed from the excerpt that the tune is based on the tonality of D with a dance-like dotted rhythm and freely ornamented notes. The melodic contour of the first two lines shows consistency but different interval patterns. The first two phrases begin with the same melodic idea—D–C–A–G—but end differently. The third phrase (mm.4–6) is transposed a fourth lower (D to A), and is the transposition of the first phrase with more ornamented notes and varying rhythms. Similarly, the fourth phrase (mm.6–8) is the transposition of the second phrase, a fifth lower (D to G).

[10] Bálint Karosi, *Kodály Triptych*. (New York: The Leupold Foundation, 2022), 1.
[11] Ibid.,1.
[12] John S. Weissmann, "Kodály's Later Orchestral Music (II)." *Tempo*, no. 18 (1950): 18. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4617073.
[13] Ibid., 18.

Karosi uses the original folk melody to develop an imitative style throughout the piece. This work is structured in an A–B–A form beginning with a brief introduction and a short coda. The folk melody is introduced by the pedal and it echoes in manuals at varying intervals (Figure 2.1). Subsequently, the folk melody is presented in the manuals through canonic imitations with staccato articulation. A transition, marked by frequent changes in compound meter, transforms the impassioned music into a more tranquil section, where the melody continues in a legato style with a dreamy sound utilizing string celestes. The piece culminates with a reprise of the theme on full organ, providing a satisfying finale. Notably, a thrilling chromatic ascending line leading to the final chord vividly depicts the image of the peacock ascending to the sky.



Figure 2.2: Bálint Karosi, *Canonic Fanfare on "Fölszallott a Pava"*, mm.1–10.

The peacock is a powerful symbol in Hungarian culture, embodying various meanings such as eternal love, freedom, purity, and light.[14] The composer skillfully employs style and registration to effectively convey the symbolic significance of the peacock. The character, reminiscent of the toccata style, highlights the joyous and celebratory nature of the piece as well as reverence for the peacock. The joyful mood carries throughout the performance of the piece.

Organ Culture Background in China

Before introducing Wei Gu's organ works, I will provide an overview of the development of the organ in modern China. The history and evolution of the organ in the West are closely tied to church traditions and Western European art music. However, the introduction of the organ into China represents a new and distinct situation. Within this new environment and cultural context, the organ in China may require innovation and the fusion of cultures to explore a unique developmental path.

The twentieth century marked a turning point in China's musical landscape with the introduction of the organ as a new instrument. The earliest pipe organ in China was constructed as early as the late sixteenth century: a positive organ was built in Macau around 1599/1600. However, it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that a new pipe organ was installed in the Lutheran Church in Harbin, ending a wait of three centuries.[15] The introduction of the organ in China's musical scene gained momentum with the installation of the country's first concert organ at the Beijing Concert Hall in 1989.[16] In the following decades, a limited number of pipe organs

[14] Andrea Sandor, "Why the Peacock?" Smithsonian Folklife Festival, June 24, 2013, https://festival.si.edu/blog/2013/why-the-peacock/.
[15] David Francis Urrows, "The Pipe Organ in China and the 'Cultural Great Leap Forward'," accessed June 20, 2023, https://www.academia.edu/70755018/The_Pipe_Organ_in_China_and_the_Cultural_Great_Leap_Forwad
[16] Ibid., 3–4.

were built in distinguished venues such as the Xinghai Concert Hall, the Recital Hall of China National Radio, and Zhongshan Park Concert Hall.[17] Although there were ambitious plans to construct large organs in concert halls, no Chinese individuals were trained to play the organ at that time. As China steps into the new millennium, its flourishing economy and burgeoning openness to new cultures paved the way for an increase in organ installations in concert halls and churches in various cities. This period has seen the installation of the Klais organ at the National Center for the Performing Arts (2007) in Beijing, the Rieger organ at the Shanghai Oriental Concert Hall (2005), and another at Beijing Chaoyang Protestant Church (2005).[18] The rapid growth of pipe organs over the past two decades has been linked to the construction of large theaters in numerous Chinese cities. According to Urrows's China Organ Research Project report, between 1989 and 2017, at least 56 new organs were installed throughout the country.[19] Despite the growing number of organs, the pool of skilled organ players remains significantly limited. Among the top nine conservatories in China, only the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music offer organ courses. Prior to this, a small group of students with some keyboard background pursued further organ study in countries like the U.K., Germany, and France. A significant event occurred in 2015 when John Walker, the former President of the American Guild of Organists, was invited to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music for a week of master classes, lectures, and a concert at the Shanghai Oriental Concert Hall.[20] This visit fostered the establishment of the Shanghai Chapter of the American Guild of Organists in that same year, led by Professor Lei Zhu, the chair of the Department of Modern Instrumental and Percussion at the Shanghai Conservatory. This was followed by the creation of an organ art team primarily

[17] Ibid., 4.
[18] Ibid., 5.
[19] Ibid., 4.
[20] Ibid., 7.

consisting of graduates from the Shanghai Conservatory. The following year saw the inauguration of China's first undergraduate organ program at Shanghai Conservatory. These breakthroughs signified crucial steps in the development of China's organ industry.

The progression of organ education in China relies on an international teaching team. Since the establishment of the Organ Art Team at the Shanghai Conservatory in 2015, domestic and international teaching teams have worked in collaboration to lead pedagogical and developmental efforts. The domestic team consists of doctoral and master's degree holders from the Shanghai Conservatory who have returned from overseas studies. The international team brings together organ experts from globally recognized music schools. The mission of this team is to create a platform for the organ, utilize international faculty resources, enhance professional instruction, facilitate artistic practice, academic research, and foster international exchanges. After eight years of dedicated work, significant results have been realized. Two organ art festivals took place in 2017 and 2019, and a Chinese version of "Organ Performance Techniques: Modern and Early," authored by Americans George H. Ritchie and George B. Stauffer, was translated by Dan Wu and published in 2023. The Chinese translation of Ritchie and Stauffer's *Organ Performance Techniques* is a pioneer for Chinese organ literature focusing on organ performance techniques. Additionally, during the first organ art festival, Xuru Zhang, the professor of composition from Shanghai Conservatory debuted China's first symphonic work for organ, voice, and percussion, entitled *Blowing the Clouds and Ringing the Bell*.[21] This work illustrates that Chinese composers had begun to experiment composing for the organ and exploring new organ sounds in the form of large ensembles.

[21] Zhang Xuru, *Floating Clouds and Singing Bell—for organ, vocals and percussion bands*.

Notwithstanding this progress, the organ profession in China is still in its infancy and will require a large number of original Chinese organ works to continue to promote its development. This exploration needs an extended period to absorb both Western organ culture and traditional Chinese music. Traditional folk songs in China have a long history and have been passed down through generations in various regions, while the Western organ tradition is a new addition to the musical landscape. Combining an ancient Western instrument with the elements of traditional Eastern folk songs brings great creativity to the exploration of new possibilities in organ music. Wei Gu's compositions, which attempt to blend Western traditional instruments with elements of Eastern traditional music, hold not only experimental significance for the advancement of organ music within China, but also offer Western audiences a fresh auditory experience. In the following section, I will analyze the compositional techniques infusing Gu's three pieces with Chinese folk elements.

Singaporean-Chinese Composer

Singaporean-Chinese composer Wei Gu (b. 1991) is a versatile young composer with a rich experience of diverse cultures, having lived in China, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany. This experience has ignited his passion for exploration and curiosity about new things. In the realm of music, he is particularly intrigued by learning various instruments, such as oboe, piano and toy piano. He became interested in the organ when he took organ lessons at Peabody Conservatory. This interest gives him a fresh start to writing for organ.

His organ suite contains three pieces: *When the Mountain Sings*, *When the Children Cry*, and *When the Skies Go Dark*. The suite incorporates elements of minimalism, a musical style known for its simplicity of materials, continuous form, interlocking rhythmic patterns and pulses,

slow harmonic rhythm, a lack of extended melody, and repetitive patterns.[22] Gu's works uniquely integrate these techniques, using them as a medium to evoke emotions rooted in folk melodies.

Gu composed *When the Mountain Sings* for the Student Commissioning Project of the American Guild of Organists in 2019. It is based on a folk song from Sichuan, China, entitled "槐花几是开" (When Does the Huaihua Bloom?) (Figure 3.1). *Huaihua* is a flower native to many parts of China and often symbolizes purity, beauty, and the desire for true love.[23] The original song depicts a young lady who is in love with a man, but she doesn't know his name and spends her day waiting for his arrival by the *huaihua* tree. When her mother asks her what she is looking at, she responds that she is waiting for the *huaihua* to bloom.[24]



Figure 3.1: The original folk tune of *When Does the Huaihua Bloom?*

In this work, the composer uses repetition in a highly specific manner. Initially, a consistent pattern of sixteenth notes emerges, derived from five melodic notes (F–G–A–C–D) as the repeating cells, creating a 32-note pattern (mm.1–2). This pattern incrementally expands by a single note with each repetition (Figure 3.2). This repetition structure, however, is modified as the

[22] Timothy A. Johnson, "Minimalism: Aesthetic, Style, or Technique?" *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1994): 770. http://www.jstor.org/stable/742508.
[23] Bao Yunkai, Feng Qiaoyu, "Huai hai ji shi kai" *Musical Works*, no. 4 (2016): 85–88. https://doi:10.3969/j.issn.0513-2436.2016.04.015.
[24] Ibid., 85.

tonality shifts from D minor to B minor (m.45), where the pattern becomes 12-note units, expanding by two notes with each repetition (Figure 3.3). Eventually, through a process of transposition, the melody culminates with a defined statement (m.79), and the pattern expands by a single note with each repetition starting at m. 78 (Figure 3.4). The composer employs sustained sixteenth notes and weaving melodies to depict a sense of longing.



Figure 3.2: Patterns with 12 notes as a unit are marked with red rectangles. Red circles indicate adding notes.



Figure 3.3: The red vertical line shows the measure where the pattern becomes 12-note units and expands by two notes with each repetition.



Figure 3.4: the folk tune enters in the pedal at m. 79.

I commissioned the piece *When the Children Cry* for the Diversity and Belonging: Unsung Keyboard Stories Conference in 2022, hosted by the University of Michigan and the Westfield Center for Historical Keyboard Studies. I premiered it on the C.B. Fisk organ in Blanche Anderson Moore Organ Recital Hall on October 10. The melody is based on a folk song from Hebei, China, entitled "小白菜" (Little Cabbage). It features a smooth downward line (Figure 3.5) that resonates deeply with the sorrowful narrative behind the song. The song tells the story of an orphan girl who lost her mother at an early age and was later treated badly by her stepmother and siblings.[25] As an immensely sorrowful song, it portrays the unjust hierarchical structure in families of the old society

[25] Jingbao Zhou, *Si Chou Zhi Lu Di Yin Yue Wen Hua* (Wulumuqi: Xinjiang ren min chu ban she, 1987), 297.

in China. Utilizing the repetitive nature of the original tune, composer Wei Gu adapted it into an ostinato bass, by which the melodic line continually repeats unchanged in the bass. It is derived from the first four bars of the original melody, forming a repeated bass line as shown in Figure 3.6. The beginning of the piece establishes a drone-like effect by using sustained chords that gradually transition into the repetitive bass line, creating a sense of longing. This is influenced by the minimalist drone music style, which employs simple combinations of tones held for long periods of time.[26] The piece starts with a slow and pensive opening and then evolves through texture changes to express a sense of desire and despair, eventually returning to the initial mood.

Although the composition begins and ends in a minimalist style, the middle section alters the texture by employing traditional musical techniques including polyphonic, homophonic, and monophonic textures. Figure 3.7 illustrates multiple independent voice lines moving together above a melody in the bass in mm. 38–40. The texture reduces at m. 41 where the melody is played by one voice line supported by sustained voices. It transforms to monophonic texture at m. 45, the melody presented in arpeggiated figuration.



Figure 3.5: the original folk tune of Little Cabbage.

[26] Timothy A. Johnson, "Minimalism: Aesthetic, Style, or Technique?" *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (1994): 745, http://www.jstor.org/stable/742508.



Figure 3.6: the opening section of *When the Children Cry*



Figure 3.7: complex figuration, mm.38-39

The last movement, *When the Skies Go Dark*, is inspired by the Hokkien song "Ten–Wu–Wu" (Cloudy Sky) (Figure 3.8).[27] This folk song is popular in Taiwan, Fujian, Zhejiang, and Guangdong. While there have been many versions adapting the lyrics to local lifestyles, one

[27] Lin Jen-Yu, "Exploring the Types and Derivations of the Folk Song 'Ten-Wu-Wu'," *NCHU Institution Repository*, no. 38 (2007): 215. https:// doi:10.30092/JHCLANCHU.200703.0008.

common version of the whimsical story narrates a grandpa and grandma quarreling over how to cook a fish they just caught in the rain.[28]

The original tune is expressed with animated rhythm, evoking a joyful style, such as the eighth-sixteenth-sixteenth note pattern, dotted eighth-sixteenth note pattern and sixteenth-eighth-sixteenth note pattern. Gu employs rhythmic variety within the minimalist framework to construct this piece. The sparse rhythm pattern at the beginning gradually evolves into a dense texture by gradually adding more notes. Figures 3.9 to 3.11 demonstrate the development of the original rhythm pattern through three variations. The piece aims to capture the playful essence of the song and utilizes minimalist techniques to transform the original motif into repetitive textures.



Figure 3.8: the original folk melody of Ten-Wu-Wu.



Figure 3.9: Wei Gu's *When the Skies Go Dark*, the initial rhythm pattern.

[28] Ibid., 221.



Figure 3.10: the second variation of the rhythm pattern shown in mm.20–24.



Figure 3.11: the third variation of the rhythm pattern begins in m.64.

The above analysis of the compositions reveals significant differences in their musical styles, which should be emphasized in the performance to highlight the contrasts between them. In the aspect of performance, the first two pieces, *When the Mountain Sings* and *When the Children Cry* require a focus on legato playing, while *When the Skies Go Dark* places importance on articulate phrasing. For instance, in the first piece, the continuous 16th-note patterns can be a challenge in maintaining clarity throughout the performance. Employing legato to sustain the repeating patterns allows the performer to better sense a looping motion and helps to shape the musical lines. Additionally, when playing legato, the melody can effectively accentuate the graceful and gentle characteristics of Chinese music. The final piece bursts with lively energy, allowing for a clear expression of the musical lines through its fast-paced and joyful rhythm.

Moreover, using contrasting registrations in the three pieces facilitates the interpretation of their distinct musical styles. Gu provides simple registrations for each composition at the

beginning, giving the performer the flexibility to adjust based on the dynamic markings. By carefully attending to these contrasting elements in the music, the performance can vividly showcase the diverse musical styles of these pieces. Gu uses abbreviations for the organ stops, such as Swell (Sw.), Great (Gt.), and Great coupled to Pedal (Gt.to Ped.). In the first composition, the melody in the right hand is presented simply at a *mezzo-piano* dynamic, which could be played on a soft Principal 8' stop. The left hand features sustained running notes played by a soft Flute 8' with the Swell box closed. To achieve *crescendos*, the performer can add small-sounding mutation stops and flute stops while also controlling the Swell box. When the pedal takes on the melody at measure 79, it could be played on a Principal 8' stop with the Great coupled to the Pedal.

The second piece begins with a soft presentation of the melody in the pedal, accompanied by sustained chords in the right hand. The right hand could be played on a string stop (Gamba 8') with the Swell box closed, balanced to Flute 4' in the pedal. The use of a tremulant on the string combination creates a dreamy sound, which is particularly suited to evoke a sense of nostalgia at measure 17. As the accompaniment remains on one manual throughout the piece, the section starting at measure 33 shows the left hand echoing the right hand with upward arpeggiated figurations, which could be played on a separate manual. When the dense texture calls for a more pronounced melody, adding an Octave 8' stop in the pedal at measure 37 can be effective. The last section features the melody in the left hand accompanied by a twisting, ascending chromatic figuration. The melody can be played on the Great using a Principal 8' stop, or perhaps a smaller sounding 16' stop. For the concluding part, gradually reducing some stops can achieve a *diminuendo* in the music.

For the final piece, different reed combinations can be used to create contrast with the previous movements. Although the registration at the beginning is marked as Flute 8', utilizing

reed combinations can also convey the dynamic and energetic style of the piece. The melody, with its unique rhythmic motive, can be played on Oboe 8' in the Swell division, and the Swell box can be closed for added effect. At measure 22, the right hand takes over the melody, which is clearly played on a different keyboard using a contrasting combination of Flute 8', 4', and Tremulant. Other distinctive stop combinations, such as Voix humaine 8' and Spielflöte 8', or Flute stop 8', 4', and mutation stops, can be substituted for the repeated melody. The climax of the piece presents the melody along with rapid and dramatic running figurations in the pedal, which can be performed using the Trumpet 8'.

The above recommendations for registration are based on a summary of my practical experience with the Richard, Fowkes & Co. organ, Op. 25 at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The organ specification will be provided in the Appendix 1. I hope these registration suggestions will provide some ideas for other performers and inspire their creative interpretation.

Conclusion

Incorporating folk music elements into contemporary organ music creates a new avenue of communication and sharing. Through my research on the works of American, Hungarian, and Singaporean-Chinese composers, I have found that each composer brings their unique experiences and perspectives, resulting in a rich diversity of musical expressions. The exploration of this genre requires further exploration and development by more composers.

The fusion of folk music elements and diverse contemporary musical styles imparts new vitality to the traditional practice of using folk tunes within organ music in the present day. This integration allows traditional folk music to continue to thrive and evolve in contemporary organ

works. It can stimulate creativity, cultural exchange, and deepen people's appreciation for the rich musical heritage of different regions and traditions. This fusion provides a diverse and engaging musical experience for composers and audiences around the world.

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Appendix 1



Figure 3.12: Specification, the Richard, Fowkes &Co. organ, Op. 25