

WU MAN, THE PIPA AND CHINESE TRADITION IN A CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL CONTEXT?

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Abstract

In contrast to the idea that the modernization of playing styles has unleashed the expressive potential of the *pipa*, this article suggests, through the individual case study of Wu Man, that traditional styles are essential to the numerous successful premieres of *pipa* concertos globally. It offers the experiences of diasporic *pipa* player Wu Man as an insider's viewpoint, arguing that the demonstration and emphasis of traditional *pipa* playing techniques and styles are important to a successful contemporary performance. This article is the first to disclose Wu Man's experience in how she applies traditional *pipa* music to the numerous successful premieres of *pipa* concertos, framing the *pipa* concerto as just one example of a much wider trend in the musical world—that of the commissioning and performance of new music for cross-cultural instrumental groups. There are two essential elements to the upkeep of traditional *pipa* playing: one lies with the composer's understanding of *pipa* music in their newly composed pieces and the other lies with the *pipa* player's abilities (their mastery of playing techniques, broader experience in various traditional music genres, creativity, and taking on a leading role in playing). Thus, in this article, I will analyze these elements to reveal how a globally successful *pipa* musician has interpreted and translated the traditional aspects of *pipa* music in a global world.

Keywords

Wu Man, Diasporic, Pipa musician, Chinese pipa music, Pipa concerto

INTRODUCTION

There are many diasporic pipa virtuosos across the globe, including Wu Man (USA), Yang Jing (Switzerland), Yang Wei (USA), Gao Hong (USA), Jiang Ting (Japan), Liu Fang (Canada), Cheng Yu (UK), Liu Lu (Australia), and Yu Jia (Singapore). These musicians have promoted Chinese pipa music in different ways, each helping to increase the visibility of the pipa globally. Liu Lu's thesis (2019) presented many individual stories of these diasporic musicians' pipa journeys, offering a glimpse into the varied local experiences of pipa music playing. This article explores the music and practice of Wu Man as a case study to examine how, as a Chinese pipa musician in the West, she has promoted and popularized the traditional styles of pipa music. The discussions are all based on my research, which includes interviewing Wu Man about her global journey; examining the literature about international pipa players; studying Wu Man's recordings, performances, and web presence; and then comparing those to similar efforts of other diasporic pipa musicians.

There are three reasons Wu Man makes for an exemplary case study. First, Wu Man has a wide global following and has received significant international recognition. Of the 40 albums she has released outside China,² five have been nominated for a Grammy Award, with one winning a Grammy Award in 2016 for Best World Music Album (Lo 2017). From this, Wu Man has also been able to explore

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² <http://www.wumanpipa.org/about/bio-en.html>, last accessed on 29th December, 2019.

different music genres with many musicians outside of China. Second, Wu Man is a founding member of the Silk Road Ensemble, a group that has been invited to perform and supervise many workshops in USA and around the world. Through the Silk Road Ensemble, she has had many opportunities to introduce *pipa* music to new listeners. Wu Man's work with *pipa* is introduced in a new cross-cultural art music ensemble context, which has been very carefully curated. This marks her out from peers in the global Chinese music performance circle but also suggests points of contact with other world music professionals within the same group; a study of her experiences could also lend ways of thinking about similar groups. Third, because of her fame, Wu Man has much experience premiering new *pipa* compositions in various genres, particularly with concertos outside China. It is for these reasons that Wu Man's personal interpretation of her use of traditional styles in *pipa* music for contemporary performance makes for an interesting case study, framing the *pipa* concerto as one example of a much wider trend in the musical world—that of the commissioning and performance of new music for cross-cultural instrumental groups. It is likely this situation is not unique, in that it could be applied to many instruments and players worldwide. Wu Man is a successful insider and offers first-hand experience of how a traditional *pipa* musician can communicate the value and significance of traditional styles globally.

The *pipa* as a musical instrument was imported to China during the Weijing Nanbei dynasties (A.D. 220-589) (Yang, 1997; Zhuang, 2001) and used in court ensemble during the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618-907) (Yang, 1997; Lin, 1999; Liu, 2013). Sango yoroku, preserved in Japan, is one of the extant ancient *pipa* scores that reveal the banzi notation (simplified Chinese character, tablature) and the symbols for finger techniques in the 12th century (Liu, 2013). As this instrument moved from court music to folk music, more solo compositions accumulated with the new skills developed, and the place to raise musicians moved outside the court (Yang 1997). The huaqiupin *pipa* score (1819), circulated in China, is one of surviving ancient *pipa* scores from the 19th century to illustrate the gongche notation (Chinese character, solfège) and skills. In the 19th century, five main *pipa* schools (Pudong, Pinhu, Wong, Congmin, and Wuxi) were formed in Jiangnan area (Shanghai and its surrounding regions) (Jones 1995: 283; Kuang 1999: 3-6); each of these *pipa* schools has its own specific interpretations and skills transcribed in the score (e.g., yangzhengxuan *pipa* score for pudong school, published around 1929) (Han & Zhang, 1985). 'Ancient' *pipa* scores in these notations (banzi and gongche) are 'traditional' pieces and full of 'traditional styles.' The *pipa* music notated in sango yoroku (12th century) is one part of a court ensemble, while the *pipa* pieces notated in the scores for the five main *pipa* schools are solo repertoire. The number of articulations on huaqiupin *pipa* score (1819) is about 37 (Hsu 2002: 53-54), and that on yangzhengxuan *pipa* score (1929) is 38 (Hsu, 2002: 58-59). Since 1927, when Liu Tianhua applied a Western style to his compositions of new *pipa* solo and practice pieces in staff notation, more *pipa* pieces within Western styles in cipher or staff notation have been composed (Wu 1992: 61; Yang & Saffle 2010: 88). Thus, 'traditional' *pipa* styles are the *pipa* music in ancient notations and 'contemporary' *pipa* styles are the *pipa* music composed in cipher or staff notation after Liu Tianhua (Wu, 1992: 61; Li, 2007; Hsu, 2011: 7). This definition is still applicable here.

As conservatories were established in the 1920s to 1930s in China, many traditions in music were modified, alongside scientific and systematic methodology in Western culture; for example, the transmission process (traditionally orally on gongche notation) was modified to be mainly notation-based (cipher or staff) in the conservatory system (Liang 1990: 382-386; Wong 1996: 163-181; Jones 2001: 25; Schippers 2010: 115; Zhuang 2011: 84-90). After 1949, the *pipa* musicians in the five main *pipa* schools were invited to teach in conservatories and encouraged to create new styles and skills. More contemporary styles have been created to enrich the expressive ability of *pipa* music during performance (Han & Zhang, 1985; Kuang 2003; Bakan, 2007: 298-324). When *pipa* music was professional in the conservatory system in China, during the 20th century, the place to raise musicians moved from the traditional oral system in jiangnan area to the conservatory system (Liu 2019).

Traditional Chinese music has undergone significant change, namely, being altered to conform to the Western paradigm, since the beginning of the 20th century; these changes include the appearance of

concertos for both solo instruments and orchestra as well as the institutionalization of music schools (Nettl 1985: 75; Stock 1996: 6; Jones 2001: 33-36; Deschênes 2005: 3; Stock 2004: 19-21, 31). These changes have been brought about by the modernization of earlier music styles and techniques, and through globalization, we have seen a renovation of tradition under Western influences—in areas including instrumentation, orchestration, performance setting, and playing techniques (Zhang 2010: 1). As Stock (2004: 19-21) pointed out, the influence of Western music has seen the modification of many traditional music cultures, including the music and composition of the charango (lute, Bolivia), erhu (two-stringed fiddle, China), gaida (bagpipes, Bulgaria), launeddas (double clarinet, Sardinia), mbira (thumb piano, Zimbabwe), and baglama (lute, Turkey). Through these examples, it can be seen that the Western influence on traditional music, like the pipa, occurred on a global level. A specific example of this can be seen in the comparison of the number of articulations in ancient scores—the incidence rises from 37 (huaqiupin pipa score 1819) to 72, roughly, in Chinese Music for Pipa (Shanghai Music Publisher 1997) and Pipa Teaching Material (Sun 2001). This growth in numbers reveals the development in pipa music (articulations) from five traditional pipa schools to the conservatory system, demonstrating the influence of Western music.

As noted, this instrument was used during court ensemble and developed as a solo instrument by folk artists, forming five main pipa traditional schools in jiangnan area. After pipa musicians from these traditional schools began teaching at conservatories, this instrument moved from a regionally to nationally recognized instrument. Lam (2010: 39) argued that the expressive power of pipa music has audiences actively engaging with pipa and its music as a global phenomenon as China has become increasingly globalized since the Cultural Revolution. After the debut of the first pipa concerto in 1977 and the implementation of reform and open policy in the 1970s, more pipa musicians raised in the conservatory system migrated outside China. This formed a radiant dissemination to other countries and increased the visibility of the instrument globally (Liu, 2019; Author, 2013). Wu Man, as the first pipa musician with a master's degree from the Central Conservatory of Music, is not only a pipa musician from within this conservatory system in China but also the first pipa musician to break from the center of the radiant dissemination (China-centered) to introduce and perform globally as a US-based musician (Author 2013). Here, 'global' means that Wu Man could perform, and thus introduce, this instrument to both Western and non-Western audiences based on the visibility of pipa, compared to the visibility seen in China prior to 1970s.

Many genres have been lifted out of previous contexts and roles by the forces of musical globalization, generating new patterns of power, value, and emotion in the process (Stock 2004: 37); the *pipa* concerto is an example of this. The concerto became a new, popular genre of professional performance in Chinese instrumental music,³ including the first *pipa* concerto *Caoyuan Xiaojiemei* (草原小姐妹, *Little Sisters on the Grassland*) in China in 1977. Based on the definition of a traditional style, a *pipa* concerto is definitely a modern genre (Chinese–Western fusion) in contemporary performance. As Winzenburg (2017: 194) analyzed the significance of these Chinese–Western fusion concertos,⁴ it highlights the soloist, develops and displays virtuosity, and develops a metaphorical dialog between soloists and orchestras. The conscious and century-long efforts at national empowerment tied to group identity have resulted in the rapid development of the fusion concerto (ibid. 2017: 195). Further, Winzenburg analyzed these fusion concertos based on timber (outside qualities from Chinese instruments and inside qualities from the orchestra) (ibid. 2017: 190)—with these outside qualities offering a space to execute traditional characteristics in *pipa* music, specifically utilized by Wu Man to “inform how cross-cultural elements metaphorically reshape notions of the Western concerto in Chinese-Western fusion concertos” (ibid.).

³ Winzenburg's statistics (2017: 195) shows the number of these Chinese-Western fusion concertos has increased from over 40 (1980-1989) to over 300 (1989-2010). In another statistic, the number of *pipa* concertos is more than half of the concertos for all plucked-string Chinese instruments (66 of 130) (2017: 198).

⁴ In his chapter, three instrumental concertos are discussed, including *pipa*, *erhu* (Chinese two-stringed fiddle) and *dizi* (transverse bamboo flute).

In Wu Man's *pipa* training at the Central Conservatory of Music, she received instruction in both five traditional schools and Western music. This training allows her to perform traditional styles, and the Western music education provides a tool for her to consider how to form a bridge between these two cultures, forming a foundation for her global journey (after 1990). Further to this, her experience with the Silk Road Ensemble offers more opportunities to communicate with other experts in non-Western traditions. From Wu Man's perspective, all the traditional styles are important and can be used to present traditional characteristics in contemporary performances. Further, a pentatonic melody with relevant bending skills and occasional *lun* (*tremolo*) is the core of traditional style in *pipa* music because this core is comparatively discernible in playing with other music cultures (Wu 2014). Thus, the discussion presented here explores how Wu Man applies traditional styles to her contemporary performances.

Wu Man has described significant events and performances in her career and the experiences she has had working with other international musicians and composers. From this, she shares her experience in how to promote traditional Chinese music in the music industry (Lo 2017). Some researchers have provided models to account for how local traditional music has reacted in a different culture, for example, through modification (Degh 1968–69, Nettl 1985: 3), reconstitution (Klymasz 1970), syncretism (Leary 1984), or a three-dimensional model (time–place–metaphor) (Rice 2003). However, researchers are yet to investigate how an individual performer, such as Wu Man, has interpreted and translated a traditional Chinese instrument, such as the *pipa*, in its journey toward global popularity and recognition. This article enables an understanding of what an individual musician has seen to be the essential elements of a successful global *pipa* performance. Wu Man moved to America in 1990 and became a diasporic *pipa* musician. To note, the definition of contemporary performance in this article indicates all of the performances after 1990 in various genres by Wu Man. Wu Man's case reveals “a reconsideration of the tenets of the tradition itself while facing Westernization” (Stock 2004: 31); specifically, she discusses how to demonstrate and interpret the traditional music style of the *pipa* in this modern genre, contributing to a successful premiere of a *pipa* concerto globally. Additionally, her advice could be utilized as a case study in setting up a theoretical model to examine how a traditional instrument imposes its traditional style in a form of a concerto in globalization.

MAIN DISCUSSION

In contrast to the idea that the modernization of playing styles has unleashed the expressive potential of the *pipa*, this paper suggests that traditional styles are essential to the successful premiere of *pipa* concertos globally through the individual case study of Wu Man. Wu Man (2014) stated:

“Many *pipa* musicians prefer the premiere of a *pipa* concerto to demonstrate their virtuosic playing skills and expressive abilities on the *pipa*. However, it is necessary to consider two key variables in a successful premiere: one is the comprehension of the *pipa* music by a composer and the other is the abilities of the *pipa* musician. (Wu Man, 2014)”⁵

As a successful *pipa* musician who has made significant contributions to the evolution and dissemination of *pipa* music globally, Wu Man believes that there are two prerequisites to successful interpretation in a *pipa* concerto: a good understanding of *pipa* music by a composer and the abilities of a *pipa* musician. In her criteria of success, it would be a performance that is played more than once and one in which she can present traditional styles within it. Considering Wu Man's success in promoting *pipa* to a broader audience, these suggestions should encourage composers and musicians to reconsider the value of traditional music style in *pipa*.

⁵ I conducted three interviews with Wu Man in 2014: the first is in the coffee bar at her hotel, the second is backstage after her performance in Taipei and the third is online via Skype. All the conversations are in Chinese, which I have translated and included excerpts throughout this paper. All figures are re-used with permission of the originator.

A COMPOSER'S UNDERSTANDING OF TRADITIONAL STYLE IN PIPA MUSIC

One of the significant traditional music characteristics in *pipa* is a pentatonic melody with a relevant bending skill for the left hand. For this to be performed, the understanding of the *pipa* by a composer is required. Wu Man (2014) commented:

“I found that during a premiere, people always focus on the interpretation by a pipa musician rather than on the newly composed piece by a composer. However, a good understanding of traditional style in pipa music plays an important role in a successful premiere (Wu Man, 2014)”.

According to Wu Man, a few contemporary composers are able to comprehend the full range of musical styles and playing skills available to the *pipa*, with Zhao Jiping being one of them. He has won numerous accolades at home and abroad—in China he has received the Golden Rooster Award for Best Music in films twice, the Golden Eagle Award for Best Music in television four times, and both the Outstanding Music and Remarkable Contribution awards at the Flying Apsaras Awards for television; in France, he has received the award for Best Music at the Festival of 3 Continents.⁶ Because of Zhao Jiping's familiarity with writing music for Chinese films, Wu Man believes that Zhao is skilled in expressing the musical styles of Chinese traditional instruments in his scores. From her viewpoint, Zhao's music can highlight the key styles of Chinese music, in particular the variegated timbers of traditional instruments produced through a wide array of playing techniques. When Wu Man listens to or plays Zhao's compositions, it is easy for her to apply the traditional pipa skills to the melodic line as his is replete with Chinese musical characteristics, such as the pentatonic scale. Thus, when Wu Man was given the chance to invite a composer to customise a pipa concerto for her, she requested the Sydney Symphony Orchestra to commission Zhao to customise a pipa concerto for her and the orchestra. Wu Man (2014) said that both her familiarity with the tune in the new pipa concerto and her recollections of childhood inspire her to apply all the traditional skills in pipa to represent the significant and discernible musical styles in the jiangnan area.

Take, for example, Zhao Jiping's customisation of Pipa Concerto No. 2. It illustrates a good understanding of traditional style in pipa music. The first theme is from a local pentatonic tune in jiangnan area, and the second theme is the music style from tanci (彈詞, a genre in a form of the storyteller). In tanci, the pipa is an important instrument for embellishing the skeletal melody, smoothening the contour line. The main reason for the pipa's importance here is twofold: first, the pipa is versatile in executing a pentatonic melodic line through frequent bending with occasional lun (輪, a tremolo skill in pipa); then further, the main musical texture of a pipa is skeletal melody, allowing for ornamental improvisation on the part of the musician. For instance, in Music Example 1,⁷ it is clear that the first bar is an original melodic line without bending skills or lun and the second bar is the same phrase with a bending skill ($b^1 - d^2$) and a stylish lun notated on the third beat, enabling the appearance of the main stylistic expression of pipa music (for articulations, see Table 1). Thus, in Music Example 1, the first bar reveals one important dimension of the traditional music characteristics found in Chinese music—the pentatonic scale, while the second bar demonstrates traditional pipa expressivity through the playing skills, in this instance, adding more ornamental notes.



Figure 1a: A tune without bending and lun (bar 1) and a tune with bending and occasional lun (bar 2).

⁶ <http://www.hkco.org/en/Other-Members/Zhao-Jiping.html>, last accessed on 15th January, 2020.

⁷ The figures summarize traditional pieces, demonstrated by Wu Man in an interview in 2014.




Articulation		Description
\		<i>Tan</i> : forefinger flicks outward from right to left.
/		<i>Tiao</i> : thumb plucks the string from left to right.
		<i>Lun (tremolo)</i> : the forefinger, middle finger, ring finger, and last finger flick outward from right to left in order, and the thumb picks the string from left to right. This is a basic cycle of a <i>lun</i> .
		<i>Ban lun (semi-tremolo)</i> : the forefinger, middle finger, ring finger, and last finger flick outward from right to left in order to form a cycle.
◦		<i>Fan yin</i> : harmonics. Left finger rests slightly on the string, while the right fingers pluck the string to produce sound.
		Bending skills: there are many bending skills, and a player would decide which one is suitable for various conditions. Two main skills are: <i>Tui</i> : left finger pressing the string pushes inward along a fret to raise the sound that the string produces. <i>La</i> : left finger pressing the string pulls outward along a fret to raise the sound that the string produces. Right hand techniques must be stated with this left-hand technique; otherwise, empty sounds will be produced.

Figure 1b: A short list of *pipa* articulations.

Within this *pipa* concerto by Zhao Jiping, Wu Man can utilize her interpretational ability to fully express the music. For instance, when Wu Man read the score for the first time, she found that Zhao composed a key melody that was included as a repetition through many sections of the concerto. In this repeated melody, the score allows for maximum flexibility of expression for the *pipa* player. As Zhao is very conversant with the *pipa* in a traditional Chinese style, he merely wrote down a skeletal melody, arranging relevant skills while allowing the *pipa* player to apply appropriate skills when interpreting the score (Wu 2014). The themes written by Zhao are in the styles of *jiangnan* area and *tanci*, a style characterized by repetition with improvisation. Thus, Wu Man (2014) noted that when she reads Zhao's scores, she can see this stylistic characteristic and can then apply the suitable skills and improvisation to the melody and its repetitions to execute the form. This example reveals the importance of a composer's knowledge of the solo instrument in terms of both musical styles and expressive skills. How she applied this will be explained further in Music Examples 12 and 13. It is the composer's aptitude with the *pipa* when writing the music that allows the solo instrument to express its own particular musical style and potential thoroughly in a premiere performance.

The following examples demonstrate another situation, one in which Wu Man interpreted the compositions using a less traditional *pipa* style. In Lou Harrison's *Pipa Concerto*, the melody is not presented in a traditional *pipa* style, but instead in a skeletal form. Wu Man (2014) noted that when she read the score for the first time, the skeletal form allowed her to think more intensively about where to execute more traditional skills to interpret the composition. If all the music is fixed, traditional expression is limited. In Music Example 2, the first melody (bar 1) is similar to a pentatonic scale and the second melody (bar 2 and 3) is not pentatonic. The skeletal melody allows her to assert with suitable bending ($f^1 - g^1$ and $b - d^1$) and *lun* in executing a traditional style.



Figure 2: An excerpt of phrases in Wu Man’s interpretation of *Pipa Concerto* by Lou Harrison.

The *Ghost Opera* by Tan Dun is another example. The melody written by him is still a traditional melody for the *pipa* (bending, *#f* - *a*′) (see Music Example 3), although Tan Dun demands a performing style that is quite innovative, requiring singing and drama performance on top of the traditional Chinese style melodic performance (Wu Man, 2014).



Figure 3: A phrase in Wu Man’s interpretation of *Ghost Opera* by Tan Dun.

The examples presented so far illustrate Wu Man’s assertion that the melody, in Chinese style or skeletal form, written by a composer, is the most important prerequisite for the successful premiere of a *pipa* concerto. With an appropriate score, a *pipa* player can make judgements in skill to express the traditional musical styles of *pipa* more thoroughly. This condition also highlights that the *pipa* is an instrument that is a perfect instrument for demonstrating the pentatonic and other heptatonic scales common to Chinese music genres.

The commission for a composition is thus also a key factor in a premiere’s success. Wu Man (2014) stated:

“In the past, I just performed without considering the commission process. After the international commission model was created by different symphony orchestras in 2014, I realised that the way of commissioning a composition could potentially increase the success of the performance after the premiere” (Wu Man, 2014).

Pipa Concerto No. 2 by Zhao Jiping is the first *pipa* concerto commissioned by international organizations; it was funded by different symphony orchestras from Australia, America, and China. Because the Sydney Symphony Orchestra spent more money on the commission than any other orchestra, they acquired the right to premiere *Pipa Concerto No. 2*. After the premiere in Sydney in 2014, other orchestras were able to perform the piece. The advantage of this international model is that the composition can be premiered many times, compared with the premieres of other *pipa* concertos. This international commissioning of a composition ensures the piece premieres globally, rather than only once. This reveals another aspect of Wu Man’s criterion for success—more performances after the premiere.

There are two main possibilities for the failure of a *pipa* concerto: one is from the musical style and the other is the instrumentation between the solo instrument (*pipa*) and the orchestra. Wu Man (2014) stated:

“I have seen numerous newly composed *pipa* pieces, and many of these are ineffective to execute the traditional style in *pipa* music. Sometimes they treat *pipa* as a banjo or guitar, or consider the *pipa* to be part of the orchestra. I can still perform these styles on the *pipa*; however, I do not think the essential style of traditional *pipa* music can be presented fully” (Wu Man, 2014).

These unsuccessful *pipa* concertos cannot be named and disseminated officially because they were usually eliminated during the rehearsals. First, the music style—*pipa* concertos written by composers who do not comprehend the musical styles—or the range of skills on offer with the *pipa* often are not played after their premieres. In a composition for the *pipa*, a stylistic melody with relevant bending skills is a more obvious musical characteristic that determines the success of a concerto in presenting

pipa tradition, rather than harmony progression, broken chords, dissonant intervals, too many high-speed notes, or atonal noise. These musical characteristics can be a part of the pipa concerto experimentally; however, the proportion of these in a composition should be reduced to the capacity of sound effects rather than be the key style of the composition. Wu Man (2014) commented that when a composition is replete with musical expressions external to the traditional pipa, the composition could be treated as an experimental piece, with the expectation that it will be received in the same way. In many cases of more experimental pipa concertos, the premiere is also the final performance and one of the main reasons for this is the failure in comprehension about the expressive strengths and potentialities of the pipa.

Some pipa musicians and scholars would argue that the sound effect created by dissonant intervals is part of the traditional style in pipa music. However, Wu Man (2014) states the sound effect is part of tradition, rather than a dominant style. In her experiences, some composers overemphasize the sound effect by using dissonant intervals and broken chords. The writing of dissonant sound could come from either traditional pipa music or the Western classical music tradition. On one hand, some sound effects in traditional pipa music are played to establish different atmospheres, such as the screaming sound in *Ambush from All Sides* (Figure 4 top); the sound of traditional drums, gong, and cymbal in *Dragon Boat* (Figure 4 middle); or the sound of birds singing in *Wild Geese Landing on the Sandy Beach* (Music Example 4 bottom). On the other hand, the concept of harmony is not the main component in pipa music, so such dissonant sounds are not created to fulfil the demand for it. Dissonant sounds as harmony and the use of broken chords show the influence of Western classical music in contemporary pipa concertos (Figure 5). Consequently, these are used in pipa concertos. With the influence of modern music, the whole-tone scale has been adapted into some pipa concertos, such as in *Qinsepuo* (琴瑟破) (Figure 6). Thus, Wu Man (2014) addressed that when a composer emphasises these sound effects in a pipa concerto, it could be a pipa performance exploring possibilities in contemporary performances; however, the dominant traditional style could not be presented.



Figure 4: Screaming (top), gong and cymbal (middle), and birds singing (bottom)⁸.

⁸ Summarised from three traditional pieces on Pipa Quji (A Collection of Pipa Compositions) (Li 1998).



Figure 5: The application of broken chords in a pipa concerto (*Jingzhong Wumu*, 精忠武穆) by Zhu Yusong.



Figure 6: The application of the whole-tone scale in a pipa concerto (*Qinsepuo*, 琴瑟破) by Jin Xiang.

As stated, the other possibility for failure results from the instrumentation. Wu Man (2014) explained:

“Many composers treat the orchestra as a whole, and consider the *pipa* as part of the orchestra rather than as a solo instrument in a *pipa* concerto. Many composers pay more attention to the complexity of the orchestra, and the solo instrument becomes an accompaniment in the orchestra. In this situation, the melody is usually played by the orchestra and the *pipa* musician is executing the sound effects of dissonant intervals or broken chords. Also, sometimes the solo *pipa* and the orchestra are arranged to play the same melody spontaneously, and the sound of *pipa* cannot be heard clearly. Under this circumstance, a *pipa* player cannot express the stylistic characteristic of the *pipa* because the composer has not focused on the expression of the *pipa* in a concerto. Rather, the piece is a successful symphony with occasional *pipa* solo phrases” (Wu Man, 2014).

The texture in a *pipa* concerto (*Sizhu Gongche*, 絲竹工尺) by Chung Yuikwong, premiered by Tang Liangxin in 2014, is an illustrative example to support Wu Man’s point in the successful application of tradition in the instrumentation of *pipa* music. The main texture is heterophony, with occasional polyphony; Music Example 7 presents the heterophony. Heterophony is the main texture of the genre in jiangnan area, China, and the *pipa* is an important instrument here because of its improvisational capacity to play more notes as embellishment, like through the use of *jiahua*-adding flowers (Witzleben 1995). In Music Example 7, the tune in the upper layer is for the *pipa* and the tune in the lower layer is for the *erhu* (Chinese two-stringed fiddle). From a comparison between these two layers, the variegated methods in improvisation and embellishment in this genre are revealed (Jiangnan Sizhu, 江南絲竹). In the first layer, a player inserts more notes in various rhythmic patterns by bending techniques or the application of occasional *lun*, compared to the melodic line in the second layer.



Figure 7: A comparison between the voices in heterophony (upper: *pipa*; lower: *erhu*) in the orchestra.

Music Example 8 demonstrates how a *pipa* and other instruments in the orchestra can interpret the main melody in different ways, thus forming the heterophonic texture in this concerto, including changes in rhythm and the adding of more notes.



Figure 8: A comparison between the *pipa* and the main orchestral line in heterophony (upper: *pipa*; lower: orchestra).

The structure of this piece is slightly different from other *pipa* concertos because it is arranged based on the traditional form of the genre (*Jiangnan Sizhu*), rather than in binary or sonata forms. As such, it is characterized by short phrases in a free tempo from the beginning, moving to a faster tempo, as well as changing time signatures from 4/4, 2/4, and 1/4 to reach a peak. Music Example 9 shows a phrase used as a transition to accelerate from one section to the next. This kind of arrangement in tempo is also a characteristic of this local genre.



Figure 9: A phrase in 2/4.

After the changes in time signature from 4/4 to 2/4 to 1/4, the tempo is faster than in previous sections. The music remains in a pentatonic style, allowing the demonstration of dexterity in the fingers of a *pipa* musician. See Music Example 10.



Figure 10: A phrase in 1/4.

Music Example 11 shows the ending phrase of the *pipa* in this *pipa* concerto; this is the common phrase in the Jiangnan Sizhu genre in terms of the rhythmic pattern, musical style, and the structure of the arrangement of the tempos (from slow to fast). The phrase in Music Example 11 is taken completely from the local genre, revealing an arrangement in a traditional style.



Figure 11: An ending phrase in Sizhu Gongche.

Wu Man (2014) defines the core of the traditional *pipa* music as a pentatonic melody with bending skills and occasional *lun*, another prerequisite of a successful premiere. However, it could be defined more widely. For instance, she addresses this point based on her experience in premiering *pipa* concertos, ignoring experience in other genres (for example, newly composed solo pieces). Taking the solo pieces into consideration, more traditional elements could be involved—such as inserting more notes in various rhythmic patterns in the repeating core melody and a flexible rhythm to control the phrase. Although Wu Man applied this skill to interpret the melody in a skeletal form, she did not emphasize it. Thus, if a composer applies these elements in a traditional solo piece, the composer’s understanding of the *pipa* music is still revealed. Most importantly, the prerequisite exists partly because of Wu Man’s global reputation as it could be seen to be mutually beneficial to increase the

fame and visibility from a marketing perspective. This is particularly important to note as most young musicians will not have the ability or privilege to encourage a well-known composer to acquire a deep understanding of traditional *pipa* music. Also, in the period of Wu Man's definition of traditional style, there were five major *pipa* schools, each presenting different ways to execute the bending skills and *lun*. Thus, her definition is limited to these; the scope could be wider and a composer with a deeper understanding of traditional *pipa* style would allow a *pipa* musician to execute more traditional styles.

Furthermore, as Deschênes comments, in the past 40 years or so, these recordings and performances of non-Western traditions have opened a wealth of musical discoveries for Western music lovers (Deschênes 2005: 3); the factor of the audience cannot be ignored in this case. The *pipa* concertos Wu Man premiered focus mainly on the Western audience, and they are more familiar with this music genre (concerto), compared to the traditional solo *pipa* music. In this situation, selecting discernible and unfamiliar music elements could be a good strategy to attract their attention. Also, in some cases, the *pipa* player would only be a performing executant and not a semicomposer/creator as well. In this case, a *pipa* player is showing an ideology that puts the creative musician above the more routine performer. Thus, a concerto is a bridge to connect *pipa* music to the audience outside China, and Wu Man's definition in traditional *pipa* music merely reflects the traditional style perceived by the Western audience in this genre (concerto). Her global reputation, hidden in the international commission, cannot be underestimated, and it could be considered as an effective way to share the economic aspect and increase the visibility of *pipa* globally.

ABILITIES OF A PIPA MUSICIAN

While a good understanding of the *pipa* by a composer is a prerequisite for the successful premiere of a *pipa* concerto, the ability of the *pipa* player is the other significant factor. Wu Man (2014) stated:

“The abilities of a *pipa* musician is the other crucial factor in a successful premiere. It is beneficial to have developed playing skills and styles because they enrich the expressive power in performing. However, I found many *pipa* musicians or students pay more attention to training in new skills, rather than the traditional ones. When I was a student, I also pursued the style that was fashionable at the time, and wanted something new to demonstrate I was the top student. After years of performances overseas, I gradually realised the traditional style, the origin of *pipa* music, is what differentiates it from other music cultures in the world. While enriching expressive power in performing with various skills and styles, the traditional skills and styles cannot be ignored” (Wu Man, 2014).

The second prerequisite depends on the interpretation ability of an experienced *pipa* player; Wu Man (2014) indicated that there are four important components of this. The first is being trained in, and mastering, full and excellent playing skills (especially traditional, but also adaptive, skills). The second is the ability to precisely identify the main style of a composition. Having strong abilities in these first two areas requires the accumulation of experience in numerous pieces as well as in performances in other music genres. The third component is the creativity of the *pipa* player, and the fourth is the ability to take on the leading role when playing.

MASTERY OF FULL AND EXCELLENT PLAYING SKILLS

The mastery of full and excellent playing skills is the fundamental factor that is required of a player of *pipa* music. As playing skills have developed and expanded in the last 100 years (Lu 2007a; Lu 2007b; Tian 2008; Wang 2008), both traditional and new skills are equally important in professional training. Working to enrich the expressive power and possibility of contemporary *pipa* performances, Wu Man (2014) argued that the traditional skills have been fundamental to the success of her numerous performances with excellent musicians across different genres. All the skills, including the bending technique, from traditional solo pieces should still be core to training. Other musical characteristics (such as harmony progression, broken chords, many high-speed notes, and atonal noise) can work to enrich contemporary performances; however, the best representative of music

characteristic for *pipa* is still its traditional style: a pentatonic melody with relevant bending skills and occasional *lun*. From the feedback of Western audiences to her performances, Wu Man (2014) has come to realize that the audience appreciates the distinct musical styles of the *pipa* more than its ability to execute other styles. This is significant as it shows that the *pipa* is appreciated globally as a Chinese instrument playing Chinese styles.

In the following discussion, I illustrate how Wu Man (2014) interpreted the score in a *pipa* concerto. In the *pipa* concerto by Zhao, there are two main phrases in Chinese style that characterize the whole piece. Music Example 12 shows the first main theme in the first section, played by the *pipa* and the orchestra repeatedly. This tune is a local tune from *jiangnan* area. The tune is in a pentatonic style; that is, the scale in this phrase is heptatonic; however, in this scale, five main notes (G-A-B-D-E) are more important than the other two decorative notes (C- \sharp F). This is usually considered the G-*zhi*-mode (the tonic is G, and the final note is D-*zhi*), a widespread mode in Chinese folk music.



Figure 12: The first main theme in *Pipa Concerto No.2* by Zhao Jiping, without interpretation.

Before the phrase is played by the orchestra, there is a solo phrase played by the *pipa*. Music Example 13 presents a transcription of the interpretation by Wu Man. Using a comparison between Music Examples 12 and 13, two interpretations have been made by Wu Man. The first one is a flexible tempo, and the second is the application of traditional stylistic combinations bending and *lun*. In Music Example 13, there are six *fermatas* to indicate the flexible tempo in these two phrases. Each of them was interpreted by Wu Man with both bending skills and skills in *glissando*. Among these, the first *fermata* with the bending skill ($b^1 - d^2$) is stylistically traditional *pipa* music. In the second bar, the first two beats show the combination of discernible traditional skills with *lun*, and this skill is used again in bars 4 and 6. Furthermore, a bending skill ($b^1 - d^2$) is applied in the third beat in bar 6 and a *glissando* ($\sharp f^1 - d^2$) is applied in the fourth beat, revealing a traditional music style in *pipa* (flexible tempo). At the end of this phrase (the first three beats in bar 8), an interval of one octave ($a - a^1$) is played on the *pipa* with open strings (the open strings of the *pipa* are A-d-e-a). Thus, through the analysis of the first main theme in this *pipa* concerto, composed by Zhao Jiping, and as it has been interpreted by Wu Man, it can be seen to be replete with traditional Chinese stylistics that characterize *pipa* music as distinct to other musical styles in the world.

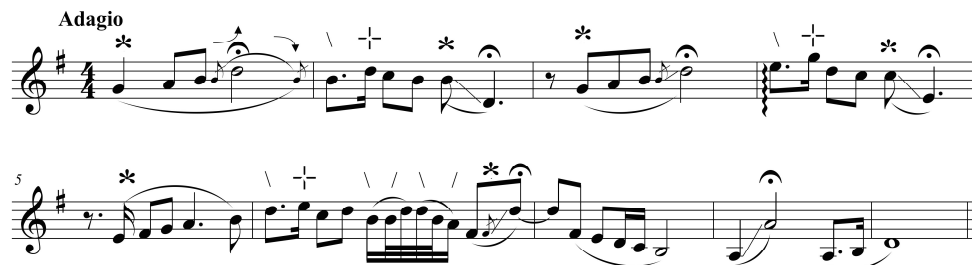


Figure 13: The first main theme in *Pipa Concerto No.2* by Zhao Jiping with interpretation by Wu Man.

Wu Man (2014) shared the feedback from her Western audience and the experience of receiving this. Although most of the audience admired the achievement of the *pipa* in performing, specifically in relation to the harmony progression, broken chord and use of many high-speed notes, they consider these music styles to be part of Western music culture, and any western instrument has demonstrated these skills for an extended period of time. When a *pipa* performer plays the expressive melody with relevant bending skills, in particular the traditional pieces, the audience would appreciate ebulliently

with a standing ovation; this was specifically seen after the premiere of the *pipa* concerto by Zhao Jiping in Sydney. When she played a traditional piece in *pipa* as an encore piece, the emotion of the audience reached a peak. After the first performance in Sydney, her albums in the traditional style were sold out at the Opera House immediately. Wu Man (2014) explained further:

“The traditional skills and music styles are at the core of *pipa* music from a global view. All the possibilities of *pipa* performances can be explored by anyone; however, the traditional compositions are the root and origin of *pipa* music. Thus, an excellent *pipa* player should acquire the ability to perform traditional pieces perfectly, to contrast with other music styles in the world. Also, most of the composers ignore that the bending skills play an important role in shaping the significant music style in *pipa*, and the training of the left hand in conservatories is less thorough than before. Consequently, the ability to create traditional compositions in *pipa* is the decisive factor to take an experienced *pipa* musician to a successful premiere of a *pipa* concerto” (Wu Man, 2014).

As mentioned, Wu Man’s definition of tradition in *pipa* music is not only from the traditional styles on ancient scores but also from her experiences with audiences outside of China. The *pipa* training in playing skills taught at conservatories has developed, although the style in traditional pieces is only part of training (Liu 2019). Also of note, the feedback from and expectation of the audiences inside and outside of China are different. The audience’s preference of style could be a decisive factor in their reception, with the full training in all playing skills (from traditional to contemporary) on *pipa* the foundation of the performance—a skilled *pipa* musician could utilize any of these skills in various situations. Wu Man’s advice indeed presents the situation for the Western audience in a form of concerto, responding to the expectation of the audience outside of China.

A PRECISE IDENTIFICATION OF THE MAIN STYLE

The second key ability of an experienced *pipa* performer is to be able to precisely recognize the main style of a composition. Wu Man (2014) stated:

“An excellent *pipa* musician, from my perspective, cannot merely focus on the *pipa* skills. Learning more traditional styles in Chinese music can help musicians to recognise the style precisely and assert relevant skills to present a unique style in *pipa*” (Wu Man, 2014).

Learning other music genres in Chinese traditional music is, interestingly, an essential factor that can assist a *pipa* player in developing better analytical potential for understanding the traditional music style of a *pipa* composition more deeply. This ability in recognizing a style contributes to a successful premiere of a *pipa* concerto with a traditional style. In Wu Man’s experiences, when she learns other musical styles more deeply and broadly, she can realize how and where to use the distinctive styles of the *pipa* to cooperate with others in producing new music. For example, when Wu Man read the score of *Ghost Opera* by Tan Dun, she was able to identify the musical style of the *pipa* as it was written in a traditional way; this identification contributed to her interpretation and then subsequent emphasis of the traditional part. Wu Man has a strong background training in the local genre (local tunes and *tanci*) as it saturated her childhood. In the *pipa* concerto by Zhao Jiping, this in-depth knowledge allowed for the identification of the music style, so she was able to decide where to apply relevant traditional skills in the composition. To present the soft and smooth intonation in musical contour, characteristic of the genre, she used appropriate bending skills to smoothen the first main theme. To increase musical diversity, she used traditional improvisational skills to change the rhythm. Without a deeper understanding of this traditional genre, she would not know how to present the style. These two examples from Wu Man reveal the importance of training in more traditional genres.

Figure 14 shows a part of a long phrase played continuously; this forms the main musical line in the Jiangnan Sizhu genre, especially when played with a slow tempo. When it comes to the scale, the pentatonic scale is quite obvious (D-E-[#]F-A-B). The *pipa* skills in Music Example 7 are identical to the ones used in Music Example 14, revealing the traditional style in the phrase. When a *pipa* player can understand this style through proper identification of the score, they can utilize a combination of these skills as well as its stylistic rhythmic patterns to play traditional *pipa* music discernibly in the piece.



Figure 14: A part of a long phrase in *Sizhu Gongche*.

More examples from Wu Man can explain the significance of stylistic identification. In 2003, she was invited to prepare a premiere of a *pipa* concerto, *Yang's Saga* (楊家將), composed by Chung Yiukwong. When she read the score, she realized that the music in the first movement was replete with the city music style and jazz-like styles. The focus of the piece was rhythm, so she paid special attention to accentuating the rhythm when she played the *pipa* (Music Example 15).



Figure 15: Phrases in the First Movement in *Yang's Saga*.

In the final movement, the composer was inspired by a traditional *pipa* piece, *Dragon Boat*, so she utilized some traditional skills to establish the ebullient atmosphere of the piece through the sound effects of cymbals, a drum and a *gong* (Music Example 16). In this final movement, Wu Man paid more attention to working cohesively with the orchestra, rather than worrying about the execution of her part.



Figure 16: Phrases in the Third Movement in *Yang's Saga*.

This process highlights how Wu Man (2014) identified the musical styles in the composition and how that influenced how she intended to perform before she practiced; this is crucial to a successful interpretation of a premiering *pipa* concerto. This precise recognition comes from the full comprehension of the traditional styles in *pipa*. If possible, Wu Man (2014) suggested exploring many other traditional styles, from a manifold of genres around the world, to contrast the uniqueness of the traditional *pipa* style. This ability can be acquired by both intensive and continuous studies, a process that will broaden the view of a *pipa* player and increase the accuracy of their interpretation when approaching a new *pipa* composition.

After her experience with the *pipa* around the world, Wu Man (2014) has advocated for the importance of developing these two abilities (mastery of traditional playing skills and in-depth knowledge of traditional genres in Chinese music) through repetition, practice, and exposure. An

experienced *pipa* performer should work to acquire these two abilities, ensuring they have the best capacity to interpret and execute a new *pipa* performance. In the process of broadening their view, a *pipa* player can learn how to communicate with others in music and to rethink the position of the *pipa* in the diversity of world music and sound, enriching performances.

Exploring more traditional genres in Chinese music and other music cultures could enrich *pipa* performances. However, Wu Man's reputation allows her to access other traditions easily. In many cases, entering the field and learning another tradition are not as easy as she suggests. Normally, one reliable informant and an extended period of time are necessary to understand another tradition at a mastery level. With her global reputation, she can access other traditions more easily because most people respect her global fame and benefit from it bilaterally, particularly in China and Taiwan. Thus, it must be stated that without a prestigious reputation, it is harder to acquire the chance to collaborate with another professional and thus learn. As more conservatories⁹ and departments in China gradually advocate for an education in world music, more could be done to cultivate this aspect to be more smooth for younger musicians; one *pipa* maestro, Liu Dehai, constantly encourages younger musicians to do fieldwork in *jiangnan* area to seek the spirit and root of *pipa* tradition.¹⁰ Further to this, the ability to add more notes to a skeletal form comes from extensive and deep learning in many traditional heterophonic genres, which is not emphasized by Wu Man. This is partly because she was saturated within a heterophonic music genre from her childhood, so the skills come naturally. Thus, her point could be modified as any Chinese heterophonic tradition involving *pipa* should be learnt by a *pipa* musician prior to others.

CREATIVITY OF A PIPA PLAYER

Creativity is the third element added to the successful interpretation by the player of a new *pipa* performance. Wu Man (2014) pointed out that creativity is a key factor for a *pipa* player in interpreting a new *pipa* piece, in addition to the first two abilities. Wu Man (2014) commented:

“The biggest advantage you have as a diasporic *pipa* musician is having more opportunities to collaborate with excellent musicians in different music cultures in the world. This both reveals the importance of the traditional style in *pipa* and broadens a *pipa* musician's global view to develop the creativity in the premiere” (Wu Man, 2014).

As Tan (2019: 4) commented, when the process of making something new is meaningful, creativity is constructive and therapeutic, and interaction is a key to creative performing. In Wu Man's case, ‘meaningful’ indicates the application of traditional *pipa* style, and ‘interaction’ has occurred through various encounters with other music genres. In a *pipa* concerto competition in 2012, *Yang's Saga* was the compulsory piece. Wu Man, as a member of the evaluation committee, found that all competitors interpreted the music in the same way. This phenomenon reveals the *pipa* players merely copy their teachers, without critically thinking about how to interpret the piece and develop their own individual and creative style in the performance. A successful interpretation depends on a precise identification of musical styles, virtuosic skills, and creative arrangement (Wu 2014).

When looking at Wu Man's experience, a creative arrangement from previous performances can bring fresh ideas to the audience, which comes from how deeply a *pipa* player understands the traditional *pipa* and how broadly they understand the music of the world; with this, the player can demonstrate their creativity in the rearrangement. Wu Man (2014) commented that in the first rehearsal in the Silk Road Ensemble, she just used what she had learned from her teachers. In the process, she found that other musicians in different cultures would emphasize some phrases or beats to diversify the performance and attract the audience's attention. The encouragements from the ensemble edify her to develop her own creativity in her *pipa* performance (Wu 2014).

This collision between two or more musical genres or instruments can encourage a *pipa* player to develop a personal interpretation in a composition, for example, the success of the Silk Road

⁹ http://www.ccom.edu.cn/xwyhd/xsjd/2019f/201911/t20191117_62735.html Last accessed on 19th February, 2020.

¹⁰ <https://kknews.cc/culture/z8qppq3.html> Last accessed on 12th February, 2020.

Ensemble. Wu Man (2014) pointed out from the beginning that the method of creativity is not mature; however, through experience, creativity could be cultivated through numerous collisions and experiments. According to Wu Man (2014), this process is very important for a pipa player who intends to participate in a successful premiere of a new pipa piece. In Silk Road Ensemble, Wu Man develops her creativity based on the inspirations from other music cultures and the traditional style, differentiating from other instruments. Deschênes argued that while learning something from another cultural context, you must give up, or at least put aside, something from your own cultural background in order to integrate something new (Deschênes 2005: 11). Wu Man (2014) emphasized that the traditional style in pipa music cannot be eliminated while developing creativity, coming back to the importance of tradition she highlighted in the previous point.

Wu Man (2014) addressed the benefit of participating in the Silk Road Ensemble, ignoring the benefits from other genres (for example, string quartet). Similar to other groups in different countries (for example, the Atlas Ensemble in Amsterdam), Silk Road Ensemble is a platform where many distinguished musicians with various musical backgrounds can collaborate intensively; this is because all the musicians are on different contracts (not full-time-based) and they have to compromise and collaborate heavily, thus eliminating some stylish elements and exaggerating the chosen style in playing. This still demonstrates the hegemony in a Western form to put variegated traditions in the same beat and key, with occasional flexibilities to demonstrate a specific instrument and attract the global audience. For instance, when they arrange the programme in Chinese-speaking society, they will arrange more compositions adapted from Chinese traditional music or more chances for Chinese instrumentalists to perform.

In terms of the diversity of music cultures around the globe, Silk Road Ensemble is definitely an effective platform to encounter more professionals intensively and increase the visibility of some non-Western instruments. A pipa musician could benefit from the diversity in this ensemble, cultivating the creativity in the performances. However, participating in other ensembles (or duets) could also be beneficial. For instance, Yang Jing (Switzerland) collaborates with an organist, Wolfgang Sieber,¹¹ who has a successful and creative reputation. Gao Hong (USA) collaborates with a reputable sitar musician, Shubhendra Rao,¹² and oud musician, Issam Rafea,¹³ focusing on improvisation. Liu Lu (Australia)¹⁴ and Cheng Yu (UK)¹⁵ work closely with the musicians from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in Sydney and School of Oriental and African Studies in London, respectively (Liu 2019). These collaborations all cultivate creativity in pipa performances, exemplifying that the Silk Road Ensemble is not the only option when looking to encounter more music cultures. However, this platform indeed increases the visibility of the instruments and musicians in this ensemble globally compared to other diasporic pipa musicians.

TAKING A LEADING ROLE

The fourth aspect in the success of a *pipa* concerto premiere is that the *pipa* player must take a leading role in the performance. Wu Man (2014) stated:

“In my experience, the leading role in the performance is usually ignored by many pipa musicians. In particular, when collaborating with Western musicians” (Wu Man, 2014).

In general, a *pipa* player follows the instructions of a conductor while interpreting a new piece. A conductor who is familiar with *pipa* music can evoke the distinctive styles of the *pipa* in a *pipa*

¹¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryZu9_wYqwU&list=RDryZu9_wYqwU&start_radio=1&t=238 Last accessed on 12th February, 2020.

¹² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryZu9_wYqwU&list=RDryZu9_wYqwU&start_radio=1, Last accessed on 12th February, 2020.

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3Zf7oUERQA> Last accessed on 12th February, 2020.

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqdlrE5j-TM> Last accessed on 12th February, 2020.

¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlCMUamYFck> Last accessed on 12th February, 2020.

concerto. Under this situation, a *pipa* player can discuss with the conductor how they can emphasize distinct expressions of the *pipa* in the interpretation. However, if a Western conductor and the orchestra are not adept with the *pipa*, a *pipa* player should take the lead to instruct the conductor and orchestra to follow the interpretation of a score in a flexible tempo.

In many cases, Wu Man took on this leading role in her performances. Taking the lead may be required throughout a whole performance. *Pipa Concerto No.2* remains a concerto in form. In addition to the solos and orchestral parts, Music Example 17 demonstrates this phenomenon. In this situation, the *pipa* player should be the leader. For example, the upper line is the tune played by the orchestra (mainly the strings), and the lower line is the tune played by the *pipa*, which is arranged in a canonic style. In the lower line, in the first note on the fourth beat in the first bar, Wu Man (2014) would use bending skills to produce the second note on the fourth beat; the strings in the orchestra should then apply the relevant skill in *glissando* ($b^1 - d^2$ in the first bar, $b^1 - d^1$ in the third bar, $c^2 - e^1$ in the fifth bar, $^{\#}f^1 - d^2$ in the seventh bar, and $a - a^1$ in the final bar) to imitate the bending style from *pipa*. Further, in the second note on the fourth beat in the lower line, she would hold on for a while to present the traditional style in a flexible time. When she signals the conductor, the strings will move to the next bar. This demonstrates how a *pipa* player takes on the leading role to instruct both the conductor and the orchestra to maintain consistency in the interpretation of the traditional style (flexible time and bending style).



Figure 17: A phrase played by the orchestra (upper voice) and a solo *pipa* (lower voice).

The second theme in *Pipa Concerto No.2* originates from the local *tanci* genre. To illustrate the differences of this theme from the previous theme, it is presented in a fast tempo, common to this genre. As a result, the *pipa* is extremely suitable for the performance of this theme, and therefore, the orchestra is instructed by Wu Man to imitate the *pipa* articulation (staccato) when the orchestra plays the same theme after the *pipa* in the concerto. In our interview, Wu Man comments that she utilized the traditional *pipa* skills without any modification when she practiced the concerto for the first time. She found this phrase so familiar because of the strong connection she has between the music in the concerto and her experience of musicality in *pipa* performance; however, the conductor and the orchestra do not have this familiarity, so she takes the leading role to instruct and demonstrate it to them in rehearsal. Music Example 18 demonstrates the second theme in this *pipa* concerto; it is presented by the *pipa* and the orchestra sequentially, forming an atmosphere of competition, consistent with interpretation in traditional *pipa* style. In this situation, a *pipa* player should be the leader to maintain the presentation in traditional style consistently.



Figure 18: The second theme in the pipa concerto by Zhao Jiping.

Figure 18 shows the whole second theme, and Music Example 19 presents another abbreviated variation played by the *pipa*. The atmosphere is completely different from the first theme because of a significant discrepancy in tempos. The first one is slow, and the second one is fast.



Figure 19: An abbreviation of the second theme.

This fourth skill, leading the orchestra, advocated for by Wu Man, might be more beneficial in the premieres occurring outside of China (those with an orchestra and audience with a lower understanding of *pipa* music). In many cases, a *pipa* musician should compromise to maintain a consistent rhythm with other instruments. Thus, with Wu Man's global reputation, she might have more opportunity to guide and supervise senior musicians, which allows her to acquire more experience maintaining consistency in a traditional *pipa* style and using more flexibility in performances.

In our interview, Wu Man (2014) stated that a successful performance depends on precise, creative, and reasonable interpretation. After the advent of the first *pipa* concerto in 1977, this genre has become globally popular, allowing for the wide demonstration of the excellent skills of a *pipa* player. After efforts made in exploring the possibilities of *pipa* music by many composers and players, *pipa* music has developed and expanded, adapted, and diversified. The form of a *pipa* concerto has changed from a symbol of innovation, Westernization, and professionalization to a widespread popular form of *pipa* performance. Nowadays, it is essential to think about what makes the *pipa* an instrument that is attractive to audiences from a global perspective (Wu 2014; Lo 2017).

A solo piece and a concerto are two different forms. In a concerto, a *pipa* player needs to cooperate with many musicians on the stage simultaneously. Since the *pipa* concerto is so widespread and accepted by professional musicians, amateurs, and audiences alike, understanding the main musical styles of the *pipa* is the main issue for all *pipa* players. If a *pipa* performer cannot express the attractive and touching music available to the *pipa* on the stage, the performance will be meaningless. A desirable interpretation of a new *pipa* piece comes from a *pipa* player with well-trained skills, the ability in recognizing a style derived from a global outlook, creativity, and experience in leading performances.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I examine two main elements—the composer and the performer—of a successful premiere in pipa music through the practical experience of a successful diasporic pipa musician—Wu Man. Within this, a composer's good understanding of the distinctive musical characteristics of the pipa is the first element necessary for the success of the premiere of a pipa concerto. The second element encapsulates four prominent abilities of a pipa player—their rigorous training in traditional

pipa, their ability to recognize music styles, their creativity, and their ability in taking on a leading role in pipa playing on stage.

Overall, the points highlighted by Wu Man offer personal and valuable information. However, Wu Man's suggestions reveal that she works predominantly within a circle where the concerto is a vehicle for her to execute her skills, namely, valuing the pieces that allow her to bring in traditional stylistic components, because they are her preference and she is in a position of unquestioned authority. Considering these two areas more deeply, the factors of the audience and her reputation are hidden in the interview. An understanding of these, drawn from the interview with Wu Man, is very valuable and useful for younger musicians when seeking careers on the global stage; however, the elements of audience and reputation should be evaluated. Nevertheless, within these two prerequisites (the comprehension of *pipa* music by a composer and the abilities of a *pipa* musician) and her continuous efforts since 1990, Wu Man has gained a global reputation and increased the visibility of the *pipa* in the global context. The experience of Wu Man is one among many diasporic *pipa* musicians, so her experiences may be different to other *pipa* musicians. Wu Man's experiences can be used to examine how a traditional instrument can present its unique musical styles in a global age.

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