



《音乐学文集》第五集（英文版）

DISCOURSE IN MUSIC

Collected Essays of the Musicology Department
Central Conservatory of Music

Edited by Zhang Boyu

中央音乐学院出版社
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Acknowledgement

Since the 1980s, the Musicology Department of the Central Conservatory of Music started to publish its proceedings including articles written by the musicology staff working in the Conservatory. As of 2006, four volumes had been published. This year (2010) is the 70th anniversary of the CCOM. As an offering for this occasion, the Musicology Department has edited the fifth volume of the proceedings. The department has existed for 55 years, with considerable achievements in teaching and research and has a strong influence both inside as well as outside China. Unfortunately, few of these achievements have been published in English, which has certainly limited the exchange between the research done here at CCOM and that of the West. We have edited this fifth volume in English not only based on the wishes of the staff but also to fulfill the academic need for the exchange of musicological thoughts between China and abroad. We know that this is a difficult task, and the English expressions will be insufficient for conveying the profound thoughts raised by the professors, but we still boldly tried. As a result of limitations on the length of the book, only short articles were chosen in order to include as many as possible. Therefore, articles included here can definitely not exposit the entire body of research done at the CCOM. Although 31 articles are included, this is only a small part, and some of the research by academic staff is not covered.

Among the 30 articles, 17 are translated by Zhao Qi and Crosso Moore, 9 by Yuanxiang Translation Company, and 4 by the authors themselves. Thanks to all who presented their articles. Thanks to Zhao Qi, Crosso and Yuanxiang Translation Company for the translations. Thanks to Russel, and Azalea Birch for the proof readings. Thanks to Victoria Sun for offering great help on the translation of German text. Thanks, finally, to the Xu Xiaping Musicology Fund and *Keyanchu* (the Office of the Music Research of the CCOM) in financing this project. Without all of this help, this volume in English of proceedings by Chinese scholars a first in Chinese musicology history, could never have been published!

Zhang Boyu

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Music Aesthetics and Appreciation

A Foreword to the book

“Interpretation of Tragic Content in Chopin’s Music”

Yu Runyang

The book will focus on the interpretation of the tragic content in Chopin’s music. Although tragic content is only one aspect of Chopin’s music, from my point of view it is the core question concerning research into Chopin’s music. Unfortunately scholars of Chopin have never taken into account this aspect of his music or elaborated upon it in any real sense in the past.

Certainly the content of Chopin’s music is very rich and pluralistic and sorrow cannot summarize the entire picture. There are elements present such as the composer’s clear-cut mental yearning for beautiful things, a passion and hunger aroused by love, fresh and harmonious feelings stimulated by nature and affectionate memories of times when he experienced simple country life and folk art in Poland, different impressions and experiences deriving from the extravagance of the upper-class cultural artistic salon and close contact with friends and relatives in his hometown etc. All these stimuli account for the colorful and rich content of his music but I think what engender the most deeply moving and the most powerful impact on people’s heart are his works which embrace tragic content to varying degrees. It is these works that display and establish the supreme values in Chopin’s music.

I have always held the idea that in artistic works of any era and any kind, what truly touches deeply and strongly stirs people’s hearts are not those elements that reveal happiness, joy and ease; on the contrary, the most stirring are those that simulate feelings like frustration, loneliness, depression, melancholy, sadness and misery, feelings that explode in uncontrollable ire. These feelings occur precisely when the valuable things in a person’s life are irrevocably destroyed. What I intend to discuss here, concerning the inherent element in Chopin’s related works, is just this tragic content.

“Sorrow” in Chopin’s music has a broad and extensive meaning and possesses disparate

characteristics: sadness, melancholy, loneliness and misery all fall into this category. When it evolves to a stronger, more profound level, I designate it “tragedy”. We can see that this tragedy in Chopin’s music is not solely present to pour out sadness and misery or to depict a sigh of resignation. It reveals emotions juxtaposed in contradictory and conflicting situations, often possessing a strong interior power characteristic of a certain struggle: I call this characteristic “dramatic”. This is the reason why I generalize in describing “sorrow” of a higher level implied in Chopin’s music, as “dramatic-tragedy”.

The existence of “dramatic-tragedy” in Chopin’s music has its far-reaching historical origins in European ideology and culture. In the West as early as the ancient Greek period, the practice and the theory of tragedy already had gained a glorious level of achievement. More especially after the mid-18th century this became so, when Baumgarten established “aesthetics” as a discipline and “sorrow” in artistic works was seen as “beauty” within this important category. Glancing back on the history of Western literature and art, tragedy has been seen to occupy a very important position, becoming almost a tradition in Western literature and art. Recently some scholars in China even came to conclude, after their research into the essential characteristics of European ideology and culture, that the essential characteristic could be generalized as “the spirit of tragedy”.¹ This spirit of tragedy in art more often than not touches the most essential and ultimate problems such as the circumstances and significance of a human being’s survival. In a certain sense, this metaphysical inquiry and reflection on life has approached a philosophical level in some profound artistic works. More often than not this is described by and elaborated upon by humanities scholars in the language-based arts such as literature, poetry and drama. Though a similar process of development and evolution in western music culture also exists, and still remains an interesting subject for further exploration, it is beyond the scope of this book.

Roughly speaking then, European music before Chopin’s time was already permeated with tragic elements. According to historical material during the ancient Greek period, in tragedies where Sophocles enquires about the fate of human beings, music played an important role and choral singing under the stage played an important part in heightening the tragic atmosphere. Unfortunately, the musical parts of such plays have almost completely fallen into oblivion, apart from the texts, so there is no way of studying and explaining their musical content. In the music of the Middle Ages and Renaissance periods, tragic themes such as that of Jesus could not be understood by the public and the walk towards Calvary still occupied an important position, reflecting the misery of common peoples’ lives. In upper class music of the Baroque period, be it Lully’s “Lyrical tragedy” or a Purcell opera full of tragic sentiment, though tragedy dominates the mainstream music of the time, the social implications of tragedy change. Works like Bach’s *St Matthew Passion* based on the Gospel of St. Matthew, represent the zenith of tragic sentiment in

music of that time. This last work actually embodies profound secular humanism in the guise of religious music, and reflects German misery, a consequence of various disastrous conditions around that period. During the Classical Age, dominated as it was by Rationalism in the Enlightenment, tragedy in music completely metamorphosed from the world of the Other to that of “humankind”; tragedy had gained a new human, social content. The tragic content in Beethoven’s music, regardless of whether it is the hero’s death in *Symphony No. 3* and *Egmont Overture*, or the hero’s persistent struggle facing a cruel fate in *Symphony No. 5*, all reveal the composer’s new experience and understanding the tragic fate of human existence. Music moves from the heroic through a glorious stage, to achieve a noble state in the end. All these stages are realized in violent contradictory conflicts within the music, and thus does musical dramatic-tragedy mature and come of age.

As European music enters into the Romantic period, we can suggest that dramatic-tragedy in music undergoes a new evolutionary phase. In the context of Romanticism, and parallel with mainstream trends in literature, poetry and the fine arts, throughout Europe musicians’ spiritual-emotional world changes simultaneously. The social ideals advocated in the Enlightenment and later in the French Revolution are by now *passé* and artists, cherishing a certain disillusionment about the new social conditions grow increasingly disenchanted with social reality. Musicians are no longer supported by social ideals seasoned with a Utopian essence and they thus experience the disharmony and a range of contradictions between social reality and themselves, something which in the past musicians had never experienced. In a society which is more and more vulgarized and commercialized, musicians engaged in their own personal emotional life and perhaps bearing cynical sentiment often feel inexplicably depressed, lonely and even miserable and sad. Under these socio-psychological circumstances the dramatic-tragedy embedded in their music comes to possess a radical element which European music in the past had never experienced. The elements of dramatic-tragedy inherent in the music of Schubert, Berlioz, up to Chopin etc. evolved during just this era under precisely such socio-psychological conditions.

As far as the profound essence of art is concerned Chopin’s music, in common with music with similar profound content in the Europe of his time, embodies the deepest implication of being human. But this implication of human nature is not abstract; in the case of Chopin’s music it is embodied concretely in the music’s sorrow, in its tragedy, all the way up to its dramatic-tragedy formed and driven by its own particular and potential socio-psychological reasons.

We should emphasize at this juncture that Chopin spent a carefree and very happy childhood in his hometown, Warsaw. As the child of a French-expatriate father and a Polish mother, bright and talented Chopin was under the cultural influence of France and Poland from his parents and he developed a solid music foundation nurtured by a musician of German origin, Elsner. When he graduated from the Warsaw Conservatory of Music where he had given brilliant performances,

Chopin was already a young master of the piano and of composition although the depth of his composition in that period did not reach the emotional state earlier designated as sorrow. He realized his ideal of pursuing study abroad at the age of 20; he stayed in Germany and Austria for almost one year on route before settling in Paris for good, a place where he spent 39 years of his prematurely shortened life in this the European cultural artistic center of that time.

After leaving his motherland, living in a place which was not his native Warsaw, Chopin's emotional world changed profoundly, which was something that was reflected in his compositions from that period. Whereas his early compositions written in Warsaw were full of enthusiasm and optimism, were carefree and full of youthful fantasy and yearning, these emotional expressions were now replaced by tragedy. Driven from within and caused by contradictions and conflict in his most profound and most mature works composed while living away from Warsaw, these elements produce a unique musical world. Let us now make an attempt to comprehend these elements: the social, the psychological and the personal in his life that constitute the tragic content in Chopin's music.

Firstly there was a great spiritual and emotional trauma caused by his motherland's downfall.

Chopin lived in his own country for 20 years from 1810 when he was born to 1830 when he left Poland, a country which had been carved up three times by European powers namely Russia, Prussia and Austria between 1772 and 1795. After Napoleon was defeated in 1813, Poland was carved up for the fourth time. Apart from some territories occupied by Prussia and Austria, Russia took over nine tenths of Polish territory, the Tsar becoming the ruler of the so called "Kingdom of Poland", quashing Polish national consciousness and implementing the "Russianization" of Polish culture. Chopin, being of commoner origin, was greatly influenced and encouraged by the Polish National Liberation Movement which aroused his strong patriotism and nationalist sentiments. He regarded Kosciuszko as the archetypical "national hero", a general who had led the armed uprising against the rule of Tsar in 1794; Chopin's father, as a French-expatriate living in Poland, almost died in the uprising. Young Chopin was greatly influenced by the Romantic ideology and was imbued with the strong national spirit and patriotic enthusiasm that had sprung up in Poland. He loved the poetry by his contemporary, the great Polish patriotic poet Mickiewicz, he greatly respected the famed scholar from the University of Warsaw, and a Literary Theorist of Romanticism, K. Brodziński, who claimed that the nationality of art is of the utmost importance holding that works lacking patriotic enthusiasm could not be regarded as lofty ones. Furthermore Chopin, residing abroad, witnessed the setbacks and the miserable defeat of the active Poland National Liberation Movement between 1830 and 1840 and with this defeat his hopes were dashed. It is not hard therefore to understand the misery and the trauma inflicted on Chopin in spirit and in emotion by all these events. This "Polish complex", especially when far away from his country and living in a foreign land, haunted Chopin deeply for the rest of his life.

Secondly there was the home sickness produced by an irresistible yearning for his motherland.

Home sickness, a product of longing for the motherland and yearning for the country of one's birth constitutes a unique intrinsic psychological complex for human beings. It has become a perpetual theme in literary artistic creation throughout human history and of course, Chopin's music is not exempt from this influence. But the emergence of this intrinsic emotion in human nature has its specific reasons and backgrounds. As far as Chopin is concerned, in his homesick melancholy there emerges something special that surpasses even the usual homesick complex, a yearning that a drifter holds for his lost motherland to which he can never return. As the German musician Schumann put it, "Fate also distinguished Chopin among all others by endowing him with an original and pronounced nationalism—that of Poland. And because this nationalism is in deep mourning, it attracts us all the more firmly to this thoughtful artist."² The homesickness born of irresistible yearning for his motherland constitutes an important source of tragic content in Chopin's music".

Thirdly solitude and melancholy caused by social circumstances and parting with relatives and friends in Warsaw.

Although Chopin couldn't do without the social salon gatherings of the upper class in Paris, he remained an outsider nevertheless after all in those rarified salons of Paris and his art could not be truly understood. Whenever he, this foreigner, went back to his residency, what he felt in his heart was a feeling of inexplicable solitude and loneliness; he was even described by his contemporary friend Liszt as a "thoroughly eccentric person". Chopin attached importance to affection among relatives and friends and in his 1000-page-long collected letters, published after his death, most of his letters are seen to have been addressed to his relatives in his home town and his friends who like him were living away from the motherland.

What really brought happiness and comfort to him was when he shared confidences in letters with relatives and friends in Warsaw or when he got together with his countrymen, expatriates like him. However, precisely because of these sentiments it can be understood just how sad he became when relatives and friends died. His sister died young, his father passed away far off in Warsaw, life-long friends like J. Matuszyński etc died relatively young; all these events made Chopin unhappy enough to muse that he had already been made a "true Polish orphan".

Fourthly, for artists who grow up and live in a romantic atmosphere, love no doubt plays an important and on-going part in their spiritual life and influences deeply their emotional world. Chopin is a case in point. He experienced love several times in his brief life, experiences which exerted influence to varying degrees on the composer's emotional life. As early as his Warsaw period he fell in love with a girl, C. Gladkowska, who was studying vocal music in the conservatory. Chopin demonstrated his strong passion in some of his pieces composed in that

Warsaw period, especially in the Larghetto of his *Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor, op. 21 II*. Because Chopin left Poland all too soon his love for C. Glądkowska did not come to fruition. Although he was sad about it, it did not leave much scar-tissue on his emotional life. In 1835 when Chopin went to Dresden in Germany from Paris, he became acquainted with a Polish girl of aristocratic origin, one M. Wodzińska; they fell in love with each other. But because of the differences in their family status, Chopin's proposal was in the end declined by her family and their chaste love ended abruptly. Chopin experienced the misery of losing love. It wasn't until many years later after Chopin died that people found among his belongings a bundle of well-kept letters bound with a piece of satin. These proved to be the love letters between C. Glądkowska and Chopin, and the satin still clearly bore Chopin's handwriting, "*Moja bieda*".³ However, the great emotional trauma in Chopin's life was brought about by his involvement with a French woman authoress, George Sand, whom he met in 1838. They experienced happiness in their eight years of living together but for many reasons they grew apart and their relationship came to an end. This proved a heavy blow for Chopin both spiritually and emotionally, perhaps even a fatal one; he never recovered from this blow and two years later he died distressfully as the result of a severe illness.

From the descriptions above we are patently aware that Chopin's brief life, his emotional life, and especially his internal world always takes on a tragic hue. In a certain sense we may even see Chopin as a tragic character. This is precisely why the most touching, the most stirring of his works are imbued with strong tragic implications. One writer has talked about the deepest meaning implied in the most heartfelt literary works: life can be interpreted by the reader in terms of the word "regret". Chopin's works are no exception. I mention in this book that when Chopin was talking about his music, he often employed the Polish word, "*żal*".

This is frequently used in Polish, though its meaning is polysemic, fertile and subtle; it is difficult to find an accurate and proper Chinese equivalent to express it. When native Poles use this word in its commonest sense it is, in my view, approximate to "regret" in equivalent Chinese terms. When Chopin employed the term "*żal*" to generalize his deepest musical message its meaning was far-reaching, no doubt with a certain sorrow implied. In the case of this Polish composer, the elements analyzed above such as the social, the psychological and the personal that constitute the tragic content in Chopin's music, imply precisely "regret" in a profound sense, don't they?

True music should be a real expression of one's life experience, acting as a spiritual-emotional mirror. In my view, if its deeper content is to be elaborated upon there are two procedures that one cannot circumvent. One procedure is to gain insight into the composer's particular situation in a variety of time frames; his social and cultural environments along with the course of his spiritual journey, especially his emotional experience. A good command of all of these can only be based on empirical evidence and materials. The other procedure is to penetrate into the musical text itself,

that is the music's structural elements in terms of sound, because any spiritual content can only be elaborated upon by gaining insight into the musical text. A lot of the book will be given over to references of first-hand related materials as well as to a detailed analysis of the music itself with the purpose of such elaboration.

I know very well that musical texts and linguistic texts are derived from entirely different semiotic systems. One can but conjecture how hard it is to elaborate the former by means of the latter; truly a mission impossible. However, when people are faced with musical works especially, they are not always content with a superficial perception of it but rather they wish to explore deeper connotations. If such connotations are to be expressed linguistically employing something which is totally different from the semiotic system of music, it seems we are faced with a paradox. Nevertheless, according to Susanne K. Langer's somorphism theory, in which it is argued that there exists a uniformity between the dynamism of the art of music and the dynamism of the emotion of the music recipient's, it may be possible to realize this elaboration after all, and it is worthwhile to undertake this academic exploration and attempt the elaboration.

Based on the concept mentioned above, we will now attempt to explore the subject of the book by examining Chopin's 24 pieces composed over different periods of his life.

Notes:

1. Refers to Zhou Chunsheng's *Tragic Spirit and the History of European Intellect and Culture*, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1999. The author summed up the characteristics of European intellect and culture as "tragic spirit", and divided the course of historical evolution into several historical stages. Namely they are, the formation of tragic spirit (6th century B. C. – 5th century B. C.), the evolution of tragic spirit in the Christian world (5th century to 14th century), the return of tragic spirit to the people in reality (14th century to 17th century), the criticism of tragic spirit by rational reflection (17th century to 19th century), followed by self-consciousness, investigation and exploration of tragic spirit (19th century and 20th century).
2. Robert Schumann: "*Chopin*" in *On Music and Musician*, translated by Paul Rosenfeld from German "*Schriften Über Musik und Musiker*". Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press 1983: 132. This article is based on the Chinese version translated by Chen Dengyi. Beijing: Music Publishing House, 1960, p.42.
3. Polish, meaning "my sorrow".

About the author: Yu Runyang is a senior professor and the former president of the Central Conservatory of Music. He specializes in Western music history and music aesthetics.

The Aesthetics of the Universal Union of Man and Nature: The Combination of Emotion and Setting as Influences upon Traditional Chinese Music

Wang Cizhao

I. The aesthetic values of the “contemplation of nature and the universal union of man and nature” (*Ziran Guanzhao, Wuwo Heyi*)

The Confucian ideal of the oneness of beauty and goodness basically orientates people’s aesthetic interests towards a self-cultivation of moral spirit; it is tinged with strong ethical and political color. Taoism, on the other hand, especially in that aesthetic expression of it represented by Zhuangzi, broke away from the value system of Confucianism. Laying aside social politics and morality, Taoism attempted to transcend contradictions between beauty and ugliness, virtue and evil, life and death, right and wrong etc, and constructed an aesthetic value system based on the “contemplation of nature” and the “universal union of man and nature”.

The Confucian “art-life” theory restricted the development of art in politics and morality. As a result, it came under criticism from the other schools of thought of the day. Especially in the pre-Qin period, Confucian ideology was under convergent attack from Mohism, Taoism as well as from the Legalists. Mohists and Legalists both treated art from the perspective of utility, either negating art entirely or setting it a political agenda, certainly denying its relatively independent aesthetic value. Only Taoism, through the rejection of Confucian benevolence and rites, turned its eyes to nature and hence stimulated an artistic revival. The aesthetics resulting from this turning back to nature had a long-lasting impact on traditional Chinese culture.

Li Zehou wrote in his book *The Path of Beauty* (2001) about change and transformation in terms of Confucian and Taoist concepts saying: “The permanence of the mountain and the river contrast with the ephemeral nature of grandiose man; man’s artifice pales in the presence of the harmony of nature; in an autumn garden the song and music of the *sheng* (mouth organ) are evanescent when compared with the rock and the spring” (Li 2001: 168). It is from such contrasting alternatives; man vs. nature, definite vs. indefinite, brief vs. perpetual that Taoism chooses to focus on nature and returns to the heart of nature, establishing as it does so the aesthetic value of the “contemplation of nature and the universal union of man and nature”.

Zhuangzi contributed greatly to the development of the Taoist aesthetic value of the “contemplation of nature and the universal union of man and nature”. Zhuangzi’s thinking was implicit in his descriptions of everything in heaven and on earth, and his evocations of the immensities of sea, heaven and earth rendered people miniscule and insignificant amid the grandeur of nature. Based on this concept, aesthetic pleasure only exists when people cease to be concerned about their paltry existence, forgetting feelings, worries, benefits, gains and losses, happiness and misfortune, allowing their insignificant selves to be integrated into “the grand beauty of heaven and earth”, which is in Zhuangzi’s point of view, “true beauty”, “pure beauty”. This not only eliminates Confucian aesthetic requirements for virtues but also removes the aesthetic pursuit of right or wrong. Zhuangzi asks that aesthetic subjects be intermingled with aesthetic objects naturally, resisting the desire for utility and by transcending worldliness, all things and I are one, a universal union of man and nature. The aesthetic value of the “contemplation of nature, and the universal union of man and nature” blazes the way for the development of art in China. Chinese literature, poetry, painting and music were all influenced by it after the Six Dynasties period, so that their motifs centre on nature, their works being deeply, lastingly, permeated with the conception of the “universal union of man and nature”.

The “universal union of man and nature” as an aesthetic value embodies the pursuit in art of “conveying emotion by means of the setting, the combining of emotion with setting”.

II. The artistic state of “conveying emotion by means of the setting, the combining of emotion with setting” (*Yuqing Yujing, Qingjing Xiangji*)

There is a saying in Chinese art: “Meaning is a far-reaching thing imbued with deep emotion. Natural scenery brings one peace of mind.” It implies a kind of artistic pursuit of a marriage between, rather than dissociation of, emotion from setting.

This aesthetic pursuit underlies the special nature of emotion and setting in traditional Chinese aesthetics. “Emotion” in Chinese art is never “lust”, referring as it does rather to transcendence towards “selfless emotion” or “emotion without self”. In terms of art performance it involves a clear dissociation from the emotion of “lust” or the idea of “utility”. The argument is that only emotion without self-involvement can resonate with the emotion of all things in the universe. Thus, the emotion of a human being is the emotion of all things, and vice versa.

In traditional Chinese art a “setting” is no mere popular vignette; it reflects the “wholeness” of nature by means of one scene and one thing. Precisely because of this, Chinese classical poetry and other works of art are not limited to the authentic and superficial description of objects but rather they convey emotion by means of the setting and take natural emotional expressionism as their goal. Su Dongpo once wrote: “Judge an image by its vividness and the judgment will be that of a child.”

There are also the old sayings: “Don’t read lessons into poetry”, and, “Don’t judge a painting by its vividness.” All these exemplify the spirit of Chinese art where emotion is emphasized. The “setting” must take “emotion” as the criterion and must be based on the “emotion”. It is only by “the combining of emotion and setting” that the true meaning of “setting” can be revealed.

The pursuit of Chinese art in terms of “emotion” and “setting” therefore is to gain a certain unity between people and things. In other words, a certain state of unity between “emotion” and “setting” is the target of artists and it is also the driving force in the development of Chinese art.

As a seminal aesthetic category “the unity of emotion and setting” has had a long history in China. As early as the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern dynasties, Zhong Rong proposed “depiction with full emotion” in his article “The Preface of Shipin” (*Shipin Xu*). In the Ming dynasty, Xie Zhen wrote in his book *Poetry Talks of Siming* (*Siming Shihua*): “Poetry is about emotion and scenery; one alone is not enough, and the two together do not conflict.”; he also wrote in that book that “poetry is a medium to describe emotion and scenery, the implied emotion is deep and long-lasting, the scenery described is meaningful and far-reaching” (Xie [Ming dynasty]: 150). Li Yu, a great playwright of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties said: “What we use to write poetry is nothing but emotion and scenery,” and “if the emotion is expressed fully, if the scenery is described clearly, the poetry is regarded as good”. Later, Wang Fuzhi commented on it in detail in *Poetry Talks of Jiang’s Family* (*Jiangzhai Shihua*), saying, “emotion and setting are different words, but they cannot be separated,” and “one who is good at writing will convey emotion through the setting, setting being filled with emotion.”; “setting stimulates emotion, emotion being part of that setting, so we can say that the setting is one with the emotion, the emotion is one with the setting”(Wang Fuzhi [Ming dynasty]: 150), hence the wise saying that there is “unity in emotion and setting”. Wang Guowei gave a detailed account of these aesthetic pursuits, the pursuits of “the unity of emotion and setting”; in his book *Human Words and Language*, he wrote, “Poetry takes the aesthetic state as the highest one; reaching that state implies having a unique quality, hence the existence of many well-known sayings”. What is this thing, “this aesthetic state?” Wang Guowei answered this question: “The aesthetic state does not refer to the setting only; happiness, anger, sadness and joy also belong to that state. So the poem which describes true scenery and true emotions is the one that has reached the aesthetic state; otherwise, it has not achieved that state”. Wang Guowei posited that the “aesthetic state” is in fact the blending of “setting” and “emotion”, the “unity of emotion and setting” (Wang Guowei [Qing and Republic] 198).

“The unity of emotion and setting” moves people to depict the power of nature with their thoughts and sentiments, so that from a philosophical standpoint, it is actually the ideology of “the oneness of heaven and man” embodied in artistic aesthetics.

This aesthetic concept is also embodied in music. Ji Kang’s well-known saying goes like this:

“I watch the swan fly away, I play my *qin* gladly and as my body sways with ease, my mind is touring the Tao” (Ji kang [Wei and Jin periods]: 12). Here, music is an expression of human contemplation and the experience of nature, and the nature of this experience is the unity of emotion and setting.

III. The aesthetics of the “universal union of man and nature, and the combination of emotion and setting” as two influences on traditional Chinese music (*Wuwo Tongyi, Qingjing Xiangji*)

1. Nature as the stimulus for a broad range of subjects in the composition of instrumental music

The aesthetic concept of the “universal union of man and nature and the combining of emotion with setting” comes mainly from the nature-stimulated music of Taoism, which is “heaven-music”. The theoretical basis of “heaven-music” is based on the ancient Chinese philosophical belief in the “oneness of heaven and man”. So, the concept of the “universal union of man and nature and the combining of emotion with setting” actually takes people, nature and “heaven” as a single entity in aesthetic contemplation.

Way back in history, Chinese ancients had already envisaged music as a way to express emotion. The book entitled *Records of Music (Yueji)* says so. Only by returning to the embrace of nature can so-called “emotion”, that is “human emotion” embody the aesthetic interests of the unity of man and nature in music. So, traditional Chinese music “flickers with natural light and image” (Wu 1987: 25).

In traditional Chinese instrumental music, the subjects are largely derived from mountains, waters, flowers and birds. This shows that ancient Chinese music never embraced the concept of “absolute music” as did Western music. It always took music as an art closely related to the objective world, this objective world being solely about the diversity of nature from a “heaven-music” viewpoint. It is no coincidence therefore that there are many musical pieces based on nature in traditional Chinese instrumental music, manifesting the aesthetic concept of the “universal union of man and nature and the combining of emotion with setting”.

The penchant for using nature as the subject is especially obvious in music for the *qin*. We can draw many examples from records, such as *Gaoshan (High Mountains)*, *Liushui (Flowing Streams)*, *Yangchun (Spring)*, *Baixue (Snow)*, *Youchun (Outing in Springtime)*, *Lushui (Blue Water)*, *Qiusi (Autumn Thoughts)*, *Youlan (Solitary Orchid)*, *Sanxia Liuquan (Flowing Streams at Three Gorges)*, *Qihong (Autumn Swan)*, *Biehe Chao (A Piece about Swan)*, *Shuixian Chao (A Piece about Narcissus)*, *Pingsha Luoyan (Wild Geese Landing on the Sandy Beach)*, *Xiaoxiang Shuiyun (Mist and Clouds Over Dongting Lake)*, *Meihua Sannong (Three Variations on the Plum Blossom Theme)*, etc. Almost all the pieces display the characteristics of emotion with setting and