

MUSICAL CHINOISERIE

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Abstract

Chinoiserie remains relatively unexplored in the context of music and is usually isolated as a mid-eighteenth-century phenomenon characterized by the use of decorative Chinese motifs and concepts in Western art, porcelain, furniture, and architecture. This thesis enriches possible readings of musical chinoiserie by exploring its relationship to the intense fashion for Chinese commodities, its correlation to particular social and political climates, and its connection to the eternal themes of the feminine and utopian pastoral. As a recurring and evolving phenomenon, chinoiserie has been manifested across the past three centuries in various genres and works central to Western music. The following chapters provide case studies which draw attention to particularly rich constellations of ideas about chinoiserie, and analyse the various ways that 'the West' has confronted, represented, and appropriated Chinese difference in music.

Chapter two examines the emergence of eighteenth-century European music theatre/ drama inspired by China and its interrelation with royalty and nobility, consumer goods, fashion, and aesthetic sensibility. Chapter three explores early twentieth-century French musical works by Debussy, De Falla, and Roussel, which are inspired by nostalgic and utopian Chinese landscapes. In chapter four, the music of Mahler, Puccini, and Stravinsky reveal alternative *fin de siècle* approaches to chinoiserie. Common themes include an increased interest in

authenticity; overt and subsumed Chinese elements; and the integration of chinoiserie into existing programmes. As a counterpoint to this, chapter five turns to popular music genres which directly responded to the social and political reality of Chinese immigration to America. The straightforward, formulaic, and market driven style of Tin Pan Alley songs provides the most explicit examples of musical chinoiserie, which upon examination reveal a variety of hidden beliefs, prejudices, aspirations and idealized visions of China. By no means are these chapters intended to offer a comprehensive survey of musical chinoiserie, but they provide case studies which demonstrate the ways in which a musical work can interact with a multiplicity of intellectual and emotional responses to the West's encounter with China during important social, political, and historical events.

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Chinoiserie: Western Images of China

Chinoiserie is the product of the Western fascination with China. Commonly isolated as a mid-eighteenth-century phenomenon, it is usually characterized as the use of decorative Chinese motifs and concepts in Western art, porcelain, furniture, and architecture. This limited definition describes the *taste* in decorative arts of that period rather than a wide ranging and complex phenomenon that began in the fourteenth century and which has continued in various manifestations ever since. Chinoiserie can be understood in four interrelated ways. Firstly, as a Western phenomenon, which Hugh Honour describes as 'the expression of the European vision of Cathay'; this vision of China not only represents Western thoughts about the Chinese, but also reveals the basic human instinct to define 'us' from 'them'.¹ Secondly, at its most basic level, chinoiserie is a decorative system that can be applied to a range of art forms – from paintings, blue and white ceramics, to architectural monuments such as the Trianon de Porcelaine, Drottningholm Palace, and Brighton Pavilion. It may also be understood in relation to more abstract art forms, such as music, through the manipulation of musical signifiers that, through learned

¹ Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 7-8.

cultural codes, evoke concepts associated with all manner of things 'Chinese'. Thirdly, this decorative system often evokes a visual or aural utopian notion of the Chinese pastoral. Finally, such works of art became fashionable and highly marketable commodities.

Chinoiserie remains relatively unexplored in the context of music, where it links a work to a fascinating, utopian, or fearsome China, and tends to depict inhabitants who are almost always set in an ancient and nostalgic Chinese landscape. This thesis aims to show how the phenomenon of musical chinoiserie has been embraced by composers, performers, and listeners, and considers what broader cultural work it carries out. This cultural work includes the ways in which a popular song, instrumental piece, or opera, reflects and shapes the multiplicity of intellectual and emotional responses to the West's encounter with China during important social, political, and historical events. The chapters in this thesis examine case studies drawn from the late seventeenth century to the early twentieth century, and analyse the various ways that the West has confronted, represented, and appropriated Chinese difference in music. The main focus is on Western art music, but the advent of popular music in the early twentieth century is also considered.

The China Tea Cup: Understanding Chinoiserie



Figure 1.1: Chinese porcelain cup. Made by Miles Mason. Lane Delph, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ca. 1810 (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 2662-1901).

My approach, revealing the wider implications and possibilities of chinoiserie is encapsulated by the china tea cup. Viewing this picture of a typical Lane Delph china tea cup, one first notices its design: intricate blue and white motifs and asymmetrical forms. Chinoiserie can be understood as a 'decorative style', and this is precisely what creates its sense of novelty, charm, exoticism, and aesthetic programme. On closer inspection, one notices the depiction of a supposed Chinese landscape with willow trees, pagodas, water streams and people; the china cup thus offers images of an idyllic, utopian pastoral. The result is a unique and recognisable Chinese style, with a distinctly aristocratic chic which stems from its association with being an expensive and desired commodity in high society.

Because the china cup was so unlike anything produced in Europe, it was initially regarded as a treasured object imbued with mythical qualities. As early as the Middle Ages, small quantities of porcelain began to trickle their way into Europe. Paintings of this period such as 'The Adoration of the Magi' (c.1490) by Andrea Mantegna reveal how the rarity and exoticism of such items as the china cup made it a fitting gift to embellish scenes of the Holy family or pagan gods (Fig.1.2). Naturally the preciousness of these items appealed to European royalty and nobility who could boast of owning such priceless rarities. Queen Mary II of England (1662-1694) had a dedicated chamber to safeguard her huge collection of chinoiserie artefacts; the Countess of Suffolk Henrietta Howard (c1688-1767) and Lady Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800) were also renowned for their extensive porcelain collections.² According to David Porter, 'unlike the taste for other stylish commodities of the time, a taste for things Chinese potentially occupied a dialectically charged position as at once both ancient and modern, and justified a claim to status on the grounds of both their fashionable newness and unimpeachable pedigree'.³ The appeal of such objects as the china cup was therefore its simultaneous claim to modern fashion and its association with Chinese antiquity.

² David Beevers, ed., *Chinese Whispers: Chinoiserie in Britain 1650-1930* (Brighton: The Royal Pavilion and Museums, 2008), 20.

³ David Porter, 'Monstrous Beauty: Eighteenth Century Fashion and the Chinese Taste', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35/3 (2002): 395-411 [399].



Figure 1.2: Detail from *The Adoration of the Magi*. By Andrea Mantegna, c.1490. Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie* (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), 25.

This precious and mythical china cup also encapsulated the dream of utopia. The Chinese styled willow pattern design represented European interpretations of idyllic Chinese landscapes, which were transformed into fanciful and familiar scenes for domestic consumption. For Michel Foucault, the word 'China' alone constituted for the West a vast reservoir of utopias:

In our dream world, is not China precisely this privileged site of space? In our traditional imagery, the Chinese culture is the most meticulous, the most rigidly ordered, the one most deaf to temporal events, most attached to the pure delineation of space; we think of it as a civilization of dikes and dams beneath the

eternal face of the sky; we see it, spread and frozen, over the entire surface of a continent surrounded by walls.⁴

This quotation captures the representation of an ideological and utopian landscape which was made material by the china cup. Owning the china cup offered a small window onto a China that was understood to be an enchanted place where the inhabitants of Cathay passed their time gently wafting to and fro on swings, or reclining in willow cabins to watch their cormorants retrieving goldfish from a nearby stream. The landscape had craggy snow-capped mountains and plains sprinkled with dreaming pagodas intersected by meandering rivers.⁵ These philosophical or idealistic requirements of a utopian alternative resulted in China becoming the image of the desired ultimate Other.

Considering its longevity as a style, the term chinoiserie, is of surprisingly recent coinage. French dictionaries date its usage only from 1839, some fifty years or more after the craze was at its peak in that country. The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites its earliest appearance in *Harpers* magazine (1883) and the *Pall Mall Gazette* (1884), when it meant 'Chinese conduct' or, simply a 'notion' of China.⁶ Furthermore, the very etymology of the word 'China' suggests how the exotic, the

⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1973), xix.

⁵ Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 6-7.

⁶ 'Chinoiserie, n'. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. 30 April 2011 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/>>.

domestic, and the history of empire became entwined.⁷ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, through synecdochal association, 'China' originally was understood to be the commodity which came from China. Throughout India, and the East generally, the Persian name *chīnī* was widely diffused in the sense of 'porcelain' or 'china-ware'. From India this form and use of the word made its way to seventeenth-century England.⁸ As Beth Kowaleski-Wallace asserts 'the history of the word "china" encapsulates the ancient trading routes, as well as their subsequent opening to the west. It carries with it a history of trade and commerce'.⁹ Indeed, by the mid-seventeenth century, Europe was completely enraptured by all things Chinese, the growing vogue for chinoiserie indicated by the steady increase in the prices charged for such objects as the china cup.

Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Portugal and Spain held the monopoly of trade on China, and Chinese objects therefore reached other European countries by way of their ships. By the turn of the seventeenth century, Dutch, English, and Danish ships began to infiltrate their trade, followed later by French, Swedish, and Prussian ships. The first recorded instance of great quantities arriving in northern Europe was in 1604, when the Dutch auctioned the contents of the

⁷ Beth Kowaleski-Wallace, 'Women, China, and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29/2 (1995), 153-167 [157].

⁸ 'China, *n* and *adj*'. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. 30 April 2011 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/>>.

⁹ Beth Kowaleski-Wallace, 'Women, China, and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29/2 (1995), 157.

Portuguese carrack *Catharina*, which they had captured off Malaya: among the cargo were some 100,000 pieces of porcelain.¹⁰ Porcelain artefacts like the china cup were in great demand in Europe; in 1665 Nieuhoff's firsthand account of the China trade was captured in more than a hundred engravings and published in Dutch.¹¹ The entire publication was of vital importance to the European reconstruction of China. The book, grandly titled *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces to the Grand Tartar Chan Emperor of China*, but commonly known as the *Travels*, became the staple of the endlessly popular compilations of travels in China that were published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹² Figure 1.3 shows the interior of a warehouse with an abundance of porcelain objects which were imported by Dutch East India Companies to the avid collectors of Europe.

¹⁰ Oliver Impey, *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 46.

¹¹ Nieuhoff's account was also translated into Latin, French, and English; an edition of 1669 had the original plates copied by the renowned artist Wenceslaus Hollar.

¹² Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie* (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), 20.



Figure 1.3: Interior of a warehouse for the East India market from Nieuhoff's Travels (1665). Oliver Impey, *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 47.

It was not until the end of the seventeenth century that English, Dutch, and other European nations were officially allowed to trade at Canton and a few other ports.¹³ Such restrictions meant that merchandise like the china cup was limited and therefore highly prized. Consequently, European craftsmen were employed to create imitations of quaint scenes found on cabinets, porcelain vessels and embroideries imported from China to satisfy the high demand. With their own distinctive style, engravers such as Mathias Beitler (a Dutchman) and Valentin Sezunius (a Dane) began to produce their own versions of oriental designs with minute engravings of trees, bridges, little Chinamen, long-tailed birds, wispy trees, and rickety buildings on stilts. This was followed by similar

¹³ Oliver Impey, *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 44.

designs on household objects and paintings by renowned artists such as Antoine Watteau (1684-1721), Francis Boucher (1703-1770), and Jean Pillement (1728-1808). Without necessarily taking account of their symbolic significance, European craftsmen adopted Chinese motifs in order to replicate, and also create something new.

Besides being a treasured and desired ornament, the china cup had a function: it was used to drink tea. According to Hugh Honour it was tea that brought China into the very heart of the European, and, more particularly, the English home.¹⁴ Tea consumption was so widespread that annual East India Company imports to England increased from 214,000 pounds in 1713 to 32 million pounds in 1813.¹⁵ The impedimenta connected with tea drinking – kettles, pots, caddies, and china-cups were strongly influenced by Chinese patterns, and ownership of such items enabled one to absorb a particular Chinese exotic into the domestic home. Lorna Weatherhill writes that 'china...changed from being unknown in 1675 to being a normal part of household equipment in 1715'.¹⁶ Ownership was a measure of one's taste and fashion sense, and added a touch of style and sophistication to daily living, whilst encouraging engaging in an imaginary, exotic and utopian paradise. Porter suggests that 'the purchase and possession of

¹⁴ Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 52.

¹⁵ Anthony Farrington, *Trading Places: The East India Company and Asia 1600-1834* (London: The British Library, 2002), 94.

¹⁶ Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 31.

exotic commodities often partake of the pride of the empire' and that ownership conferred mastery to eighteenth-century Britains who revelled in the spectacle, enacted daily at their docks and warehouses, of distant lands eagerly offering up their riches at the beck and call of the London marketplace.¹⁷

The rituals of tea drinking were seen as an essentially feminine activity and artefacts of Chinese inspiration or origin were frequently associated with gossiping women and female superficiality.¹⁸ According to Kowaleski,

The very utility of China as a trope for femininity seems to have stemmed from its property as surface. China offered a blank, textual surface upon which culture could write its notions of gender. At the same time, however, China inevitably reminds us of the fictile process through which gender is constructed. As a substance, porcelain carries no significance until it has been shaped or moulded, painted and fired, affixed with a price.¹⁹

The very fragility of such objects as the china cup were arguably emblematic of a transient visual appeal without depth or substance; for many the characteristic feature of Chinese taste was an exaggerated

¹⁷ David Porter, 'Monstrous Beauty: Eighteenth Century Fashion and the Chinese Taste', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35/3 (2002): 400.

¹⁸ David Beevers, ed., *Chinese Whispers: Chinoiserie in Britain 1650-1930* (Brighton: The Royal Pavilion and Museums, 2008), 19.

¹⁹ Beth Kowaleski-Wallace, 'Women, China, and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29/2 (1995), 154.

concern for superficial prettiness. Throughout history, chinoiserie objects like the china cup have therefore been on the boundaries between cultivated and vulgar taste, and fine art and the fripperies of fashion. Despite the disdain chinoiserie objects attracted from some members of society, the extraordinary appeal and popularity of chinoiserie remained.

The china cup encapsulates the topics and concepts that are specific to chinoiserie and crucial to a fuller appreciation of its influence on music. Thriving on difference, looking toward and beyond the edges of Western knowledge, the china cup can be viewed as a Western attempt to flirt with expectations. While the necessary strangeness of the blue and white Chinese motifs marks its authenticity to a Western audience, the same feature also fundamentally complicates the subject's transmission and intelligibility. According to Porter, chinoiserie emerged 'as a bold celebration of disorder and meaninglessness, of artifice and profusion, an exuberant surrender to all that remained unassimilated by rationalist science and classical symmetries'.²⁰ In order to begin to understand chinoiserie and its influence on music, it should be understood as a process. It is constituted by, and cannot be seen apart from, a system of circulation. According to Impey, 'chinoiserie starts, of course, by imitation, developing further and further away from its prototypes with time. This is not simple degeneration of motifs into meaningless symbols, but a much more complex process, for new

²⁰David Porter, *Ideographia: The Chinese Cipher in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 135.

materials for copying were continually being made available'.²¹ Indeed, Western artists' consciousness of the market and audience underlines the fact that chinoiserie is not created in a vacuum, but rather employs terms of reference from the particular, historically specific, Western audiences it addresses. Individual representations vary considerably in the level of Chinese difference they convey to their milieux of reception. Often, those that offer only a small difference are accepted most quickly, though particular moments may be ripe for uniquely strange and challenging representations. Thus a full understanding of Chinese representation in porcelain or music should attempt not only to identify norms of expectation, but also the shock or challenge presented by a given representation. It must also locate this sort of interpretive crux within its social-political context.²²

Methodology

My starting point has been to examine how chinoiserie has primarily been considered as a visual style. The extensive research of art historians Hugh Honour, Oliver Impey, Dawn Jacobson, and Madeline Jarry provides a useful chronological survey of how European artists and craftsmen from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century have

²¹ Oliver Impey, *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 10.

²² For more information about Orientalism as a 'process', see the introduction to Frederick N. Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

regarded China and expressed their vision of it.²³ In the preface to his book *Chinoiserie* (1973), Honour provides a vivid description of his own experience:

As a child I had a very clear idea of what China was like. The willow-pattern plates off which we ate each day afforded a vivid glimpse of the Chinese landscape, and I soon learned the story of the two lovers who, pursued across the hump-backed bridge by an angry father, were transformed into birds hovering amid clouds at the top of the plate. Chinese costumes were like-wise familiar to me for I, like other children, occasionally went to fancy-dress parties dressed as a mandarin complete with embroidered silk suit, straw slippers, a pigtail dangling from the back of my head and drooping moustaches gummed to my upper lip. Certain blue and white ginger jars, brightly coloured enamel trays and lacquer panels in our own and other houses were pointed out to me as products of this distant land, and visits to Kew Gardens acquainted me with its architecture. All these objects induced in my childish mind a very distinct picture of China – a topsy-turvy land of brilliant flowers, weird monsters, and fragile buildings where most European values were

²³ Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), Oliver Impey, *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie* (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), Madeleine Jarry, *Chinoiserie. Chinese Influence on European Decorative Art, 17th and 18th Centuries*, trans. Gail Mangold-Vine (London: Vendome Press, 1981). See also Francesco Morena, *Chinoiserie: The Evolution of the Oriental Style in Italy from the 14th to the 19th Century*, trans. Eve Leckey (Florence: Centro Di, 2009) and David Beevers, ed., *Chinese Whispers: Chinoiserie in Britain 1650-1930* (Brighton: The Royal Pavilion and Museums, 2008).

reversed. And even when, years later, I discovered that they had all been made in Europe, the original impression remained at the back of my mind.²⁴

In order to situate such images in their historical contexts, several key works which focus on the social and political relationship between China and the West have been consulted. David Porter's *Ideographia: The Chinese Cipher in Early Modern Europe* (2001) traces recurrent patterns in European imaginative constructions of China through four revealing areas of encounter: aesthetic, economic, linguistic, and theological.²⁵ Focussing on eighteenth-century Europe, Porter compares the bewilderment and fascination of Europeans with their experience of Chinese religious practice, trade policy, and porcelain artefacts. He reveals how these comparisons give insight into the ways in which historical circumstances conditioned and constrained responses to China, and in the process suggests how an active engagement with Chinese culture also shaped the way the West came to understand itself. Jonathan Spence's book *The Chan's Great Continent* (1998) draws on literary, historical, and travel writing, documenting Western perceptions of China from the fourteenth century to the present.²⁶ Spence shows how romanticized accounts of medieval writers such as Marco Polo gave way to more fact-based reports from

²⁴ Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 1-2.

²⁵ David Porter, *Ideographia: The Chinese Cipher in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University press, 2001)

²⁶ Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1998)

European merchants and diplomats in the seventeenth century, and also identifies a specifically French and American exotic that emerges in the mid-nineteenth century. While the exoticism of writers such as Ezra Pound, Charles Baudelaire, Pearl S. Buck, and Edgar Snow showcase a continuing romantic thread of ways of perceiving China, Colin Mackerras's book *Images of China* (1989) also covers more fact-based perceptions of China from the earliest times through to the late 1980s.²⁷ These important historical accounts demonstrate the way in which China has served both as an inspirational model for and as a threat to different schools of thought in the West.

References to musical chinoiserie have been relatively rare. Composers, critics, and scholars have tended to describe the concept of chinoiserie as delicate and graceful, or dismiss it as outdated, decadent, or superficial. Simply used to denote a Chinese musical style, it is often used in passing comments without further clarification as to its history or precise meaning. Concerning Lehar's operetta, *The Land of Smiles* (1923), Ralph Locke writes: 'The orchestra's several passages of chinoiserie, delightful in their own quirky way, must have given the composer, and players, a welcome escape from operetta routine'.²⁸ William Ashbrook writes that 'the pervasive musical "chinoiserie" in

²⁷ Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (London: Oxford University Press, 1989). See also D. E. Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West 1500-1800*, (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2009), and David Martin Jones, *The Image of China in Western Social and Political Thought* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

²⁸ Ralph Locke, *Musical Exoticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 260.

Turandot is couleur locale of an obvious sort',²⁹ whilst Mosco Carner writes 'from this precious souvenir [a Chinese music box] Puccini took the idea for one of his most exquisite chinoseries'.³⁰ Steve Reich, however, is quite firm in his objection to making Western musical works *sound* African, Balinese, or Chinese. To him, that is what exotic normally means, which he condemns as 'chinoiserie'.³¹ For Ralph Locke the term is 'normally associated with eighteenth-century porcelain bric-a-brac'.³² These quotations are fairly representative of the way chinoiserie has been applied to music, and demonstrate the limitation of its use to date.

Musical chinoiserie can however be implicated in more rigorous writing about exoticism and orientalism in music. Recent work by Martin Clayton and Bennet Zon, Ralph Locke, and Claire Mabilat show how Orientalist and Exoticist art are beginning to have a high profile in some musicological and academic spheres.³³ According to Claire Mabilat, these two loaded concepts differ in their usage:

²⁹ William Ashbrook and Harold Powers, *Puccini's Turandot: The End of a Great Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 94.

³⁰ Mosco Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography* (London: Holmes and Meier, 1974), 451.

³¹ See Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, ed, *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 20.

³² Ralph Locke, *Musical Exoticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 288.

³³ Martin Clayton and Bennet Zon, eds., *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s to 1940s* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007); Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Claire Mabilat, *Orientalism and Representations of Music in the Nineteenth-Century British Popular Arts* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008).

Exoticism is an artistic tool, whereas orientalism is charged with cultural and/or political agendas. Whilst exoticism enables artists (in whatever art form) to broaden their artistic palette and to explore new artistic mediums, images and styles, orientalism depicts another culture in such a way as to create comment, or to highlight (often negative) difference. The former appreciates and embraces cultural diversity, whereas the latter (generally) disparages or criticizes it. Even though orientalism may use elements of exoticism within its processes, these concepts remain extremely different in their aims.³⁴

Whilst this is a fair attempt to draw a clear distinction between exoticism and orientalism, this critical division is impractical and in fact rarely made by the many academics writing on the subject. This is because political and cultural agendas almost always permeate the exploration of new and exotic artistic mediums. This is made evident in Ralph Locke's definition of exoticism as 'a place, people or social milieu that is perceived as different from home by the people making and receiving the exotic cultural product, creating something that is different, colourful and suggestive of another culture'.³⁵ The point is, the two concepts are too closely linked and cannot easily be pulled apart when discussing music in its social, historical, and cultural context. Thus, on a basic

³⁴ Claire Mabilat, *Orientalism and Representations of Music in the Nineteenth-Century British Popular Arts* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), 6-7.

³⁵ Ralph Locke, *Musical Exoticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 47.

level, certain aspects of both exoticism and orientalism are fundamental to a study of musical chinoiserie.

Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1978) is seminal to any discussion of this field and has been influential in many disciplines, especially literary studies, history, anthropology, area studies, and comparative religion. For Said 'Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them")'.³⁶ One of Said's aims was to reveal orientalism as a discourse; for example, he highlighted how the oriental has always been viewed as a myth or a stereotype which over the course of two centuries of European thought came to be considered as a kind of systematic knowledge about the East. Furthermore, he argued that the myth of the Oriental was possible because of European political dominance of the Middle East and Asia, and he consequently viewed orientalism as a 'Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient'.³⁷

In Said's later study *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), a section was devoted to an exploration of the orientalist paradigm in Verdi's opera *Aida* (1871). Said claims that 'As a highly specialized form of aesthetic memory, *Aida* embodies, as it was intended to do, the authority of Europe's version of Egypt at a moment in its nineteenth-century

³⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 43.

³⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 3.

history'.³⁸ This chapter focused on orientalism in music at a time when musicologists were beginning to be more concerned with political ideas within the discipline, including imperialism. Following this, articles such as Paul Robinson's 'Is Aida an Orientalist Opera?' (1993), and Ralph Locke's 'Reflections on Orientalism in Opera and Musical Theatre' (1993) began to emerge.³⁹ Since then, many other scholars have written about orientalism either from a perspective which reiterates and explores Said's ideas, or extends the term to cover exotic locales beyond the Middle East. Musicologists such as Clayton and Zon, and Mabilat embrace India and Islamic North Africa respectively.⁴⁰ Richard Taruskin explores orientalism in Russian art music, while Anthony Sheppard stretches the term to Japan, when explaining how certain conventions of noh drama are extracted and manipulated in Benjamin Britten's *Curlew River* (1964).⁴¹ Susan McClary claims to find orientalist attitudes in the way the Spanish gypsy of the title is portrayed in Bizet's *Carmen*, while Lawrence Kramer suggests that orientalism can be felt in Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloe* (1912), even though the ballet's setting is

³⁸ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Vintage, 1994), 151.

³⁹ Paul Robinson, 'Is Aida an Orientalist Opera?', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5/2 (1993): 133-40. Ralph Locke, 'Reflections on Orientalism in Opera and Musical Theater', *Opera Quarterly* 10/1 (1993): 48-64.

⁴⁰ Martin Clayton and Bennet Zon, ed., *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s -1940s* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007). Claire Mabilat, *Orientalism and Representations of Music in the Nineteenth-Century British Popular Arts* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008).

⁴¹ Richard Taruskin, 'Russian Musical Orientalism: A Postscript', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 6/1 (1994): 81-4. Richard Taruskin, 'Entoiling the Falconet: Russian Musical Orientalism in Context' in Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 194-217. Anthony W. Sheppard, 'An Exotic Enemy: Anti-Japanese Musical Propaganda in World War II Hollywood', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 54/2 (2001): 303-57.

essentially that of the mythical Arcadia of ancient Greece.⁴² It seems then that orientalism has become a term that can refer to any culture perceived as 'other'; Ziauddin Sardar's book *Orientalism* (1999) suggests that 'there simply has never been a definite object that is the Orient; the Orient is merely a pattern book from which strands can be taken to fashion whatever suits the temper of the times in the West'.⁴³

Relating this wider definition of the 'Orient' to a study of musical chinoiserie requires a careful approach, and one that considers the specific socio-political and cultural interactions of China and the West. As Said's *Orientalism* focuses its attention almost exclusively on non-fiction writings (e.g., travellers and governmental reports), it pays less attention to exotic portrayals in literature and the arts than they deserve (as admitted by Said himself) and different approaches are necessary when dealing with music and its range of ideological and artistic aims. Most importantly, for the present study, China does not easily fall into the 'Orientalist' paradigm of 'a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient'.⁴⁴ As the history traced by this thesis shows, China was never entirely a colonialist enterprise, and relations with the West were instead focussed around exploration, trade, and eventually immigration to the West. For

⁴² Susan McClary, *Carmen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 29-43. Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 201-225.

⁴³ Ziauddin Sardar, *Orientalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999), 53.

⁴⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 7

example, in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries China was admired and regarded as a highly sophisticated civilization and source of trade. But by the early nineteenth century, the onset of Chinese immigration to the West provoked a multitude of Western responses ranging from curiosity, admiration, wonderment, to perceived threat. For this reason, by the early twentieth century the power dynamics were more complex; the cultures became too intermingled, their contents and histories too interdependent and hybrid for clean-cut separation into large and mostly ideological oppositions like Orient and Occident.

A more fruitful starting point for this thesis than Said's works has been some recent, more nuanced writing about orientalism which focuses on the self, on the feminine, and on the fictional. Four complications to a hierarchical arrangement of Self and Other are identified by Matthew Head in his article 'Musicology on Safari: Orientalism and the Spectre of Postcolonial Theory' (2003).⁴⁵ These complications can all be related to chinoiserie; the first considers orientalism to be a mask for critique of European society. Indeed, when composers appropriate music that is perceived as Chinese it is not used simply to represent the Other; it is used 'to represent our own thoughts about the Other'.⁴⁶ Orientalism (or in our case chinoiserie) protects the 'Occident' (or Western world) from the analysis of self that is integral to a true engagement with other

⁴⁵ Matthew Head, 'Musicology on Safari: Orientalism and the Spectre of Postcolonial Theory.' *Music Analysis* 22/1-2 (2003): 211-30.

⁴⁶ Derek B Scott, 'The Twentieth Century: Orientalism and Musical Style', *The Musical Quarterly* 82/2 (1998): 314.

cultures. Through this 'elaborate project of displacement and self-invention',⁴⁷ and the fictionalization of the Other, Europeans actually reveal more about their own fears and desires than anything about the Other culture that they are attempting or claiming to portray. As Meyda Yegenoglu writes, orientalism 'is about the cultural representation of the West to itself by way of a detour through the other'.⁴⁸ According to Mabilat, this insight can be developed; not only can the Other be inspirational (and envy-inducing) in certain cultural aspects, so providing a 'template' for European observers, but the Other can also act as a foil for 'self-construction', a marker against which Europeans may consider what they are (supposedly) not.⁴⁹ This leads to the second complication identified by Head; Orientalist discourse expresses a degree of ambivalence towards the Other. Such ambivalence often results in musical representations which exhibit the simultaneous existence of two conflicting attitudes and emotions towards the Chinese subject (eg, utopian Chinese landscape versus a barbaric China, or wise emperor versus an evil china man). The third complication considers orientalism's connection to utopia: it is a corrective fantasy to Western urbanisation and industrialisation. Head suggests finally that 'the relationship between the troping of music as Other and

⁴⁷ Edward Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 196.

⁴⁸ Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.

⁴⁹ Claire Mabilat, *Orientalism and Representations of Music in the Nineteenth-Century British Popular Arts* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), 13.

orientalism's constructions of Otherness requires further research', and this is an area that this thesis addresses.

Recent scholarship has also drawn attention to the gendered nature of orientalism. According to Linda Phyllis Austern 'the Western imagination has long considered music a phantasmic language through which the unspeakably alien may be evoked, and through which the exotic and feminized erotic have the capacity to unite in forbidden and dangerous desire'.⁵⁰ One aspect of this fusion that fascinated Europeans was the 'Chinese' woman, or 'China doll', which fuelled the creation of many stories and fantasies. Not only was the mystery of the Chinese female a preoccupation, but in fact 'China' as a geographical space was frequently viewed as metaphorically sensual and was nearly always understood in feminine terms. In European imagery, China has therefore been conceptualized not only as racialized, but as feminized too. Thus China was often viewed through the fantasized metaphor of the Chinese woman. Reina Lewis and Meyda Yegenoglu home in on this area of study and provide a detailed investigation of the interrelation between orientalism, sexuality, and gender.⁵¹ Their work highlights the importance of subjecting the discourse of 'China' to a reading that explores this sexualisation, and supports the notion that European

⁵⁰ Linda Phyllis Austern, 'Forreine Conceites and Wandring Devises: The Exotic, the Erotic, and the Feminine' in Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 26-42 [26].

⁵¹ See Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1995) and Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 26, 73.

understandings of 'China' as a country and the women therein are often interrelating frameworks.

Finally, John Roger Haddad identifies the real/fictive duality of chinoiserie for both historical and aesthetic appreciation in his book *The Romance of China* (2008). He suggests that 'China existed in a state of tension caused by the presence of two contrary impulses: the imagination's need to create fictional lands and the rational mind's inexorable quest to demystify the real world'.⁵² According to Dahlhaus, exoticism exemplifies the fictitious nature of art, serving to conjure up an illusion whose authenticity and accuracy are irrelevant. The crucial point is not the degree to which exoticism is 'genuine', as he wrote:

but rather the function it serves as a legitimate departure from the aesthetic and compositional norms of European music...It is not so much the original context as the new artificial context which we should examine if we want our analysis to be historical – that is, to pursue the aesthetic and compositional significance of the phenomenon in the nineteenth century.⁵³

Dahlhaus's comments draw a disciplinary boundary between ethnomusicology and historical-musicological accounts of exoticism: the very nature of Chinoiserie is representational, a matter of invention rather than authenticity.

⁵² John Rogers Haddad, *The Romance of China: Excursions to China in U.S. Culture, 1776-1876* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), xiv.

⁵³ Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 302.

This thesis develops some of these ideas (about orientalism and the self, gender, and fiction) in order to understand how musical chinoiserie 'represents'. So far, the majority of musicologists writing about exoticism and orientalism focus primarily on *the extent to which* music of the country being portrayed influenced the western musical work in question, whilst others focus on the Saidian dichotomies of East and West. Consequently, the interaction between Western exotic musical efforts on the one hand, and the cultural values, concerns, and prejudices of their day on the other has been thinly researched. Only three books on musical exoticism have so far attempted to range widely across centuries, countries, and genres to begin to address some of these issues. The first of these books is edited by Jonathan Bellman and entitled *The Exotic in Western Music*; its chapters are divided by region, from Spain to the Middle East, to Russia and India.⁵⁴ The most relevant chapters to this thesis were 'Early Exoticism Revisited' by Miriam K. Whaples, and 'Forreine Conceites and Wandring Devises: The Exotic, the Erotic, and the Feminine' by Linda Phyllis Austern.⁵⁵ The second book is Timothy D. Taylor's *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World* which focuses on systems of domination, exploitation, colonialism, and imperialism.⁵⁶ In the first part of this book,

⁵⁴ Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997)

⁵⁵ Miriam K. Whaples, 'Early Exoticism Revisited' in Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 3-25. Linda Phyllis Austern, 'Forreine Conceites and Wandring Devises: The Exotic, the Erotic, and the Feminine' in Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 26-42.

⁵⁶ Timothy Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007)

Taylor focuses on seventeenth and eighteenth-century musical works that are inspired by exotic subjects; the second part discusses the impact of globalization on pop music, music in television, and advertising since the 1980s. But by far the most comprehensive book to date is Ralph Locke's 2009 book *Musical Exoticism*.⁵⁷ In this, Locke meticulously covers a wide-range of topics and issues, but also attempts to answer more general questions, such as: How is the unfamiliar region portrayed, even when so-called 'authentic' materials and styles are not being imitated or even hinted at? This is one of many inspiring and thought provoking questions Locke raises in his book – questions which are heartily taken on board in this thesis.

As yet there has been no in-depth study focussing on the specific topic of music and chinoiserie. Those scholars who have addressed the topic have done so briefly, or as part of different research aims. Adrienne Ward investigates the representation of China in Italian operas of the eighteenth century in her 2010 book *Pagodas in Play*.⁵⁸ Examination of the *actual* music however is not a feature of her research; the focus lies on analysing the libretti, enlightenment ideologies, and the European fascination with China in this period. Jeremy Day-O'Connell's 2007 book *Pentatonicism from the Eighteenth Century to Debussy* has a chapter entitled 'The pastoral-exotic pentatonic'. Within this chapter, Day-O'Connell provides a historical reading of how the pentatonic scale

⁵⁷ Ralph Locke, *Musical Exoticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

⁵⁸ Adrienne Ward, *Pagodas in Play: China on the Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera Stage* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010).

derived from Chinese origins, and how it has been appropriated in various Western art music works. The general aim of the book, however, seems to be to provide a lexicon of Western musical works that have used the pentatonic scale for pastoral, religious, primitive, or exotic agendas.⁵⁹ William Ashbrook and Harold Powers discuss chinoiserie as one of 'The Four Colours' in Puccini's *Turandot* and focus on established stylistic codes as the main or even sole factor in the process of Chinese portrayal.⁶⁰ Similarly, Richard Taruskin uses Stravinsky's term 'fausse chinoiserie' as a subheading under which to provide an in-depth analysis of the musical construction of 'The Chinese March' in *The Nightingale* opera.⁶¹

Current musicological research on music and chinoiserie is evidently very limited, with a tendency to focus almost entirely on musical signs signifying Chinese difference. This thesis explores some fundamental and neglected issues related to musical chinoiserie as a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to treat each facet comprehensively. Instead, it illuminates some historically and culturally significant musical works, and explores the four recurring themes of chinoiserie identified at the start of the chapter; the commodity, the utopian pastoral, the decorative system, and the

⁵⁹ Jeremy Day-O'Connell, *Pentatonicism from the Eighteenth Century to Debussy* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2007).

⁶⁰ William Ashbrook and Harold Powers, *Puccini's Turandot: The End of the Great Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 94-99.

⁶¹ Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works through Mavra*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1091-1108.

basic human instinct to define 'us' from 'them'. It demonstrates how chinoiserie has manifested itself across the past three centuries in various genres and works central to Western music, and reveals how musical chinoiserie is not necessarily limited to specific devices, but almost always heard in dynamic tension with a narrative framework which in turn relates to specific political circumstance. The mediation of visual and textual images, cultural preconceptions, and social and historical context in shaping the listener's response are therefore foregrounded. In other words, this thesis attempts to situate musical works in their social and historical contexts and uncover a range of meanings. Why was this song composed in the way it was? What were composers and society thinking about, talking about, doing, in a particular moment, and how did all these things leave traces in music?

The notion of a nostalgic Chinese landscape certainly left traces in music, and had its roots in late seventeenth-century England. This fascination with China had contributed towards the mapping out of a new model in the art of gardening. In 1685 the first trading post was established by English merchants in Amoy on the Chinese coast and the same year Sir William Temple's long essay *Upon the Gardens of Epicurus* was published. This essay has been regarded as the first attempt on the part of an English author to refer to China as a model in gardening.

Among us, the beauty of building and planting is placed chiefly in some certain proportions, symmetries, or uniformities; our walks and our trees arranged so, as to answer one another, and at exact distances. The Chinese scorn this way of planting...their imagination is employed in contriving figures, where the beauty shall be great, and strike the eye, but without any order of disposition of parts, that shall be commonly or easily observed...We have hardly any notion of this sort of beauty.⁶²

Temple refers to China in order to foster a break with topiary and encourage landscape designers across Europe to change direction. France began to adopt the new style under the name *jardin anglo-chinois*. The main principles set forth in the essay lie in disorder and irregularity – what the poet Alexander Pope called an ‘artful wilderness’ – to replace symmetrical paths and groves. In an attempt to define this unique Chinese aesthetic, Temple goes on to write: ‘they [the Chinese] have a particular word to express [this studied beauty of irregularity]:...Sharawadgi’.⁶³ The word sharawadgi certainly sounds exotic, however, there is much speculation as to whether it really comes from the Chinese *sa-ro-wai-dgi* which signifies ‘graceful disorder’, or from the Japanese *sorawaji* which means ‘not being regular’.⁶⁴

⁶² Albert Forbes Sieveking, ed., *Sir William Temple: Upon the Gardens of Epicurus, with Other Seventeenth Century Garden Essays* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1908), 54.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ For more information on the history and origin of the word ‘Sharadwadgi’, see Ciaran Murray, ‘Sharawadgi Resolved’, *Garden History* 26/2 (1998): 208-213, and

The term 'Sharawadgi' will be used as a concept to discuss the particular Chinese aesthetic of the musical works under consideration in this thesis. With Temple, emerged a new philosophical conception of the interrelation between gardens, nature, and art. A striking parallel can be found between eighteenth-century landscape gardeners and twentieth-century composers with regard to their artistic aims and aesthetic sensibilities.⁶⁵ The desire to achieve something natural, idyllic, and utopian was framed through the inclusion of pagodas, water fountains, little man-made streams and the careful arrangement of rocks and plants. In music, these elements were used to frame musical works with titles such as 'pagodas', or more explicitly in song texts which conveyed images of a Chinese lady amid willow trees, orange blossoms, and rippling streams. Furthermore, a careful consideration of space, silence, and timelessness was essential to evoking a simultaneously nostalgic and mystical atmosphere in the Western creation of Chinese landscapes in art. Musically, this was realised through an identifiable sensitivity to timbre and texture, space and silence, and well-known Chinese musical gestures. In the same way that landscape gardeners moved towards a change in direction where the main principles lay in disorder and irregularity, composers were embracing this 'artful wilderness' by fostering a break with conventional

Takau Shimada, 'Is Sharawadgi Derived from the Japanese Word Sorowaji?', *The Review of English Studies* 48/191 (1997): 350-352.

⁶⁵ Certain features of the Chinese garden also creep into European decorative schemes, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. These decorative schemes often depicted Chinese garden scenes which show the essential formality of the Chinese garden with a slight and understated use of asymmetry.

diatonicism, metre, and harmony, in order to embrace a Chinese soundscape that evoked freedom, difference, and newness.

A unifying trait in the musical works under consideration in this thesis is that they often portray a nostalgic Chinese landscape that wistfully looks back to these eighteenth-century ideals. By the early twentieth century there was much more knowledge about China (some of it negative), yet composers in looking for sources of inspiration on China *still* chose to view it as a place of exquisite landscapes, simplicity, and beauty. This Chinese landscape was almost always characterized by feminine traits such as perfumes, ornaments, and peach blossoms, all of which adorned the seventeenth to eighteenth-century *jardin anglo-chinois*.

The question then arises: were there pervasive and distinctly Chinese musical motifs to represent these images and ideal notions of China? Scholars such as Bellman, Scott, and Whaples have provided comprehensive lists of exotic musical devices – all of which (some more prominently than others) can be found in musical chinoiserie (see below for a selected list).

Parallel fourths and fifths	Dissonance
Chromatic scales	Polytonality

Use of minor tonality	Use of percussion
Pentatonic scales	Chime-like chords
Whole tone scales	Triplets against quavers
Drones	Cyclical repetition of pentatonic motifs
Chinese riff	Solo oboe over sparse orchestral texture
Arabesques and excessive ornamentation	Prominent use of the cymbals and gong

Nothing of interest or significance can be drawn from merely pointing out that a musical work or popular song might use a minor or pentatonic scale to sound Chinese. This thesis aims to show that it is not the individual devices used that make up the distinctive sound of musical chinoiserie, but the *way in which these devices are combined* to produce a distinctively Chinese decorative soundscape.

I have identified the concept of 'acoustic sharawadgi' as a useful term with which to describe a particularly unique feature of musical chinoiserie. I use 'acoustic sharawadgi' to introduce the idea of a musical *effect* which conveys a graceful disorder in sound that can initially be difficult to comprehend; how can 'disorder' *be* or *sound* 'graceful'? Fundamentally, it is a sound that goes against conventional Western musical practice or expectation by incorporating the use of exotic devices such as parallel fifths, chromaticism, pentatonic / whole-tone scales, ornamentation, etc. Through a variety of methods, these devices are carefully selected and constructed to produce a unique

charm that ranges from the subtle and touching, to the brash and comical. For example, Gluck's final polonaise of *Le Cinesi* can be heard as acoustic sharawadgi with its exotic, yet highly revered polonaise dance overlaid with jangling Turkish percussion (see chapter 2). Debussy's *Pagodes* evokes a slightly different acoustic sharawadgi with its disjointed and intricately layered phrase structures, apparent rhythmic liberation, and fragmented pentatonic lines (see chapter 3). And Stravinsky's Nightingale bird also conveys an acoustic sharawadgi with its soaring modal melodic lines, which sometimes break out abruptly in highly decorative arabesques amidst a silent or gently shimmering orchestra (see chapter 4).

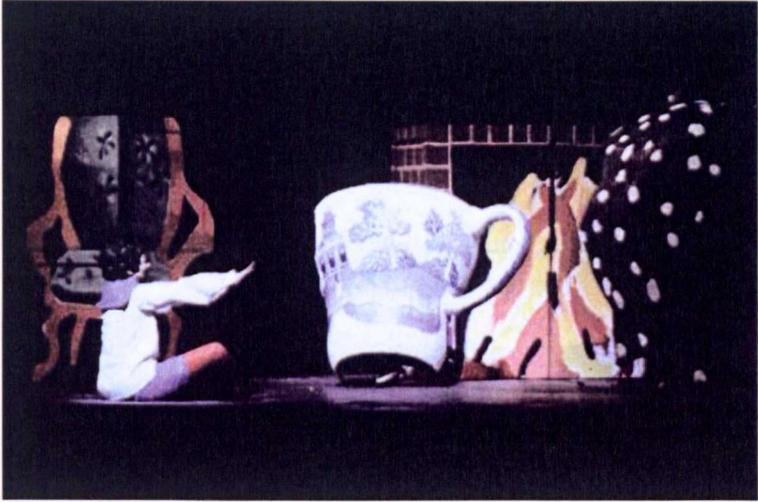
While acoustic sharawadgi can be used broadly as a theoretical concept to understand the structure and effect of musical chinoiserie, it can be also used to describe a particular musical atmosphere that evokes the qualities advocated in the *meaning* of the word which extends beyond graceful disorder to embrace notions of space, silence, timelessness, newness, simplicity, and freedom. As the term derives from late seventeenth-century landscape gardening techniques, it seems fitting to apply the term to musical imaginings of a natural, idyllic, and pastoral Chinese landscape.

In contrast to this, the term 'la machine chinoise' which was used by Debussy to identify a particularly decorative Chinese sounding

configuration, addresses an aspect of musical chinoiserie that can sound mechanical, detached, and to some extent music-box like. The distinctive musical aesthetic of 'la machine chinoise' was evidently well-known and appealing to early twentieth-century composers, and they used it to convey a diverse range of Chinese subjects. The unique sound, timbre, and aesthetic of 'la machine chinoise' is identified in chapter 3 as high-pitched, intricately patterned, delicately percussive, and repetitive – the overall sound effect is perhaps music-box-like, or bell-like. This fragile and delicate timbre was used effectively to portray feminine Chinese subjects; the mechanical, repetitive, and bell-like sounds of 'la machine chinoise' also abstracted representations of a nostalgic Chinese landscape, suggesting a 'make-believe' and fairy-tale world. In chapter 4, the term 'la machine chinoise' is further explored as this 'mechanical trope' can be also used to portray a more brash, severe, and overt style, with the additional use of dissonance, cymbals, and gongs.

An exploration of musical chinoiserie can be creative. For example, perhaps we can think of it as a kind of 'musical porcelain': a unique sound, timbre, and aesthetic that can be considered to be a kind of musical onomatopoeia. It is found in musical gestures or phrases which closely replicate the *sound* of brittle, fragile, glass-like porcelain. Usually, this will involve parallel fourths or fifths, dissonance, and glockenspiel or some bell-like musical effect (this is a feature that is unique to musical chinoiserie). A very simple example of 'musical

porcelain' can be found in Ravel's depiction of the China tea cup in his ballet-opera *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (1925). In this example, the orchestral texture is reduced to the glockenspiel playing in fourths as the young child sings 'Oh! ma belle tasse chinoise!' [Oh! my lovely Chinese cup!].



Version nouvelle plus aiguë THE CHILD. *strick-a*
L'ENFANT, *atterro*

p Oh! — ma bel — le
Oh! — my love — ly

tas — se chi — noï — se!
Chi — ese cup! — se!

Y En.

Figure 1.4: 'Oh ma belle tasse chinoise' in Maurice Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (1925).

The use of 'musical porcelain' is not always as obvious as in the music of Ravel's China tea cup, however, we could think about whether this onomatopoeic sound was manipulated by composers to convey particular Chinese settings and subjects. Perhaps Puccini used this 'musical porcelain' to depict the comical, farcical, and to some extent mechanical character of the three masks (Ping, Pong, and Pang) in his opera *Turandot*. Maybe Stravinsky used it to articulate aurally the porcelain palace in *The Nightingale*. And perhaps this 'musical porcelain' was used not only to signify the Chinese subject in popular song, but to also emphasise the fragility and delicate archetype of the China doll, or Sing-song girl.

Quite how and when this 'musical porcelain' became a distinctive feature of musical chinoiserie is hard to pinpoint. Perhaps it started with the mid-eighteenth century predilection for musical turquerie and the percussive bell-sounds they produced. Or perhaps it was inspired by the fashionable porcelain artefacts themselves. Maybe it was representative of what was believed to be Chinese music. Some of the musical examples used in this thesis may even demonstrate how the most popular commodity of chinoiserie – porcelain - could be reified in musical sound? One can only speculate on such ideas, but by opening up such questions it allows us to begin thinking about musical chinoiserie in innovative and creative ways.

Chinoiserie and Music

Chinese influence on Western music can be traced back to the mid-seventeenth century. A quest for the exotic has led a host of composers, including Purcell, Gluck, Offenbach, Debussy, Mahler, Puccini, and others, to adopt Western approximations of Chinese gestures in their musical works. Music inspired by China was influenced by 'images' of China which would have been available to composers in many forms, as diplomatic reports or as poems, as stage plays or letters home, as philosophical tracts or novels, or as objects and paintings. In more recent times these 'images' of China extend to the medium of tv, film, adverts, and arise from the more general impact of increased travel and globalization. This thesis does not attempt to provide a comprehensive historical survey, but rather draws attention to moments that demonstrate particularly interesting and rich constellations of ideas about chinoiserie.

The potential repertoire that could be considered is vast, as composers have evoked a prodigious variety of Chinese realms and peoples: temple gardens, pagodas, porcelain palaces, lotus lands, Imperial Emperors, villains, and perhaps best-known, Puccini's Chinese princess, Turandot, whose brutal reign has been depicted in dozens of productions, all around the world. Like *Turandot*, many Chinese-inspired works are perpetual items in the modern repertoire. The durability of such works demonstrates that musical chinoiserie has been

a recurring and evolving phenomenon, which has significantly contributed to the development of Western art music and its canon of performed works. Nevertheless, as suggested above their particularly Chinese aspects have often been inadequately examined, and little attention has been paid to the connection between those Chinese aspects and the work's style and structure, its representation on stage, reception by audiences, and visual and literary influences upon it.

To begin with, chapter two discusses music inspired by China at the height of the chinoiserie craze in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries. A close reading of Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* (1692) and Gluck's *Le Cinesi* (1754) demonstrates how the principal visual source of Chinese culture, the consumer good, was incorporated into extravagant and politically significant musical performances of the day. *The Fairy Queen* was commissioned to celebrate the wedding anniversary of Queen Mary and King William of England, and *Le Cinesi* was commissioned for the Austrian royal family's ceremonious visit to Schlosshof an der March. As the phenomenon of chinoiserie was initially experienced exclusively by the upper class, Chinese inspired operas tended to use 'Chinese' elements and motifs to create a luxurious decorative experience which was most notable in the elaborate stage settings. Such performances allowed for the privileging of the sensual, the indecipherable and the pleasurable, in a manner deeply significant for the visual articulation of values held by the noble and aspirational classes. This chapter explores the emergence of

eighteenth-century European music inspired by China and its interrelation with royalty and nobility, consumer goods, fashion, and aesthetic sensibility. By doing so, it reveals how Chinese emphasis in these operas relied heavily on extravagant and luxurious visual elements, and how the development of musical chinoiserie had its roots in a pseudo-Turkish idiom.

In the eighteenth century, European cultural responses to Chinese empire were influenced by the Jesuits' enthusiastic transmission and interpretation of Chinese cultural material; their positive outlook was reflected in European literature, theatre, ornaments, and design. By the mid-nineteenth-century, the Jesuits' favourable picture of China was increasingly being challenged by more fact-based reports from European merchants, travellers, and diplomats. Europe had included China in her colonial enterprise pursuing territorial, commercial, and cultural expansion, implanting concessions in cities such as Shanghai, and participating in the repression of the anti-Western Boxer Rising of 1900. Furthermore, the onset of Chinese immigration to Europe and America in the mid to late nineteenth century contributed to a decisive shift in the Western view of China. However, this was by no means a uniform shift, but one that promulgated multiple and contradictory images of China in Western culture. Whilst composers of Western art music continued to indulge in archaic, timeless, and ideological visions of China, popular music composers began to focus on the reality of

Chinese immigration. Chapters three, four, and five flow from this critical moment of change and make up the main body of this thesis.

Chapter three explores the ways in which early twentieth-century French musical works inspired by China have focussed on nostalgic and utopian Chinese landscapes that look back wistfully to eighteenth-century ideals. Debussy's 'Rondel Chinois' (1891), 'Pagodes' (1903) from *Estampes*, and De Falla's vocal setting of Théophile Gautier's poem 'Chinoiserie' (1909) are just a few examples of how the Western interest in utopian landscapes and paradise pictures was translated into music. New world conceptions of China permeated fin-de-siècle Parisian artistic culture, and writers such as Louis Laloy, Victor Segalan, Gustave Flaubert, and Pierre Loti promulgated notions of an esoteric and spiritual China. These composers responded by conveying nostalgic Chinese landscapes with a profound sensitivity to timbre and texture, space and silence, and well-known Chinese musical gestures which enacted sonic representations of a well-established notion of Chinese grace and delicacy. The particularity of this Chinese grace and delicacy was labelled by the famous eighteenth-century landscape gardener Sir William Temple as 'Sharadwadgi', which means 'graceful disorder', and is used as a concept to examine the particular Chinese aesthetic of the French musical works under consideration. A close analysis of the interrelation between utopian landscapes, sharawadgi, the feminine, and music allows us to better understand the

musicalisation of the visual and literary aspects of chinoiserie at this time.

Chapter four examines Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (1908), Stravinsky's *The Nightingale* (1914), and Puccini's *Turandot* (1926), which each attest to a more scholarly anthropological approach, and reveal a more diverse continuation of 'Chinese idiom' in Western art music. Influential sources such as poetry by the famous Tang dynasty poet Li Tai Po, ethno-musicological studies by Laloy and J. A. Van Aalst, translations of Chinese legends by Friedrich Schiller, Carlo Gozzi, Hans Anderson, and even a Chinese music box demonstrate how such works can be highly personal and psychologically elaborate musical creations inspired by China. The chapter foregrounds two very different soundscapes: an overt exoticism with its chaotic, vibrant, percussive, pentatonic, and jaunty style; and a more submerged exoticism where well established Chinese musical signifiers are used to render an ethereal and spiritual China. Such binary oppositions (overt vs submerged chinoiserie) are a constant theme in the general field of music and exoticism, and this chapter puts them into dialogue with each other.

The popular music of Tin Pan Alley lends a distinctive twist to the study of musical chinoiserie in chapter five, for not all Chinese of the time lived in nostalgic landscapes or porcelain palaces; some were arriving on American and European shores. Popular music inspired by China

offers a fascinating counterpoint to the archaic visions prevalent in the Western art music of previous chapters. Contrary to the nostalgic and utopian visions of China in Western art music, popular music genres responded more directly to the social and political reality of Chinese immigration to America. Perceived as a threat to local employment and American ways of life, Chinese immigrants were also viewed with genuine curiosity. As a result, they were subjected to a variety of stereotyping through music. The straightforward, formulaic, and market driven style of these songs provide the most explicit examples of musical chinoiserie, which upon examination reveal a variety of hidden beliefs, prejudices, aspirations and idealized visions of China.

The epilogue considers the meaning of musical chinoiserie today. As China's role in the West becomes increasingly prominent, this epilogue discusses the relevance of musical chinoiserie to musicians and audiences in the present day. Among other things, it explores the ways in which some of the operas discussed in previous chapters have been reconfigured in recent productions. The central themes of chinoiserie as 'commodity', 'utopian landscape', 'decorative system', and 'cultural other', are also briefly addressed in relation to contemporary pop songs and stage musicals.

A positive motivation for researching Western musical representations of China is that the country and its people have for centuries represented something of an enigma for the West. This is partly

because China is viewed as a large, populous, and mythical land, steeped in tradition. The constant return to and evolving use of Chinese subjects in Western music clearly shows that the West has been concerned about China for a very long time. The signs are that this situation will continue. This thesis reveals how at certain times China has been represented in music in a variety of ways, as worthy of admiration, sympathy, curiosity, fear, ridicule, hostility, or as a means of profit. Western musical representations of China are therefore part of a wider network of social, cultural, and political relationships. They are a highly significant and neglected area of research well worth exploring.

Royalty, Luxury, and Chinoiserie in the Enlightenment

This chapter considers how Enlightenment conceptions of China found their way into music, and demonstrates that far more was known about China in early eighteenth-century Europe than about almost any other far-off land. For over one hundred years, Jesuit missionaries based in Macao, Guangzhou and then in the imperial court at Beijing had produced widely translated and anthologised accounts of their experiences and impressions. As a result, China occupied a prominent place in the geographical imagination of the period. According to David Porter,

Western readers would have been fully aware of the peculiarities of the Chinese language and writing system, the rationalist moral philosophy of the great sage Confucius, the strict meritocracy of the examination-based civil service, and of course the famously naturalistic style in landscape gardening hailed by William Temple, Joseph Addison and William Chambers, and adapted into what the French came to call *le jardin anglo-chinois*.¹

Because they admired Chinese culture, Europeans were eager to understand the Chinese language, borrow from the philosophy of

¹ David Porter, 'Monstrous Beauty: Eighteenth Century Fashion and the Chinese Taste', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35/3 (2002), 398.

Confucius, and integrate concepts of Chinese art into their own creations. Such admiration was influenced by missionary reports that conveyed the image of a highly advanced Chinese civilization with a rich and unbroken cultural heritage of over four thousand years. As D.E. Mungello writes, 'they were influenced by Chinese culture because they regarded Chinese culture as superior, at least until the end of the eighteenth century'.²

It is often assumed that there were very few significant exotic musical portrayals until the mid-eighteenth-century fad for *alla turca* operas. Tim Taylor writes that 'western composers before the nineteenth century did not yet possess concepts of authenticity, ethnography, even history, all of which were constructed by late-eighteenth-century modernity, and so their transcriptions of the appropriated music look and sound like Western European music of the time'.³ Miriam K. Whaples and Thomas Betzwieser outline a common approach to the study of musical exoticism, viewing it less as a broader way of thinking, or artistic approach and more as a catalogue of particular stylistic devices that would have been recognised as 'foreign' by composers and listeners of the period.⁴ This widespread view detracts from an appreciation of the

² D. E. Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West 1500-1800* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2009),81.

³ Tim Taylor, 'Peopling the Stage: Opera, Otherness, and New Musical Representation in the Eighteenth Century', *Cultural Critique* 36 (Spring 1997), 55-88 [56].

⁴ Miriam K. Whaples, 'Early Exoticism Revisited' in Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 3-25. Thomas

multiple ways in which the West viewed China in various musical genres at the height of the chinoiserie craze in the enlightenment period. In order to offer a more all-encompassing outlook, this chapter focuses on the ways in which music supported representations of China in the characters, costumes, dances, libretto, and stage settings. Painters, craft makers, and designers were all expressing this newly discovered Chinese world in their works of art. But the key question is: How did the ubiquity of these increasingly fashionable Chinese artefacts influence musical creations of this period?

This chapter focuses on scenes from Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* (1692) and Gluck's *Le Cinesi* (1754), and examines how the intense vogue for Chinese consumer goods may have influenced extravagant and politically significant musical performances of the day. Commissioned to celebrate the wedding anniversary of Queen Mary and King William of England, *The Fairy Queen* was destined to be a lavish affair. The premiere of *Le Cinesi* was similarly intended to be a spectacular event as it was commissioned for the Austrian royal family's ceremonial visit to Schlosshof an der March. This chapter reveals how the phenomenon of chinoiserie in its various operatic manifestations was initially experienced primarily by the upper classes. It also demonstrates how these operas used 'Chinese' elements and motifs to create a luxurious

Betzwieser, 'The Turkish Language in Eighteenth Century Music: Context and Meaning' in Paolo Amalfitano and Loretta Innocenti, eds., *L'orient* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2006), 227-255.

decorative experience which was most obvious in the elaborate stage settings. Colin Mackerras reveals how Jesuit missionaries were immensely positive about China during this period, praising every aspect of its people and society, its elite governance, its prosperity, and Confucian rationalism.⁵ Aesthetic sensibility therefore became an essential component of social and political identity as writers and travellers who fuelled the notion of the Imperial court at Beijing as the paragon of splendour and magnificence were qualities easily transferable to the European royal courts. Staging *The Fairy Queen* and *Le Cinesi* with elaborate Chinese decor enhanced musically, disseminated an associative value readily appreciated by the Royal family which revelled in allegory, thrived on symbolism, and indulged in dynastic glorification.

Queen Mary of England and *The Fairy Queen* (1692)

In 1692, Purcell had been commissioned to write the semi-opera *The Fairy Queen*, which was an adaptation of Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. According to Curtis Price, the author of the new verses and the adapter of the play text is unknown, but the likeliest candidate is Thomas Betterton the actor-manager of the Dorset Garden

⁵ Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), 24-37.

Theatre.⁶ Shakespeare's love and marriage theme was used to celebrate the 15th royal wedding anniversary of William and Mary. In the fifth and final act, the celebratory climax is evident from the detailed stage directions:

While the Scene is darken'd, a single Entry is danced; Then a Symphony is play'd; after that the scene is suddenly illuminated, and discovers a transparent Prospect of a Chinese Garden, the Architecture, the Trees, the Plants, the Fruit, the Birds, the Beasts quite different from what we have in this part of the World. It is terminated by an Arch, through which is seen other arches with close Arbors, and a row of Trees to the end of the View. Over it is a hanging Garden, which rises by several ascents to the top of the House; it is bounded on either side with pleasant Bowers, various trees, and numbers of strange Birds flying in the air, on top of a Platform is a fountain, throwing up Water, which falls into a large Basin.⁷

Why a Chinese garden? Where was information coming from with regard to Chinese architecture, trees, plants, fruit, strange birds and beasts? Was this a realistic portrayal or an idyllic utopian ideal of China? Did the symphony *sound* Chinese to its seventeenth-century

⁶ Curtis Alexander Price, *Henry Purcell and the London Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 321-322. Curtis Price also claims that Betterton is a reasonable guess as he was involved in all the previous Dorset Garden operas, and almost certainly reworked *The Prophetess* in 1690. He was also paid to prepare *The Indian Queen* for Purcell, although he apparently backed out of it due to the 1694-5 actors' rebellion.

⁷ Jacob Tonson, *The Fairy Queen – Word Book* (London, 1692). *Early English Books Online*. <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>> (accessed 15/09/10).

audience? Was this simply because chinoiserie was all the rage in England in the late seventeenth century, or was there more to it?

Frans and Julie Muller state that 'the Chinese garden must have been a bow to Mary's collection of China, while the hanging garden above it paid deference to William and his love of Baroque garden planning'.⁸ Whilst this may be true to some extent, it is also likely the Chinese garden was chosen as a scene-setting that offered artists a short cut to represent China as the poetical, mystical, and fairytale land of Cathay. Sir William Temple's 1685 essay 'Upon the Gardens of Epicurus' pays tribute to the qualities found in the Chinese garden:

their imagination is employed in contriving figures where the beauty shall be great, and strike the eye, without any order of disposition of parts, that shall be commonly or easily observed...We have hardly any notion of this sort of beauty...The Chinese have a particular word to express [this studied beauty of irregularity] – Sharawadgi.⁹

The notion that a conscious theory of beauty could have as its essence a contrived irregularity was quite new. This 'beauty without order' was an attractive escape from classicism into a 'world of sophisticated baroque illusion, similar in some respects to theatre'.¹⁰ To the late

⁸ Frans and Julie Muller, 'Completing the Picture: The Importance of Reconstructing Early Opera', *Early Music* 33/4 (2005), 667-682 [668-669].

⁹ William Temple, *Upon the Gardens of Epicurus* (London, 1685), 54. *Open Library*. <http://openlibrary.org/books/OL7052798M/Sir_William_Temple_upon_the_gardens_of_Epicurus> (accessed 14/09/10).

¹⁰ David Beavers, ed., *Chinese Whispers: Chinoiserie in Britain 1650-1930* (Brighton: The Royal Pavilion and Museums, 2008), 17.

seventeenth-century eye, the Chinese garden scene in *The Fairy Queen* would have conveyed a recognisably 'Chinese' irregular beauty familiar from Chinese porcelain and delftware.

Chinese porcelain, silks, wallpaper, lacquer, and the imitations they spawned initially appeared as 'luxurious markers of class distinction'.¹¹

According to Dawn Jacobson,

The Baroque was in full fig in Europe, and although it was a classically derived style, its exuberant decoration, expansive forms and overall air of opulence and grandeur could comfortably accommodate those Chinese imports whose 'baroque' qualities of glitter, extravagance and luxury were valued.¹²

Queen Mary evidently understood the inherent value of these Chinese imports, and has been credited with promulgating the craze for oriental porcelain in Britain. She is also renowned for her magnificent porcelain and delftware collection that was exhibited at Kensington Palace and later at Hampton Court.¹³ It was not unusual for European monarchs like Queen Mary to set aside a small room for the arrangement and exposition of the most beautiful pieces in their collections (Fig. 2.1). According to Madeleine Jarry, 'these porcelain rooms were analogous

¹¹ David Porter, 'Monstrous Beauty: Eighteenth Century Fashion and the Chinese Taste', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35/3 (2002), 396.

¹² Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie* (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), 31-32.

¹³ See Vanessa Alayrac-Fielding, 'Frailty, Thy Name Is China: Women, Chinoiserie and the Threat of Low Culture in Eighteenth-Century England', *Women's History Review* 18/4 (2009), 659-668, and Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 69.

to the Renaissance *cabinets de curiosités* with all their precious stones, cameos, manuscripts, and miniatures'.¹⁴

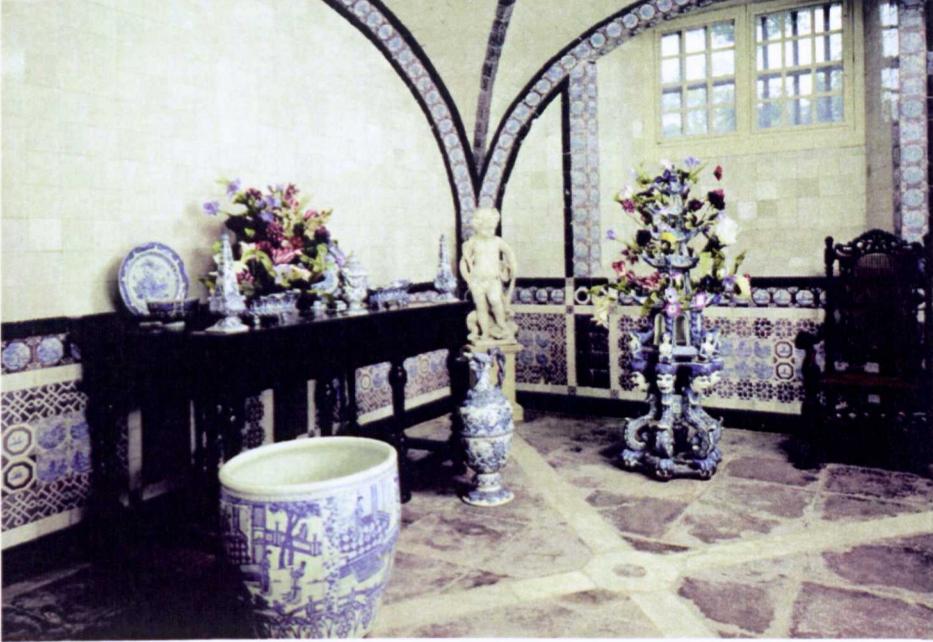


Figure 2.1: Queen Mary started this collection while living in the Netherlands. The Dutch East India Company was bringing a large amount of chinaware into Europe, and had presented her with a number of pieces. The picture above shows some of her collection that is kept in 'Her Majesty's little cellar' (Palace Het Loo, Apeldoorn)

The grand culminating masque of Purcell's *Fairy Queen* was an elaborate compliment to Queen Mary and King William. Act V moves from benediction (the earthly lovers blessed by a Juno summoned by Oberon and Titania), through evocation of paradisial life (a vision of order commanded by Oberon to celebrate reconciliation with his Queen), to invocation and ritual fruition (the summoning of the god of

¹⁴ Madeleine Jarry, *Chinoiserie. Chinese Influence on European Decorative Art, 17th and 18th Centuries*, trans. Gail Mangold-Vine (London: Vendome Press, 1981), 63.

marriage and the bursting into flames of his torch).¹⁵ The transformation of Shakespeare's play into semi-opera was skilfully handled as each musical scene was treated as a masque, a gesture of celebration or illustration, featuring symbolic figures such as 'Night', 'Winter', 'A Chinese Garden, etc.¹⁶ Moreover, at least in the 1692 production, the symbolic subject of each masque was central to the plot, the transition into it set up by the text, either by taking an expanded view of one of Shakespeare's calls for music, or by inserting a new one.¹⁷ In the final masque of *The Fairy Queen*, the duke announces 'I hear strange music, warbling in the air', which is followed by Oberon introducing the spectacular Chinese garden scene, described as a 'transparent world':

Act V

Duke: I hear strange music, warbling in the air.

Oberon: Tis fairy music, sent by me,
To cure your incredulity.
All was true the lovers told,
You shall stranger things behold....

[And then after a few more lines:]

Oberon: Now, let a new Transparent World be seen,
All Nature joyn to entertain our Queen.
Now we are reconcil'd, all things agree
To make a Universal Harmony

¹⁵ Roger Savage, 'The Shakespeare - Purcell Fairy Queen: A Defence and Recommendation', *Early Music* 1/1 (1973), 201-222 [215].

¹⁶ Curtis Price, 'The Fairy Queen', *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy. <<http://www.grovemusic.com>> (accessed 5 October 2010).

¹⁷ Martin Adams, *Henry Purcell: The Origins and Development of His Musical Style* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 310.

The Chinese setting was admiringly described in Tonson's 1692 word book, and featured 'Six Monkeys [who] come from beneath the trees and dance'.¹⁸ According to Tonson's word book, this number came towards the end of Act V; however, in the music score the monkeys appeared before the revelation of the Chinese garden scene.¹⁹ According to the 2009 Purcell Society edition of *The Fairy Queen* score:

The entry dance may have finished too soon, before preparations for the Chinese garden transformation had been completed. Dancing monkeys filled an awkward hiatus (no more convincing reason for their relocation has been suggested), though they punctured the mood of artfully induced gloom sooner than Betterton had intended and weakened the surprise effect of sudden illumination when the moment came.²⁰

Rather than puncture the mood of artfully induced gloom and weaken the surprise effect of sudden illumination, one can perhaps consider that the inclusion of the Monkeys' Dance enhanced the evocation of an enchanted and exotic world with strange beasts and creatures. The inclusion of the Monkeys' Dance was in line with the fashion for *singerie* – defined as a type of European ornament in which monkeys are

¹⁸ Jacob Tonson, *The Fairy Queen – Word Book* (London, 1692). *Early English Books Online*. <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>> (accessed 15/09/10).

¹⁹ According to Andrew Pinnock and Bruce Wood 'it seems unlikely that the dance was copied into the score at the wrong point: if it had been, one would expect to find it headed by some warning that it belonged several pages later – otherwise severe complications would result in orchestral parts copied from the score'. For more information with regard to source relationships, details of stage history, and printed evidence see Andrew Pinnock and Bruce Wood, 'The Fairy Queen: A Fresh Look at the Issues', *Early Music* 21/1 (1993): 45-62.

²⁰ Andrew Pinnock and Bruce Wood, ed., *The Fairy Queen* Purcell Society Edition ed. (London: Stainer & Bell Ltd, 2009), xxi.

represented in anthropomorphic (often quasi-Chinese) attitude.²¹ According to Honour, how monkeys first became entangled in chinoiserie is a question that has exercised several writers. They occasionally appear on Chinese porcelain, and some examples of this type may have been included among the large seventeenth-century importations. Alternatively, *singeries* may derive from the monkeys who assisted Vishnu against the demons, a scene that was depicted on at least one Indian palampore imported into Europe, though none of these monkeys would have been attired as human beings, which is the essential mark of the *singerie*. Whatever the origin of the cult, monkeys came to be associated in the European mind with China before the end of the seventeenth century.²² As Lord Rochester remarked to his pet ape: 'Kiss me, thou curious miniature of man, How odd thou art, how pretty, how japan'.²³ Honour writes that in the *Grande Singerie* and *Petite Singerie* decors at the Château de Chantilly (c.1735), Christophe Huet mixed mandarins and monkeys so freely that it is often difficult to tell whether an individual figure represents a simian Chinaman or a sapient ape (Fig. 2.2).²⁴

²¹ 'Singerie, *n*'. The Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. 1989. OED Online. Oxford University Press. 30 April 2011 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/>>.

²² Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 91.

²³ *Ibid.*, 91.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.



Figure 2.2: *La Grande Singerie*, panels painted by Christopher Huet, Château de Chantilly, c. 1735. Picture in Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie*, 65.



Figure 2.3: A dance of monkeys. Illustration to 'Of an Egyptian King and his Apes', in John Ogilby, *The Fables of Aesop Paraphras'd in Verse* (London, 1651). According to Frans and Julie Muller, a copy of the 1668 edition of this book was in Betterton's possession. (The Huntington Library, San Marino, California, 106524, pl.55).

While Frans and Julie Muller focus on the physical practicality of this monkey dance with regard to the problems of perspective scenery, whether actors or children dressed as monkeys – or even whether real monkeys were used – nothing has been said about the music. So what role does music have in this visual spectacle? Was there any attempt to create an exotic or mystical type of sound? A quick glance at Example 2.1 would suggest that there was nothing unusual or exotic about the music for the Monkeys' Dance.

MONKEYS' DANCE

41

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Instrumental Bass

6

A

10

15

Example 2.1: 'Monkeys' Dance', *The Fairy Queen*, Act V.

Establishing a link between musical gestures and dramatic action provides a more useful insight as to how music was used to represent this spectacle. According to Curtis Price, Purcell was 'a composer in whom passions ran high. His response to a lyric or a dramatic event was unflinchingly direct; the music almost always declares an

unequivocal point of view'.²⁵ Therefore, one aspect we can consider is Purcell's choice of using a lively 6/8 jig, and how this dance was employed in seventeenth-century England. According to Meredith Little:

Sung and danced jigs were a prominent feature of the stage entertainment called 'jigg', an improvised, farcical, burlesque comedy for two to five actors... The jig seems to have retained its association with light and potentially vulgar things throughout the century, for as late as 1676 Thomas Mace wrote 'Toys or Jiggs, are Light-Squibbish Things, only fit for Fantastical and Easie-Light-Headed People'.²⁶

The Monkeys' dance can be described as a 'character dance' which represented the fantastical and grotesque nature of the 'strange beasts' that inhabited the Chinese garden. The use of the jig enhanced the 'reading' of the monkey dance as a somewhat primitive, comedic, and fantastical episode which would have remained potent as ever for performers and audiences. One can argue that this was embodied more or less directly in the visual element and the notes – even though those notes did not sound 'Chinese'. The point here is that the jig was suggestive of the exotic monkey dance on stage and contributed to the dramatic tension leading to the revelation of the spectacular Chinese garden scene.²⁷

²⁵ Curtis Alexander Price, *Henry Purcell and the London Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 26.

²⁶ Meredith Little, 'Gigue', *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy. <<http://www.grovemusic.com>> (accessed 6 October 2010).

²⁷ According to the 2009 Purcell Society Edition of *The Fairy Queen*, the 'Monkeys' Dance' may have been restored to the Chinese garden masque sequence – to its word-book position, where in Betterton's pre-production imagination it had always

One of the earliest and most widely disseminated books concerning European ideas about China was by the Dutch embassy secretary John Nieuhof in 1655. Translated into English by John Ogilby in 1673, *An Embassy from the East India Company of the United Provinces to the Great Tartar* was the most profusely illustrated work on China of the period, and contained more than one hundred and fifty realistic engravings showing pagodas, strange beasts, palm trees, fringed umbrellas, and people in Chinese costumes.²⁸ According to Muller, the book was among the hundreds owned by Thomas Betterton the actor-manager of Dorset Garden Theatre, and he certainly would have found inspiration in it for the production of Purcell's *Fairy Queen*.²⁹ The section entitled 'Of Strange Beasts or Animals in China' may have influenced the inclusion of the 'Monkey Dance' within the *Fairy Queen* opera, as the following description highlights the peculiarity of these animals:

The province of Fokien hath an animal perfectly resembling a man, but longer arm'd, and hairy all over, call'd Fefe, most swift and greedy after human flesh; which that he may the better make his prey, he feigneth upon him. There are also in China apes and

belonged, and where Purcell too appears to have intended it to go: its key, G major, is the same as that of the following number, 'Hark! how all things', whereas it sits less comfortably between the Entry Dance and the Symphony, both in C major. These suggestions are consistent with the textual evidence and acknowledge the complexity of Betterton's production problem near the end of *The Fairy Queen*. See Andrew Pinnock and Bruce Wood, ed., *The Fairy Queen* Purcell Society Edition ed. (London: Stainer & Bell Ltd, 2009), xxi.

²⁸ Johannes Nieuhof, *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Chan*, trans. John Ogilby (London, 1673). See also Adrienne Ward, *Pagodas in Play: China on the Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera Stage* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010), 34.

²⁹ Frans and Julie Muller, 'Completing the Picture: The Importance of Reconstructing Early Opera', *Early Music* 33/4 (2005), 671.

baboons of a different kind, whereof some imitate men, others, dogs and cats, and are also tractable and docile to admiration...³⁰

In addition to this, the exotic name of the love interest of the Chinese man in the final act appears to have been sourced from the appendix of Ogilby's book. The title of the love song, 'Yes, Xansi', can be linked to a picture of a woman from the province of Xansi (Fig. 2.4).



Figure 2.4: A woman from the province of Xansi. Illustration from John Ogilby, *An Embassy from the East India Company of the United Provinces to the Great Tartar Chan* (London, 1673), between pages 356 and 357. (The Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ashmole H.16).

Detailed descriptions of the stage setting and accounts by witnesses such as John Downes, Peter Motteux, and Colley Cibber confirm that what swept the audience away was downright bedazzlement, the splendour of the scenes and machines in conjunction with lavish costumes and large musical effects.³¹ Frans and Julie Muller attempt to

³⁰ Johannes Nieuhof, *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Chan*, trans. John Ogilby (London, 1673).

³¹ Robert Etheridge Moore, *Henry Purcell and the Restoration Theatre*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1974), 120-121. See also Michael Burden, 'Casting Issues in the Original Production of Purcell's Opera "the Fairy Queen"', *Music and Letters* 84/4 (2003): 596-607.

recreate in our imaginations something of the stage picture in their 2005 article 'Completing the picture: the importance of reconstructing early opera'.³² In the conclusion to their article, they reconstruct a possible imaginative visualization of the seventeenth century theatrical experience and how it may have looked on stage (Fig. 2.5).



Figure 2.5: Computer-animated reconstruction of *The Fairy Queen*, Act V, from Frans and Julie Muller. *The Fairy Queen*: (a) the masque begins; (b) dance on the forestage; (c) the Chinese garden; (d) the monkey dance; (e) Hymen summoned by two Chinese women. Frans and Julie Muller, 'Completing the Picture: The Importance of Reconstructing Early Opera', *Early Music* 33/4 (2005), 679.

According to Hugh Honour, the most likely person to have designed the stage setting is Robert Robinson who specialized in exotic scenes, luxuriant with plants, birds, and beasts, and who is known to have

³² Frans and Julie Muller, 'Completing the Picture: The Importance of Reconstructing Early Opera', *Early Music* 33/4 (2005), 679.

worked for the theatre.³³ His oil paintings are held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and are among the earliest examples of paintings in the chinoiserie style. Airy pagodas, misty hills, glens with palm trees, Chinese figures, exotic birds and beasts, are all portrayed in Robinson's paintings (Fig. 2.6 - 2.8) – images from a land remote, exotic, and unreal enough to stimulate the mystical and narcotic dream world of *The Fairy Queen*. Muller takes a more cautious approach by stating that the fact Robinson was known to have worked for the theatre is 'not enough to link him to the *Fairy Queen* with any certainty, but his decorative work has a theatrical quality and exhibits exotic elements from both east and west'.³⁴ One may never be able to provide a conclusive answer to who painted the scenery, but if indeed Robinson was our artist and he did paint the sets of the fifth act, and perhaps the whole opera, his distinctive fantastical Chinese style must have provided an appropriate visual spectacle for the magical, exotic, and bizarre story of *The Fairy Queen*. Creating a Chinese utopian paradise on stage would have intensified the jubilant nature of two outstanding musical moments in the opera; the duet of the Chinese ladies, and the grand and joyful concluding Chaconne.

³³ Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 78.

³⁴ Frans and Julie Muller, 'Completing the Picture: The Importance of Reconstructing Early Opera', *Early Music* 33/4 (2005), 673. It should be also noted that a contract made up in 1699/1700 between Robinson and Elkanah Settle tells us that he made 'several sets of scenes and machines, for a new opera', probably *The Virgin Prophetess*, or *The Fate of Troy*. It can be found in Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama 1660-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 382.



Figure 2.6: 'A Chinese Dignitary Riding a Fish' (1696) by Robert Robinson (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, P.12-1954/V&A Images).

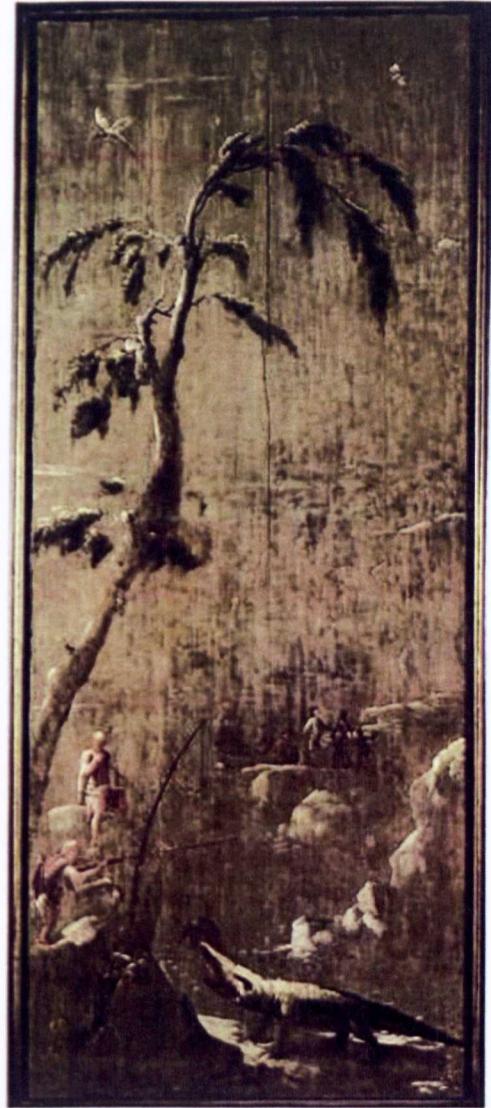


Figure 2.7: (Left) 'A Chinese Princess at a Shrine Figure' (1696) by Robert Robinson (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, P.10-1954/V&A Images).

Figure 2.8: (Right) 'Chinese Fisherman Hunting a Crocodile' (1696) by Robert Robinson (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, P.7-1954/V&A Images).

The duet 'Turn then thine eyes', for two Chinese ladies, glorifies the King and Queen. Tonson's 1692 word book reveals how prior to this moment six pedestals of China-work rise from under the stage, which support six large vases of porcelain, which contain China orange trees

105

ies there, up - on those glor - - - ies there,
 glor - - - ies there, those glor - - - ies there,

And catch-ing, catch-ing flames, catch-ing, catch-ing
 And catch-ing, catch-ing, catch-ing, catch-ing flames, catch-ing, catch-ing

110

G

flames will on, - will on... thy torch ap-pear, And catch-ing, catch-ing
 flames will on, - will on... thy torch ap-pear, And

Example 2.2: continued...

Purcell's music for the opening words reflects the action of 'turning thine eyes' with a series of descending 'turning' triplets. Particularly striking and relevant to the appearance of delicate and decorative chinoiserie objects on stage is the way in which the two soprano voices echo one another and sing in thirds. The overall acoustic effect is one of splendour, fragility, and intricately patterned decor. The series of descending triplets take on specific associations because they are sung to the repeated words 'turn', 'glories', and 'flames'. One thus easily imagines the effect this would have had on an audience who were already immersed in the spectacular appearance of luxurious China orange trees in porcelain vases. Furthermore, Purcell's rising thirds on the word 'flames' audibly build up the dramatic tension towards Hymen's authoritative words: 'My torch indeed will from such brightness shine / Love ne'er had yet such altars, so divine'. Such melismatic passages must be read in context as revealing an exotic Chinese paradise. Chinoiserie was primarily a visual-artistic style, and therefore the non-musical elements (such as the libretto, stage setting, and costumes) were most likely what motivated the composer to copy or create distinctive musical elements. Chinoiserie was a popular commodity, and together with well-documented knowledge of Chinese high-culture, it would have served as the framework within which the performer and listener 'read' the musical codes.

The Fairy-Queen.

Thus wildly we live,
Thus freely we give,
What Heaven as freely bestows.

Chorus. Thus wildly, &c.

We were not made
For Labour and Trade,
Which Fools on each other impose.

Chorus. We were not &c.

A Chinese Man Sings.

YES, *Xanxi*, in your Looks I find
The Charms by which my Heart's betray'd;
Then let not your Disdain unbend
The Prisoner that your Eyes have made.

She that in Love makes least Defence,
Wounds ever with the surest Dart;
Beauty may captivate the Sence,
But Kindness only gains the Heart.

Six Monkeys come from between the Trees, and Dance.

Two Women Sing in Parts.

¹ Wo. **H**ark how all Things with one Sound rejoice,
And the World seems to have one Voice.

² Wo. Hark how the Echoing Air a Triumph sings,
And all around pleas'd Cupids clap their Wings.

¹ Wo. Sure the dull God of Marriage does not hear;
We'll rouse him with a Charm. *Hymen appear!*

Chorus. Appear! Hymen appear!

^B th. Our Queen of Night commands you not to stay.

Chorus. Our Queen, &c.

Enter

*The Fairy-Queen.**Enter Hymen*

Hy. See, see, I obey.
My Torch has long been out, I hate
On loose dissembled Vows to wait.
Where hardly Love out-lives the Wedding-Night,
False Flames, Love's Meteors, yield my Torch no Light.

Six Pedestals of China-work rise from under the Stage; they support six large Vases of Porcelain, in which are six China-Orange-trees.

Both Wo. Turn then thy Eyes upon these Glories there,
And Catching Flames will on thy Torch appear.

Hy. My Torch, indeed, will from such Brightness shine;
Love ne'er had yet such Altars, so divine.

The Pedestals move toward the Front of the Stage, and the Grand Dance begins of Twenty four Persons; then Hymen and the Two Women sing together.

They shall be as happy as they're fair;
Love shall fill all the Places of Care:
And every time the Sun shall display
His Rising Light,
It shall be to them a new Wedding-Day;
And when he sets; a new Nuptial-Night.

A Chinese Man and Woman dance.

The Grand Ch. They shall be, &c.

All the Dancers join in it.

Oh. At Dead of Night we'll to the Bride-bed come,
And sprinkle hallow'd Dew-drops round the Room.
Tit. We'll drive the Fume about; about,
To keep all Noxious Spirits out;
That the Issue they create,
May be ever fortunate.

OK

Figure 2.9: Jacob Tonson, *The Fairy Queen – Word Book* (London, 1692).

After the duet 'Turn then thine eyes', Tonson's 1692 word book indicates that the porcelain vases move toward the front of the stage, and 'the grand dance begins of the twenty four persons' (Fig. 2.9). Significantly, for this grand dance Purcell chose to compose a Chaconne, which was to be danced by twenty-four Chinese men and women on stage (Ex. 2.3). What was the significance of using the Chaconne dance? And why have it danced by Chinese men and women? Would it have been recognised as exotic? Did it support the notion of splendour and stateliness that would have been appreciated by Queen Mary and King William?

CHACONNE

DANCE FOR CHINESE MEN AND WOMEN

49

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Instrumental Bass

5

A

10

15

B

20

Example 2.3: 'Chaconne', *The Fairy Queen*, Act V.

The Chaconne, with its Spanish origins, provided Purcell with immediate access to a foreign musical language. According to Miriam Whaples,

Exotic dances are of two kinds in the seventeenth century. On the one hand are the dances of genuinely non-European provenance or connotation: the Moresca, Canaries, Sarabande, Chaconne, Forlana. On the other hand are dances, frequently called merely 'dance' or 'air,' rendered exotic in context by the identity of the characters performing them.³⁶

Although the Chaconne was not specific to China, the twenty-four Chinese male and female characters dancing on stage would have extended its exotic connotations to the utopian Chinese garden scene.

The Chaconne celebrated the marriage vows and triumphant love between Titania and Oberon. It also resolved the confusion between the mortal lovers who are finally paired up with their rightful love interests: 'They shall be as happy as they're fair / Love shall fill all the places of care / And every time the sun shall display his rising light / It shall be to them a new wedding day / And when he sets, a new nuptial night'. For Rose A. Pruiksma:

Whether providing an aural depiction of a nation outside France – Spanish, Italian, North African, or even Chinese – or weaving a sensuous message celebrating the delights of physical love, the theatrical chaconne in Lully's oeuvre richly evoked a

³⁶ Miriam Whaples, 'Early Exoticism Revisited' in Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 15.

significant set of aural and visual stereotypes for French audiences. Able to communicate on a variety of levels, Lully's chaconnes in their theatrical contexts worked on the implicit ties between foreignness, exoticism, and sexuality that can be found not only in Furetiere's dictionaries, but elsewhere in the literature and drama of the seventeenth century. The chaconne, as an Hispanic export, allowed for the presence of the necessary physical side of love on the stage at the same time that it kept that carnality slightly apart from the character of the true Frenchman. The two sides of the chaconne – foreign and sexual – worked in tandem, each reinforcing the other.³⁷

Purcell similarly informs the audience (who would have been familiar with Shakespeare's play) that this love is not merely a spiritual union, but perhaps also a satisfyingly physical one. Already well-known and condemned in Spain as being a rather lewd dance song, its use here suggests the composer's awareness of its erotic potential and the safe displacement of this potential onto the bodies of foreign, Chinese characters.³⁸

In conclusion, *The Fairy Queen* is a semi-opera of ideas of love and marriage, of illusion and imagination, of the symbolic roles of night and

³⁷ Rose A. Pruiksma, 'Music, Sex, and Ethnicity: Signification in Lully's Theatrical Chaconnes' in Todd M. Borgerding, ed., *Gender, Sexuality, and Early Music* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 238-240.

³⁸ For more information about the history of the Chaconne, see Thomas Walker, 'Ciaccona and Passacaglia: Remarks on Their Origin and Early History', *American Musicological Society* 21 (1968): 300-5, and Lorenzo Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth-Century*, trans. David Bryant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 101-104.

day – and where better than to locate these themes than the mysterious Chinese garden. This final scene portrays the symbolic roles in which enlightened order is seen as incarnate in the spontaneous rational behaviours of men and women in an oriental Eden (The Chinese garden), which is untarnished by the false sophistications of modern Europe. As Roger Savage suggests, the character Bottom's words are at the very heart of the midsummer night's dream as he says, 'reason and love keep little company together nowadays – the more the pity that some honest neighbours will not make them friends': it is the function of the Chinese Masque in Act V of the *Fairy Queen* to do just that.³⁹

Chinoiserie Chic: A Sign of Wealth and Sophistication

Imitations of original works or reinterpretations of an exotic theme experienced a boom in the most disparate kinds of artistic production in England.⁴⁰ Impassioned collectors such as Queen Mary were eagerly purchasing embroidered silk hangings, paintings, lacquer cabinets, and blue and white porcelain vases. Such products were endearingly put on display, and underwent certain modifications to fit into the European home. For example, porcelain vases were often mounted onto gilt metal or arranged en masse in what can only be described as a collector's

³⁹ Roger Savage, 'The Shakespeare - Purcell *Fairy Queen*: A Defence and Recommendation', *Early Music* 1/1 (1973), 217.

⁴⁰ Francesco Morena, *Chinoiserie: The Evolution of the Oriental Style in Italy from the 14th to the 19th Century*, trans. Eve Leckey (Florence: Centro Di, 2009), 89.

ornamental showpiece. Figure 2.10 shows an eight-level, pyramidal étagère which was designed to display Chinese porcelain.⁴¹ The mirrors in the back reflect the pieces exhibited and would have enhanced the “baroque” qualities of glitter, extravagance, and luxury’ that were so valued.⁴²



Figure 2.10: Étagère lined with mirrors, Berlin, c.1695. Staatliche Schloesser und Garten, Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin. Picture in Madeleine Jarry, *Chinoiserie*, 62.

Chinoiserie, it should be noted at the outset, was a pan-European phenomenon, and fashionable Chinese commodities were popular all over Europe. A surge in demand for chinoiserie objects is particularly apparent in the first decades of the eighteenth century. The main reasons for this can be attributed to a steady increase in market

⁴¹ Madeleine Jarry, *Chinoiserie. Chinese Influence on European Decorative Art, 17th and 18th Centuries*, trans. Gail Mangold-Vine (London: Vendome Press, 1981), 62.

⁴² Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie* (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), 32.

demand for fashionable novelties, as well as the emergence of ritualized tea drinking as a pleasurable and sophisticated pastime. The popularity of the chinoiserie style infiltrated daily life and was applied to a diverse range of objects, from the typical blue and white porcelain vases, to wig stands, clocks, beds, and even harpsichords (see Figures 2.11 to 2.16). One can only imagine the touch of elegance the chinoiserie harpsichord would have brought to an eighteenth-century drawing room. Not only was it an object to be treasured and put on display, but it was also an instrument to produce musical sound. Playing on such a decadent and exotically embellished instrument would have no doubt added another dimension to the musical experience, both for the player and for the audience.



Figure 2.11: A collection of English Delftware. One hundred and thirty years divide the plate (top left) of 1630 from the teapot (bottom right) of 1760. Picture in Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie*, 50.



Figure 2.12: Fan showing various Chinese scenes. Possibly Dutch, c.1770. Picture in Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie*, 89.



Figure 2.13: Harpsichord, c.1710. Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin. Picture in Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie*, 42.



Figure 2.14: (Left) Wig stand in blue and white faience, 1675. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Figure 2.15: (Right) Detail of hand-printed wallpaper, c.1760. In the Chinese bedroom at Blickling Hall, Norfolk. Picture in Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie*, 148.



Figure 2.16: Salon Pillement, c.1750. Château de Craon, Haroué. Picture in Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie*, 90.

European royalty had the money and resources to take this fashion for chinoiserie one step further by building large-scale Chinese-inspired architectural delights. In France, the *Trianon de porcelain* (1670-71) was commissioned by Louis XIV for his mistress Madame de Montespan. According to Jacobson 'the Trianon de Porcelaine's great novelty was that its balustrades were loaded with Chinese vases, its roofs covered with blue and white faience tiles and its somewhat chilly interiors decorated with blue and white chinoiseries filled with furniture in the Chinese manner' (Figure 2.16).⁴³ It was the first of many Chinese inspired buildings to adorn the parks of Europe, and following this numerous other Chinese pagodas, latticed tea-houses, kiosks and 'Confucian' temples sprung up in every corner of Europe, from Drottingholm to Naples.⁴⁴ In England in 1762, a ten-storey Chinese pagoda was built in Kew Gardens, and at nearly fifty metres high was the tallest reconstruction of a Chinese building in Europe at the time (Figure 2.18).⁴⁵ In Sweden in 1753, Queen Louisa Ulrique (sister of Frederick the Great) was given a Chinese pavilion for her thirty-fourth birthday (Figure 2.17). An elaborate ceremony was put on to celebrate where the entire court all dressed in Chinese costume; the keys were handed to the Queen by her mandarin-robed seven-year-old son. The

⁴³ Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie* (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), 35.

⁴⁴ Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 53.

⁴⁵ This pagoda was designed by Sir William Chambers, and is significant in that it inspired garden architects across Europe, Russia, and the United States. William Chamber's *Designs of Chinese Buildings* (1757) and *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772) are very significant in the history of chinoiserie.

memorable birthday concluded with a Chinese ballet.⁴⁶ In Italy, one of the most elaborate pieces of chinoiserie was the Porcelain Room made for the royal villa at Portici between 1757 and 1759 in the apartment of Queen Maria Amalia (Figure 2.19). The room was completely lined with around three thousand pieces of Capodimonte porcelain, mostly in a pure glistening white.⁴⁷ They fitted together like a jigsaw, embellished with Chinamen, exotic birds, butterflies, flowers and monkeys – rather similar in fact to the irregular Chinese garden described in Purcell's *Fairy Queen*.

⁴⁶ Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie* (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), 94-95, and Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 117.

⁴⁷ Francesco Morena, *Chinoiserie: The Evolution of the Oriental Style in Italy from the 14th to the 19th Century*, trans. Eve Leckey (Florence: Centro Di, 2009), 190-192, and Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie* (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), 116.

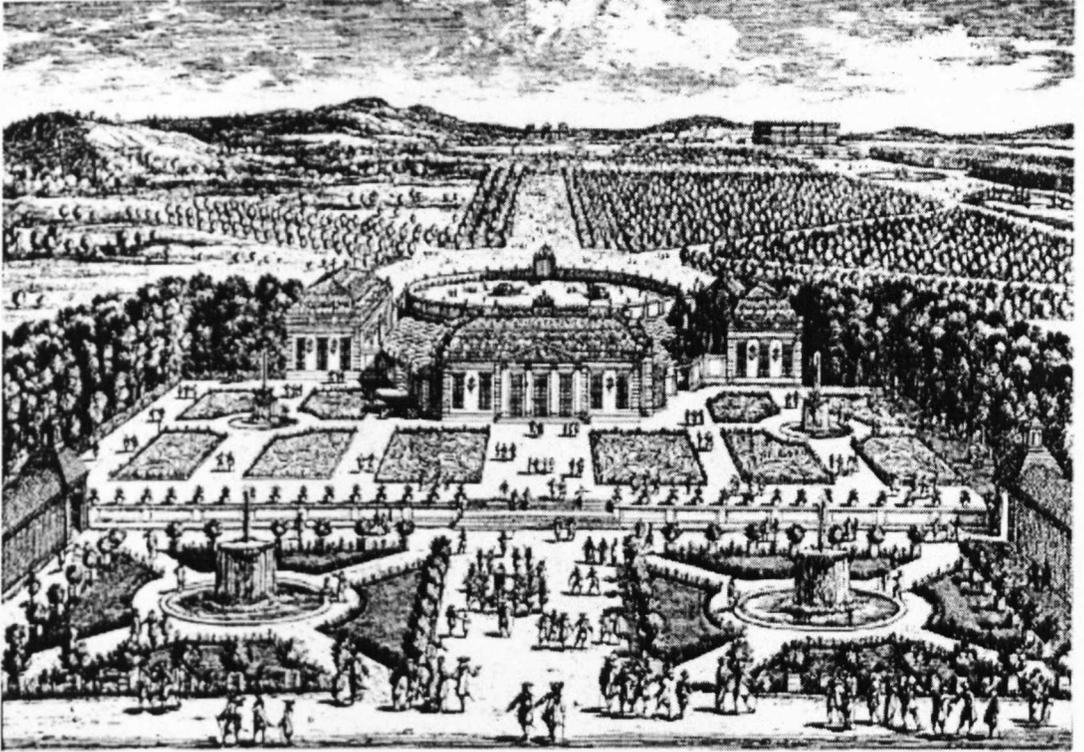


Figure 2.16: The Trianon de Porcelaine, Versailles. Engraving, c. 1675. Picture taken from Thomas H. Lee, ed., *China and Europe* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1991), 247.



Figure 2.17: The Chinese Pavillion, Drottningholm, 1754. Picture take from Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie*, 88.



Figure 2.18: Pagoda at Kew Gardens in Surrey, England, built in 1762. Picture taken by Robin Webster. Geograph Britain and Ireland Project. <<http://www.geograph.org.uk/>> (accessed 23/08/11).



Figure 2.19: The Porcelain Room made for the Royal Villa at Portici, Naples, 1757-1759. Picture taken from Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie*, 137.

Empress Maria Therese and *Le Cinesi* (1754)

By the mid-eighteenth century, operas and ballets with a Chinese theme became even more elaborate and spectacular, and increasingly associated with highly respected Chinese virtues, widely documented by Jesuit scholars. For example, Rameau's *Les Paladins* (1760) has an elaborate Chinese pagoda scene, Noverre's ballet *Les Fêtes Chinoises* (1751) is documented as having lavish Chinese costumes and scenery, and a cluster of musical versions of Metastasio's *L'eroe Cinese* (1752) was created by Italian composers. Many of these works used chinoiserie to symbolize or honour the royal state, or to introduce an admired Chinese political system and supremely peaceful governance into a European context. Furthermore, the fashion for collecting chinoiserie objects became increasingly viewed as a feminine virtue, 'which often presented as a form of madness – a madness frequently manifested in women and associated with sexual disorder; mania for the country of China and for its most coveted and unusual product, porcelain'.⁴⁸ According to Hugh Honour, 'Chinoiseries of the baroque era stressed the magnificence and prodigality of the imagined orient – they abounded in opulently robed princes, jungles of burgeoning fruit-trees, herds of strange fauna – while those of the eighteenth century revealed its grace and whimsical charm'.⁴⁹ In some respects this general statement describes the way in which chinoiserie was used in

⁴⁸ Rosalind Ballaster, *Fabulous Orient: Fictions of the East in England 1662-1785* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 204.

⁴⁹ Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 85.

the two operas under discussion: *The Fairy Queen* focussed on a magical, bizarre Chinese wilderness to convey splendour and magnificence, whilst *Le Cinesi* indulged in the 'grace and whimsical charm' of three Chinese ladies at tea in a sparkling and magnificent Chinese setting.

Just like Queen Mary, Empress Maria Theresa was an avid collector of chinoiserie items, but with a particular love for Chinese lacquer. According to Michael E. Yonan, this love of lacquer emerged 'less from a close relationship with the Far East than from a mythical one directly relevant to Habsburg identity. This was not a new role for non-European imagery at court, since for decades the concept of exotic, faraway lands had offered the Habsburgs a series of associations relevant to the process of dynastic glorification'.⁵⁰ Schonbrunn's most noteworthy and sumptuous room, the Vieux-Laque Zimmer in Maria Theresa's summer palace is testament to this as portraits of the royal family are interspersed with Chinese lacquered wood panels. This reception room simultaneously celebrated Maria Theresa's eminent ancestors, the dynasty's longevity, her cutting edge artistic activities and advanced taste (Figs. 2.21 - 2.22). Empress Maria Theresa's passion for Chinese decor and goods also manifested itself in her art patronage. China served as the setting for various theatrical presentations and operas held at court, many of which invited comparisons between the Habsburgs and their Chinese counterparts. In a similar way to the

⁵⁰ Michael E. Yonan, 'Veneers of Authority: Chinese Lacquers in Maria Theresa's Vienna', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37/4 (2004): 652-72.

Vieux-Laque Zimmer room, Quaglio's luxuriously Chinese styled stage setting for Gluck's opera *Le Cinesi* (1754), with libretto by Metastasio, reinforced such ideals and notions of class distinction.

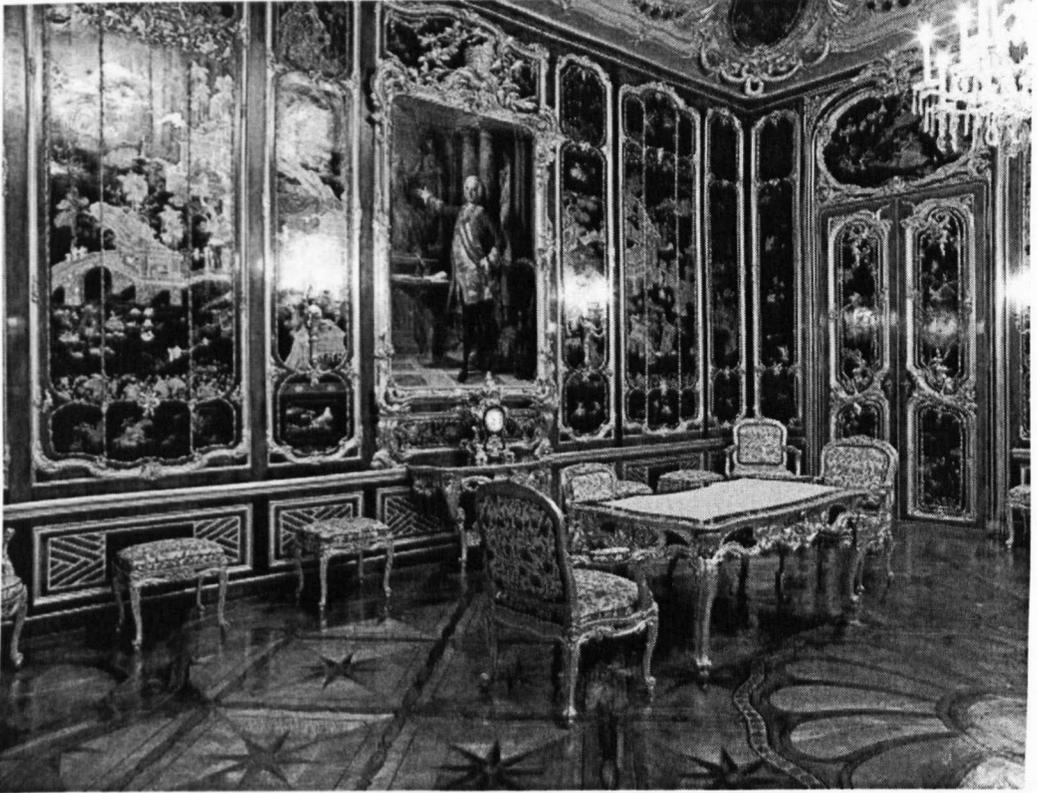


Figure 2.20: Vieux-Laque Zimmer, view to the northeast. Schloss Schönbrunn, Vienna. Photo: Bildarchiv, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.



Figure 2.21: Vieux-Laque Zimmer, view to the northwest. Schloss Schönbrunn, Vienna. Photo: Bildarchiv, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

Italian opera performed in Vienna was an instrument of state, celebrating Habsburg victories, marriages and anniversaries, and *Le Cinesi* can be understood in this context.⁵¹ Two years earlier, Pietro Metastasio had written the *drama per musica L'eroe cinese* (1752) at the express wishes of Empress Maria Theresa.⁵² The plot involved mistaken identities and questions of paternity at the Chinese court, with the true hero claiming his right to the throne. Adrienne Ward describes how China served as a model for the enlightened Catholic sovereignty:

⁵¹ Bruce Alan Brown, 'Maria Theresa's Vienna' in Neal Zaslaw, ed., *The Classical Era: From the 1740s to the End of the 18th Century* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 108.

⁵² Adrienne Ward, *Pagodas in Play: China on the Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera Stage* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010), 98.

Heroic opera engaged with its surrounding culture by stressing more than ever the attitudes, behaviours, and qualities necessary to the successful functioning of the enlightened Catholic state. The motifs of early opera seria – the celebration of civilized peoples and the virtues of proper hereditary monarchies – still obtained. Now it was time to recognise the merits of the victors and their policies for peaceful governing. The wish to entrench the newly acquired tranquillity led to a heightened emphasis on the values of clemency, loyalty, and personal sacrifice for the greater good.⁵³

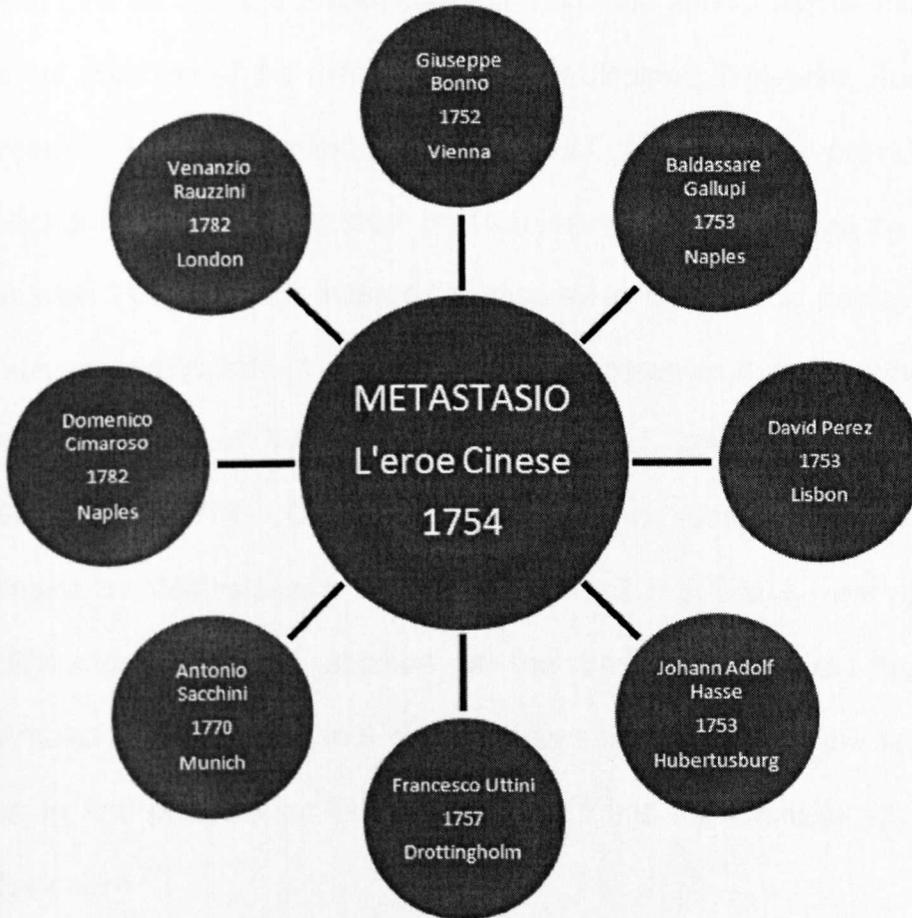
Ideal notions of clemency, loyalty, personal sacrifice, and peaceful governing were directly influenced by positive Jesuit interpretations of Confucianism. *L'eroe Cinese* expanded upon and explored all these issues which reinforced the idea of the Imperial Court at Beijing as the paragon of absolute splendour and magnificence.⁵⁴ These qualities were easily transferable to the Habsburg court.⁵⁵ First set to music by Giuseppe Bonno in Vienna, 1752, Metastasio's *L'eroe cinese* proceeded to inspire a number of composers thereafter. Table 2.1 demonstrates how Metastasio's *L'eroe Cinese* inspired numerous composers across Europe. All these performances occurred at the

⁵³ Ibid., 100.

⁵⁴ The French writer and philosopher Voltaire also generated visions of an extremely sage and benevolent Chinese emperor who ruled over his empire judiciously. In 1755, Voltaire had written *L'Orphelin de la Chine* which was based on a very similar plot.

⁵⁵ Elaborate ceremonies at the Habsburg court drew much comment from visitors. In the early eighteenth century, the Habsburgs had even adopted open-air sedans or *Sänften* carried by human beings in direct imitation of perceived Chinese practice. See Michael E Yonan, 'Veneers of Authority: Chinese Lacquers in Maria Theresa's Vienna', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37/4 (2004), 663.

height of Europe's fascination with China and were a musical expression of the latest fashion in chinoiserie. A study of all these works would constitute a substantial thesis in its own right, so for the purpose of this chapter we must turn our attention to one story: the premiere of Gluck's opera *Le Cinesi* in 1754, which was based on Metastasio's revised version of his 1735 text.⁵⁶



Metastasio's *L'eroe Cinese* is based on a chapter of ancient dynastic history ('La storia Tchao-kong') contained in Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'empire de la chine et de la tartarie chinoise* (Paris: P.G. Le Mercier. 1735).

Table 2.1: Composers who wrote operas based on Metastasio's *L'eroe Cinese* (1754). The table shows the date of composition and place where the opera was premiered.

⁵⁶ Metastasio's 1735 text was first set to music by Antonio Caldara and commissioned by Empress Elizabeth in the same year as part of the celebration festivities at Charles IV's court in Vienna.

In September 1754 the Austrian royal family paid a hugely anticipated and ceremonious four-day visit to Schlosshof an der March, the residence outside Vienna of Joseph Friedrich Prince of Saxe-Hildburghausen. A series of glittering events had been carefully planned for the delectation of the imperial family (represented in force by the Emperor Francis, the Empress Maria Theresa, the Archdukes Joseph and Charles and the Archduchesses Marianne and Christine, as well as other notables of the royal suite). Water displays, fireworks, Bacchanal scenes, hunting parties and other such amusements provided the backdrop to three theatrical entertainments commissioned by Prince Joseph Friedrich and intended to display to the full the powers of his musical establishment. At this grand and ceremonious occasion came the premiere of Willibald Gluck's one-act opera, *Le Cinesi* (24 September 1754). Commissioned by Prince Joseph Friedrich and based on Metastasio's revised version of the twenty-year-old text, Dittersdorf's detailed account of the premiere captures both the atmosphere of the original circumstances which brought the work into being and provides an illuminating insight into the Chinese element in this opera.⁵⁷

I have still before my eyes the exquisite performance of 'Le Cinesi', the slight comic opera, arranged by Metastasio from his play 'Il Ballo Cinese', and set to music by Gluck. Quaglio's decorations were quite in the Chinese taste, and transparent.

⁵⁷ Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739-1799) was an Austrian composer and violinist. Joseph Friedrich Prince of Saxe-Hildburghausen noticed him and hired him for his court orchestra, and there he would have worked closely with Gluck.

Workers in lacquer, carpenters and gilders, had lavished all their resources upon them, but their chief brilliancy depended on prismatic poles of glass, which had been polished by Bohemian craftsmen, and were carefully fitted into one another in empty places, preciously soaked in coloured oils. They were very effective, even in sunshine and the broad light of day, but no pen can describe the surpassing and astounding brilliancy of these prisms when lit up by innumerable lamps. The reader must imagine the reflected brilliancy of the azure-coloured meadows of lacquer, the glitter of the gilded foliage, and, lastly, the rainbow-like colours repeated by hundreds of prisms, and flashing like diamonds of the finest water. The most vivid fancy will fall short of the real magic. And then, Gluck's god-like music! It was not only delicious playfulness of the sparkling symphony, accompanied now and again by little bells, triangles, small hand-drums, etc., sometimes singly, sometimes all together, which, at the very outset, and before the raising of the curtain, transported the audience: the music was from first to last an enchantment.⁵⁸

Dittersdorf's account reveals how the Chinese subject of the opera was staged with chinoiserie objects to produce a spectacular visual experience. Lacquer works, glass works, coloured oils, lamps, and gilded foliage work were in abundance and showcased an intensely rich and luxurious setting, which gave the effect of shimmering rainbow colours, and prisms like diamonds. Significantly, Dittersdorf also refers

⁵⁸ Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf, *The Autobiography of Karl Von Dittersdorf* (London: R. Bentley and Son, 1896), 70-72.

to the music which was 'accompanied here and there by little chimes, triangles, hand drums and bells, now singly, now altogether, which sent the listener, even before the curtain had risen, into a transport of delight'. It would seem that the delicate and glass-like sounds of the percussion section were heard even before the curtain had risen, which would have transported the listener aurally and perhaps alerted the audience to a musical depiction of a Chinese subject.

Sitting at tea and feeling bored are three young aristocratic Chinese ladies in the spectacular setting described by Dittersdorf. After pondering on the best way to pass time, Lisanga (the hostess) suggests some play-acting to provide some entertainment. She proposes that each of them take turns to act a small dramatic scene of their own choice, with costumes and properties to be imagined. They each agree to act out short scenes in one of the three principal dramatic styles: tragic, pastoral, and comic. Once they have performed their scenes and exhibited three theatrical types, the three Chinese ladies have a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of each. They come to decide that tragic plays can often be too heavy in view of their exaggerated pathos, that the pastoral can lack variety and is prone to becoming boring, and that comedy can often be offensive when mockery and caricature are involved. After all these critical reflections and objections, it seems that the best thing to do is look for another form of entertainment that would please them all. They find their unanimous answer to this is to dance a ballet, since everyone finds satisfaction and pleasure in the combination of music and dance.

From this brief synopsis, we can deduce that China thus far took to the stage in terms of the singers' apparel, their tea ware, and the Chinese room. The opera displayed imperial women partaking in a most fashionable social vogue, tea drinking, and became an opportunity to foreground both the custom and the luxury goods. *Le Cinesi* was actually first performed in 1735 with an earlier version of Metastasio's text, and was set to music by Antonio Caldara. According to Adrienne Ward, this performance took place in the imperial apartments of the young Archduchess Maria Theresa, which may have been decorated in a Chinese style even apart from the performance occasion.⁵⁹ For this Viennese courtly entertainment, Empress Maria Theresa had herself played the most senior of the three female roles. Her sister Marianne and a lady in waiting took the other two parts.⁶⁰ Metastasio's revised version of *Le Cinesi* was therefore a project bound to attract a personal interest in the Empress herself. Gerhard Croll, editor of the Gluck Collected Edition score of *Le Cinesi* suggests in his preface that the Empress Maria Therese may even have inspired the plan for reviving the Metastasio entertainment during the proposed Schlosshof visit.⁶¹ The revised version of *Le Cinesi* (1754) highlights the Chinese subject to a much greater extent with the addition of a male character called Silango – the brother of Lisanga. According to Max Loppert, he was 'a

⁵⁹ Adrienne Ward, *Pagodas in Play: China on the Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera Stage* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010), 169.

⁶⁰ Max Loppert, 'Gluck's Chinese Ladies: An Introduction', *The Musical Times* 125/1696 (1984), 322.

⁶¹ Christoph Willibald Gluck, *Le Cinesi* (1754). Edited by Gerhard Croll. Gluck Collected Edition (New York: Kassel, 1958).

young Chinese gentleman of fine manners polished by a recent sojourn in Europe'.⁶² Having returned from travels in Europe, Silango authoritatively provides information on the difference between Chinese and Western customs. Significantly, he accounts for much of the way China is coded in the revised *Metastasio* version.⁶³

Silango reminds the audience of the 'exotic' location of China, by highlighting the differences between Chinese and European customs, and the strict formalities between men and women. Hiding behind a folding screen and listening to the chatter of the three Chinese ladies, Silango makes his first appearance as he intrudes into their private quarters, and interrupts their conversation.

- Silango: Perhaps may I make a suggestion, ladies, if I'm not disturbing you.
- Tangia: (rising in alarm) A man!
- Lisanga: (rising in alarm) Alas!
- Sivene: (rising in alarm) What treachery is this?
- Silango: Stop, be calm! Does my arrival so frighten you? And what is it you see? A snake, a tigress?
- Tangia: Oh, far worse!
- Lisanga: I hoped for more respect from you, brother. These private apartments are forbidden to all men. You know that, surely?
- Silango: I know, but that's a Chinese absurdity. Throughout the west they laugh – and I myself have seen them – at this eccentric and rare custom.
- Tangia: What one learns from going round the world!

⁶² Max Loppert, 'Gluck's Chinese Ladies: An Introduction', *The Musical Times* 125 (1984), 321-323 [322].

⁶³ Adrienne Ward, *Pagodas in Play: China on the Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera Stage* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010), 170.

- Sivene: Ah, my dear Lisanga, I don't know where I can be. If you love me, feel how violently my heart is throbbing! (She puts Lisanga's hand on her breast)
- Lisanga: I am blazing with anger.
- Tangia: Oh heaven! What will be said of us throughout the city? Everyone will know of it – our relations, the neighbours, the people, the court and the mandarins!⁶⁴

Not only does Silango divide the text of the original three females, he also provides dramatic tension as his intrusion completely shocks and frightens them. Musically, this is represented with a significant and abrupt change of key from a predominantly minor tonality to Bb major (Ex. 2.4). Furthermore, his knowledge of the foreign land of Europe also makes him in the eyes of the three Chinese ladies, worldly and exotic (a kind of reverse exoticism). However, one can also consider that Silango represents the voice of the West as he intrudes upon a feminine Chinese space with talk about how absurd 'their' customs are, and disrupting their peace. Silango breaks rules as he crosses the divide between men and women, while a distressed Lisanga sings 'I hoped for more respect from you, brother. These private apartments are forbidden to all men'. Knowledgeable, worldly, and feeling rather superior about his recent arrival back from travels to Europe, Silango dismisses this rule as a 'Chinese absurdity'. He claims that 'throughout the West they laugh' and that with his own eyes he has seen this 'rare and eccentric custom'. The prudishness and highly conservative respect demanded from the aristocratic Chinese women, would have no doubt appealed to the Austrian monarchy's conservatism and strict Catholic culture.

⁶⁴ Libretto taken from Christoph W. Gluck, *Le Cinesi* [1754]. Edited and translated into English by Gerhard Croll. Gluck Collected Edition (New York: Kassel, 1958).

25 SIVENE TANGIA
 LIS. *li - ce!* *Bel - lis - si - mo è il pen - sier!* *Ma l'in - ven - ta - re è men fa - ci - le a - sai di quel che*
 Ein - fall! So geist - reich und voll Witz! Ihr habt gut re - den! 'ist doch gar nicht so leicht, als es mag

28 *Si scopre improvvisamente Silango* SILANGO
 TANG. *pa - re.* *Di - rò, Nin - fa, an - cor i - o il pa - vor mi - o, se non vi son ma -*
 schi - nen. Ver - zeiht, ihr schö - nen Mäd - chen, wenn ich euch stö - re - viel - leicht kann ich euch

31 TANGIA LISINGA SIVENE SILANGO
 LIS. *le - sto.* *Un - no - mo!* *Ahi - mè!* *Che tra - di - men - to è que - sto?* *Fer - ma - te - vi, ta -*
 hel - fen. Hilf Hin - mel! Ein Mann! Weh uns, wir sind ver - ra - ten! Be - ruhigt euch, nur

Example 2. 4: Silango's intrusion to the apartment of the Chinese ladies in *Le Cinesi*, recitativo, 'E ben: stupide e mute'.

The second and final instance in which China is explicitly referred to in the libretto occurs just a little further along in the opera. At this point, Lisanga comes up with the idea to perform some theatrical piece for their common entertainment.

- Lisanga: Let's perform some theatrical piece.
 Sivene: Oh yes, I like that.
 Tangia: That's the best idea.
 Lisanga: Each of us can display her skill and imagination.
 Silango: And yet this art is common only in European countries; here in the East it's still strange to us Chinese.
 Sivene: No longer.
 Tangia: Choose the subject, dear Lisanga.
 Silango: Let it be something customary on European stages!⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Libretto taken from Christoph W. Gluck, *Le Cinesi* [1754]. Edited and translated into English by Gerhard Croll. Gluck Collected Edition (New York: Kassel, 1958).

According to Silango, a theatrical piece is an art common only in European countries and to the Chinese it is extremely unfamiliar. Ward suggests that Silango's few short lines 'Let it be something customary on European stages!' sets up a dichotomy between European operatic theatre and its lack in China, an imagined no-man's land in terms of dramatic achievements.⁶⁶ As the plot now focuses on Chinese characters embracing European performance, it raises some tricky questions: Was there any need or attempt to convey Chinese otherness in the music itself? Were there any significant developments in musical codes to represent the exotic? Was there more information available about Chinese culture and music – and if so was it taken on board by Gluck in *Le Cinesi*?

A CHINESE POLONAISE?

In order to answer these questions, this section focuses on the elaborate grand finale of Gluck's *Le Cinesi*. At this point in the opera, the three Chinese ladies decide that dancing a ballet is the best option of all the theatrical types, as everyone finds satisfaction and pleasure in the combination of music and dance. Significantly, Gluck composes a polonaise for this final dance. In the Vienna of 1754, a polonaise dance was both exotic and in vogue, and in the context of the Chinese plot and setting would have been heard as exotic in a Chinese manner. One

⁶⁶ Adrienne Ward, *Pagodas in Play: China on the Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera Stage* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010), 170.

may argue that this seems rather far-fetched, but we need to remember exactly what kind of musical sounds were recognised as exotic, and what musical codes were commonly used to denote cultural difference in music. Three aspects are considered, each in turn. Firstly, an attempt is made to understand why the polonaise was recognised as exotic and what it represented in eighteenth-century Vienna. Secondly, an investigation into the way the percussion described by Dittersdorf contributed to shaping the polonaise into a Chinese context. And thirdly, identifying the way in which the polonaise in combination with the highly nuanced percussion reflected the decorative visual aspect on stage.

By 1754 only two sources are known to have contained information on Chinese music. The first source was by Matteo Ricci, the pioneering missionary of the late sixteenth century. He reported very little concerning Chinese music and what he did report was uninformative and unfavourable. Ricci's contempt for monophony, for percussion, and for what he identifies only as 'a lack of concord, a discord of discords,' strongly resembles contemporary accounts of Turkish music.⁶⁷

The whole art of Chinese music seems to consist in producing a monotonous rhythmic beat as they know nothing of the variations and harmony that can be produced by combining different musical notes. However, they themselves are highly flattered by

⁶⁷ Jeremy Day-O'Connell, *Pentatonicism from the Eighteenth Century to Debussy* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 49-50.

their own music which to the ear of a stranger represents nothing but a discordant jangle.⁶⁸

Over one hundred years later, Jean Baptist Du Halde's four-volume *Description...de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* (1735) improved on Ricci with three pages on the subject of Chinese music, albeit a music still deplored as 'so imperfect that it hardly deserves the name'.⁶⁹ It is unlikely these limited Chinese music sources were consulted by musicians, as most eighteenth-century composers were not yet concerned with ethnomusicology. Even a familiarity with Turkish music would not have led them to adopt it without considerable modification, for, as Mozart said, the composer should not offend the ear of the listener. According to Eve R. Meyer,

The characters in most exotic operas of the time – despite their Oriental names – tended to speak and act exactly like European courtiers, and, although the librettos alluded to actual historic happenings, they usually ignored ethnic references and precise details of Eastern locale. More realistic interpretations of Oriental characters and customs were not in evidence until the second half of the century...Western composers and their audiences were not yet ready to give up their prejudices against a style of music they considered primitive and unappealing.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Matteo Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matteo Ricci 1583-1610*, trans. Louis J. Gallagher (New York: Random House, 1953 [1615]), 22.

⁶⁹ Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'empire de la chine et de la Tartarie Chinoise*, (Paris: P.G. Le Mercier, 1735).

⁷⁰ Eve R. Meyer, 'Turquerie and Eighteenth Century Music', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7/4 (1974), 476.

As demonstrated earlier, eighteenth-century chinoiserie in the visual and literary arts were highly prized and desired commodities; knowledge of China was widespread and well documented. However, in musical representations of this time there appears to have been a historical lag. Miriam Whaples, who examined approximately one hundred scores of exotic dramatic works written between 1600 and 1800, found no direct evidence of quotations from published transcriptions of Turkish or other non-European music.⁷¹ However, this does not mean that composers would not have crafted imagined and hybridised forms of exotic music. The grand finale polonaise dance of *Le Cinesi* gives an example of how China was musically imagined and represented.

Processional in nature, the polonaise assumed martial overtones and its elevated status in Poland promoted its dissemination across Europe.⁷² According to Mattheson, who in 1739 was writing about the types of dances actually performed in 'rooms, salons, and great chambers', the polonaise was a popular dance that had been widely danced in Europe for some time.⁷³ The simple folk *polonez* had been adopted by the seventeenth-century Polish nobility, who transformed it

⁷¹ Miriam K. Whaples, 'Exoticism in Dramatic Music, 1600-1800' (Diss. Indiana University, 1958): 95-124.

⁷² Stephen Downes, 'Polonaise', *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy. <<http://www.grovemusic.com>> (accessed 20 October 2010).

⁷³ Irving Godt, 'Politics, Patriotism, and a Polonaise: A Possible Revision in Bach's 'Suite in B Minor'', *The Musical Quarterly* 74/4 (1990), 610-622 [618-619].

into a more sophisticated dance, suitable for their refined, cultured courts.⁷⁴

Example 2.5: 'Polonaise', *Le Cinesi*.

Gluck's final polonaise was considered sophisticated and exotic, not only because of its national character, but because it was shaped into a particularly Chinese context through a nuanced 'Turkish' percussive style. According to Taylor, Turks were the 'default foreign Others'.⁷⁵ The unusual sounds of musical *turquerie* would therefore have promulgated the notion of a distant and mysterious China and may have contributed to the formation of an early musical chinoiserie.

⁷⁴ Stephen Downes, 'Polonaise', *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy. <<http://www.grovemusic.com>> (accessed 20 October 2010).

⁷⁵ Tim Taylor, 'Peopling the Stage: Opera, Otherness, and New Musical Representation in the Eighteenth Century', *Cultural Critique* 36 (1997), 57.

According to Jonathan Bellman, the *alla turca* style was 'the first codified expression of the strange and exotic' in Western music.⁷⁶ This Turkish style was a complex of generally noisy materials derived, in large part, from the military music of Janissary troops, or, rather, from Western impressions and distant memories thereof.⁷⁷ Europeans were fascinated with the new, 'barbarous' sound of the noisy percussion instruments, for in the eighteenth century only kettle drums were commonly used in orchestral music. The Turkish percussion group included bass drums, kettle drums, cymbals, triangles,⁷⁸ large tambourines, and the Turkish crescent (chaghana). The Turkish crescent was a pole ornamented with horse-tail plumes in different colours, with several crescents from which small bells were suspended, and acquired a variety of names, including jingling johnny, and chapeau chinois – literally, 'Chinese hat'. The music was heard initially as sinister, but as the style was incorporated into operas such as Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782) and Haydn's *L'incontro improvviso* (1775) it became increasingly fashionable.

China was granted a degree of respect from Europe that it did not grant Turks or those cultures considered as primitive. Therefore, a noisy

⁷⁶ Jonathan Bellman, *The 'Style Hongrois' in the Music of Western Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 24-25.

⁷⁷ Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 114.

⁷⁸ According to Meyer, triangles were not authentic Turkish instruments, but they became associated with European 'Turkish' music. Until the early nineteenth century, they usually had jingling metal rings on the horizontal section. See Eve R. Meyer, 'Turquerie and Eighteenth Century Music', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7/4 (1974), 486.

percussive sound may not have been entirely suitable here. Specific parts for the percussion have not survived in the original autograph of *Le Cinesi*. All that we do know is that percussion was used in the overture and final dance of the opera. It is easy to assume Turkish encodings were used indiscriminately, but they may have been tailored to fit the highly developed and individualised aesthetic of chinoiserie in the visual and literary arts. Dittersdorf's account allows one to speculate that Gluck used percussion to create a slightly more delicate sound to reflect the dainty and glittering stage setting, the three aristocratic Chinese ladies who while away their time, and the notions of China as a place of splendour and magnificence. Notice that Dittersdorf mentions 'little chimes, triangles, hand drums and bells', and not anything noisy and offensive to the ear like brass bands and large drums, as he describes in his autobiography when commenting on musical *turquerie*.⁷⁹ Furthermore, these daintier percussive instruments were sometimes played 'singly', and sometimes 'altogether' which is indicative of a more finely tuned approach to convey a Chinese setting. One can only imagine the sparkling and brittle acoustic effect if numerous Turkish crescents (*chapeaux chinois*) were singled out for particular musical phrases.

The 'little chimes, triangles, hand drums and bells' undoubtedly enhanced the visual experience of the Chinese stage setting, which is

⁷⁹ For a colourful description of a procession of masqueraders in Turkish dress, accompanied by a noisy band playing 'Turkish' music, see Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf, *The Autobiography of Karl Von Dittersdorf* (London: R. Bentley and Son, 1896), 70-72.

noted to have particularly delighted the emperor himself. As Dittersdorf notes,

When the piece was over, the Emperor and the Prince left their seats, and asked that the curtain might be raised again, which was done. The monarch, opera-glass in hand, stepped on to the stage, and Quaglio explained to him every detail. He asked for a fragment of one of the prisms; a hatful was brought to him, and he carried off three or four pieces. Then he entreated the Prince to be allowed to summon a draughtsman from Vienna, to make a drawing of the scenery. Quaglio, however, undertook the business, and finished his sketch on the following evening. The Emperor rewarded him with a handsome gold watch and chain.⁸⁰

CONCLUSION

In early Chinese-themed operas such as *The Fairy Queen* and *Le Cinesi*, China's highly esteemed qualities were used to represent the Self, rather than the Other. In *The Fairy Queen*, the love between the Chinese man and woman was also used to honour the marriage of King William and Queen Mary; they *were* the Chinese man and woman, and the Chinese garden was to be their utopian world. Similarly, the three aristocratic Chinese ladies in *Le Cinesi* reflected the idealised 'Viennese' women, as they celebrated Vienna's opera scene, while

⁸⁰ Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf, *The Autobiography of Karl Von Dittersdorf* (London: R. Bentley and Son, 1896), 71-72.

promoting the eminence of Viennese courtly culture. In *The Fairy Queen*, China also becomes an entertaining foil for libertine ways, as it accentuates the narcotic dream world of the midsummer's night's dream. Both these operas therefore reveal how what appears to be a surface-level chinoiserie spectacle, actually underpins a more meaningful deployment of Western perceptions of China's superiority over the West. China's admirable qualities of being a highly advanced and peaceful civilization were regarded as both unchanging and ancient. Between 1661 and 1799 China had only three different emperors which all belonged to the Qing dynasty; this was an extraordinary example of political stability to which European royalty would have aspired.

Chinoiserie in music may not have been 'heard' out of context as being Chinese, but perhaps enthusiasm for the style in architecture and ornament was inspiring aesthetic musical choices. For example, the highly decorative duet for the Chinese ladies in the *Fairy Queen* enhanced the spectacular vision of rising porcelain vases on stage; and the sophistication and exotic connotations of the polonaise combined with the delicate percussion aurally captured Quaglio's stage decor for *Le Cinesi* with its 'prismatic rods of glass, prisms lit by innumerable lamps, azure coloured fields made of lacquer, shimmering gilded foliage work, and prisms like diamonds'. Music therefore served to comment on and contribute to the prevailing insistence on decorum and noble gracefulness attributed to the chinoiserie style. Furthermore, such chinoiserie promoted and reinforced the celebratory purpose of these

operas, which was to honour the monarchy. In particular, the final chaconne of the *Fairy Queen* and the final polonaise of *Le Cinesi* demonstrate how popular dances were recoded as music of celebration, rather than parody. More generally, such celebratory music supported Enlightenment values of humanity and rationality, which ultimately served to glorify the monarchy.

Nostalgic Chinese Landscapes in French Music (1880 – 1910)

The allure of China conjured up an 'imaginaire irresistible' in early twentieth-century France as reflected in the poetry, literature, art works, and music of the period. According to Jonathan Spence, a specifically French idea of the Chinese exotic emerged in the mid-nineteenth century and had come to combine four main realms:

One was an appreciation of Chinese grace and delicacy, a sensitivity to timbre and texture, which spread from the initial stimuli of silk and porcelain and temple architecture of the eighteenth century to become the basis of an entire aesthetic. One was an awareness of Chinese sensuality, initially tied to this new aesthetic, but rapidly moving out to embrace something harsher and ranker, something unknowable, dangerous, and intoxicating, composed of scent and sweat, of waves of heat and festering night air. Separate from this, though inescapably linked to it, was the sense of a realm of Chinese violence and barbarism, of hidden cruelties, threats of ravishment, uncontrollable impulses. And lastly was the idea of China as the realm of melancholy, as a land that stood for something forever lost – lost to the West through uncaring

materialism, lost to China through the weight of its own past, compounded by its weakness and poverty.¹

Composers such as Debussy, De Falla, and Roussel drew out of this spate of overlapping themes a central core of mutually reinforcing images and perceptions that by the turn of the twentieth century coalesced to form what we can call a 'new Chinese exotic'. This centred on nostalgic Chinese landscapes, a subject that was immensely appealing as it opened up a world of exotic, mystical, fairytale, utopian, archaic, and romantic possibilities, and provided a space in which to play out these desires.

In this chapter, the relationship between early twentieth-century French music inspired by Chinese landscapes, *sharawadgi* (graceful disorder), and the feminine is explored in order to better understand the musicalisation of the visual and literary aspects of *chinoiserie*. 'Rondel Chinois' was written for voice and piano in 1881 by a nineteen-year-old Debussy and is an early example of a musical representation of a pastoral scene in China. This unpublished novelty piece evokes more of a generic exotic soundscape, and was not particularly Chinese sounding. However, this early attempt at evoking a Chinese setting points towards the exotic tendency in the composer's later works. 'Pagodes' from *Estampes* (1903), and 'Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut' from *Images* (1907), are mature works that exhibit a much more precise and unique Chinese aesthetic and that allude to the ideologies

¹ Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1998), 146.

of friends such as Louis Laloy and Victor Segalen. Debussy also had contact with Manuel De Falla, who in 1909 was a new arrival to the Parisian music circle. In particular, Debussy was to listen to and provide feedback on De Falla's latest work for voice and piano entitled 'Chinoiserie', from *Trois Mélodies* (1909). De Falla's 'Chinoiserie' pays homage to France's time honoured fascination with China, and is based on an 1838 poem by Théophile Gautier. In this poem, a nostalgic Chinese landscape is synonymous with the Chinese female, resulting in a highly feminized and delicate musical creation. Albert Roussel's two settings of Chinese poems by H. P. Roche from the same period entitled 'A un jeune gentilhomme' and 'Amoureux séparés' (1907-8) place the Chinese female in the context of a romantic narrative and once again position her in a nostalgic Chinese landscape.

An Early Chinese Soundscape: 'Rondel Chinois' (1881)

Debussy's unpublished 'Rondel Chinois' for voice and piano (c.1881) is the earliest example of a specifically oriental influence in his music. The poem has no known author and depicts a typically nostalgic Chinese landscape 'bordered with azaleas, water-lilies and bamboo' (see Table 3.1 below).

RONDEL CHINOIS	CHINESE RONDEL
Sur le lac bordé d'azalée De nénuphar et de bambou Passe une jonque d'acajou	On the lake, bordered with azaleas, waterlilies and bamboo, a mahogany junk with pointed bow passes.

<p>À la pointe éfilée.</p> <p>Une chinoise dort voilée D'un flot de crêpe jusqu'au cou. Sur le lac bordé d'azalée De nénuphar et de bambou.</p> <p>Sous sa véranda dentelée Un mandarin se tient debout Fixant de ses yeux de hibou La dame qui passe isolée Sur le lac bordé d'azalée.</p>	<p>A Chinese girl is asleep, veiled in a swath of crepe up to her neck, on the lake bordered with azaleas, waterlilies and bamboo.</p> <p>On his lacy veranda, a mandarin stands watching with his owl's eyes the lady passing alone on the lake bordered with azaleas.</p>
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Table 3.1: Song text of 'Rondel Chinois' c. 1881. Margaret G. Cobb, *The Poetic Debussy: A Collection of His Song Texts and Selected Letters*, trans. Richard Miller (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1982), 28-29.

What was the cultural impact of China at this time? How had things progressed since the chinoiserie craze of the enlightenment period? What kind of Chinese images and metaphors were circulating at this time? In order to contextualise the music under consideration, a brief survey is essential. According to Colin Mackarras, 'Images [of China] may be conceptual, visual, aural, olfactory, or a mixture of these'.² Debussy never went to China, so the overwhelming majority of influential images of China would have come from porcelain trinkets and art works, books and magazines.

Debussy is well known for writing music that springs from or suggests a visual context; this is evident in his exploration of the musical picturesque and the ways in which the piano could serve his purposes. The images found on Chinese porcelain trinkets in fashionable Parisian

² Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), 7.

shops may have been one of many possible influences. According to Tina Chang, from the 1860s onwards Madame Desoye sold Japanese fans, prints, textiles, and trinkets in her shop, La Jonque Chinoise, at 220 rue de Rivoli. She counted among her clients Edmond de Goncourt, Baudelaire, Manet, Monet, Moreau, and Whistler. Other boutiques included La Porte Chinoise at 36 rue Vivienne, and A l'Empire Chinois at number 56 on the same street. By 1870 there were thirty-six boutiques listed in the Didot Bottin under the rubric 'Chinoiserie et Japonerie'. Within four years, the department store Au Bon Marche established a Japanese and Chinese section on its second floor. In the same period, auctions of private collections of Chinese and Japanese porcelains became regular events at Hotel Drouot, as attested by the numerous advertisements in art journals of the time (Fig. 3.1).³ Although the advertisement shown in figure 3.1 post-dates Debussy's 'Rondel chinois' by around a decade, it nonetheless illustrates the wider interest in chinoiserie at the time.

³ Tina Chang, 'Collecting Asia: Theodore Duret's 'Voyage en Asie' and Henri Cernuschi's Museum', *Oxford Art Journal* 25/1 (2002): 21.

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Le tout composant la Collection de M. ***

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TABLEAUX, DESSINS, ESTAMPES
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BENJAMIN FILLON

VENTE HOTEL DROUOT, SALLE N° 8

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Experts :

MM. ROLLIN et FEUARDENT, à, place Louvois.

M. PÉRAL, peintre, 51, faub. Montmartre.
M. CHARLES MANNHEIM, 7, rue Saint-Georges.

MM. DANLOS et DELISLE, 15, quai Malaquais.

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Expositions :

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Publique, dimanche 19 mars, de 1 h. à 5 h.

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Dans un arrivage considérable d'objets de l'Extrême Orient se trouvent des pièces d'une grande rareté et d'une valeur artistique hors de pair que les propriétaires du Petit Saint-Thomas mettent à la disposition des amateurs.

Cette collection se compose entre autres choses de meubles anciens, boîtes, ivoires des plus rares, d'un fil merveilleux et signés par les plus grands artistes du Japon. Plusieurs de ces pièces n'ont été obtenues qu'avec les plus grandes difficultés, et il a fallu toute la diplomatie des correspondants de la Maison pour décider les possesseurs à s'en séparer.

Les amateurs feront bien de visiter cette collection d'objets d'art dès lundi matin, avant l'heure où les Magasins du Petit Saint-Thomas sont envahis par la foule.

Figure 3.1: Advertisement in *La Chronique des arts et de la curiosité*, March 1892. Paris. Tina Chang, 'Collecting Asia: Theodore Duret's 'Voyage en Asie' and Henri Cernuschi's Museum', *Oxford Art Journal* 25/1 (2002), 22.

From the 1830s onwards, eighteenth-century art came back into fashion in both England and France, bringing with it a new vogue for Chinese objects of an eighteenth-century type, and by 1859 L.E. Audot was able to remark: 'Les *Chinoiseries* ont repris faveur dans les dernières années, et les *Magots* et potiches achetés à grand frais ont été

réintégrés sur les étagères des petites maîtresses'[The chinoiserie resumed in recent years, such as expensive magots and vases were reinstated on the shelves of small masters].⁴ Although modern China had lost the affection of most Europeans with more fact-based reports detailing a China under colonialist threat, with political unrest and violent internal rebellions, the elegant world of Cathay, described by Voltaire and depicted by many a porcelain painter, began to exert a new fascination. At the 1867 Exposition Universelle, numerous Chinese inspired porcelain objects were on display (Fig. 3.2).

⁴ Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 204. See also L.E. Audot, *Traité De La Composition Et De L'ornement Des Jardins, Avec Cent Soisante-Huit Planches Représentant, En Plus De Six Cents Figures, Des Plans De Jardins, Des Fabriques Propres À Leur Décoration, Et Des Machines Pour Élever Les Eaux* (Paris: Audot, 1859).

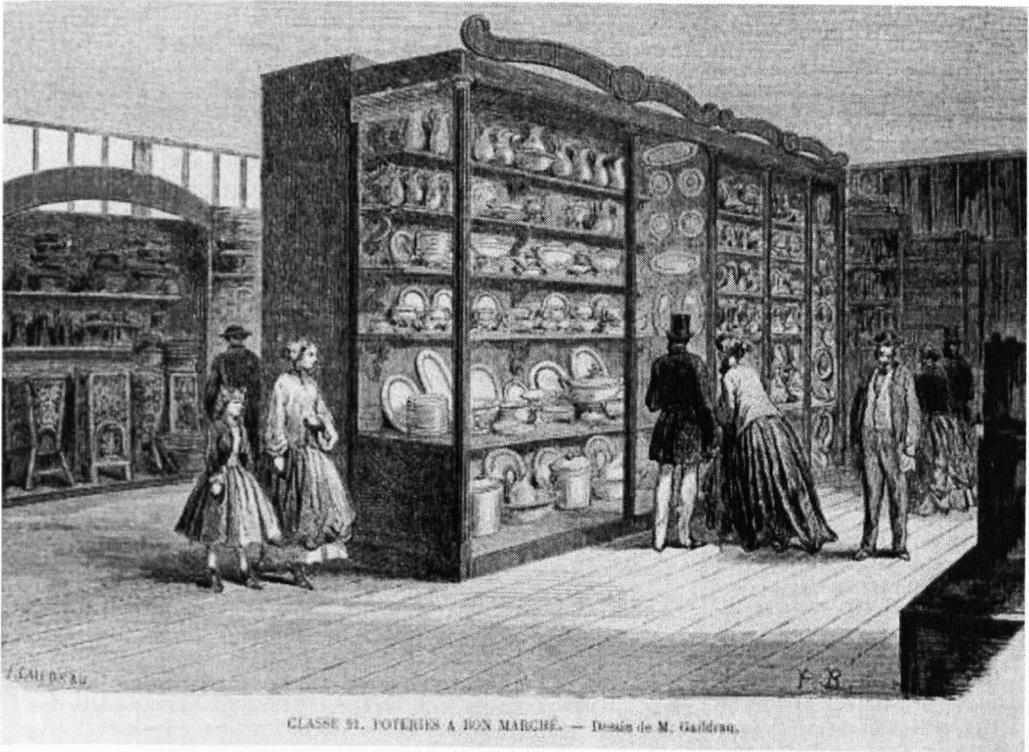


Figure 3.2: *L'exposition Universelle de 1867 Illustrée* (Paris: Bureaux d'abonnements 1867), 93.

According to Honour, the effect of this revivalist attitude was also evident at the 1878 Exposition Universelle where every example of French furniture shown was imitative of an historical or geographical style, among which eighteenth-century chinoiserie was not lacking. Indeed, nearly every type of Louis XV and Louis XVI lacquer furniture and chinoiserie bibelot seems to have been imitated. Chinoiserie silks in the style of eighteenth-century painter and designer Jean Baptiste Pillement (1728-1808) were also reproduced, with woven-in faded colours which eighteenth-century brocades had by then acquired.⁵ In

⁵ Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 205.

addition to this, one of the central attractions at the 1878 Exposition Universelle was a spectacular Chinese pavilion (Figs. 3.3 and 3.4).



CABINET ORIENTAL DE M. JULES JACQUEMART
(Gravure de *l'Histoire du Mobilier*. — Hachette et C^o, éditeurs.)

Figure 3.3: *L'art et L'industrie de Tous Les Peuples à L'exposition Universelle de 1878* (Paris: Librairie illustrée, 1880), 225.

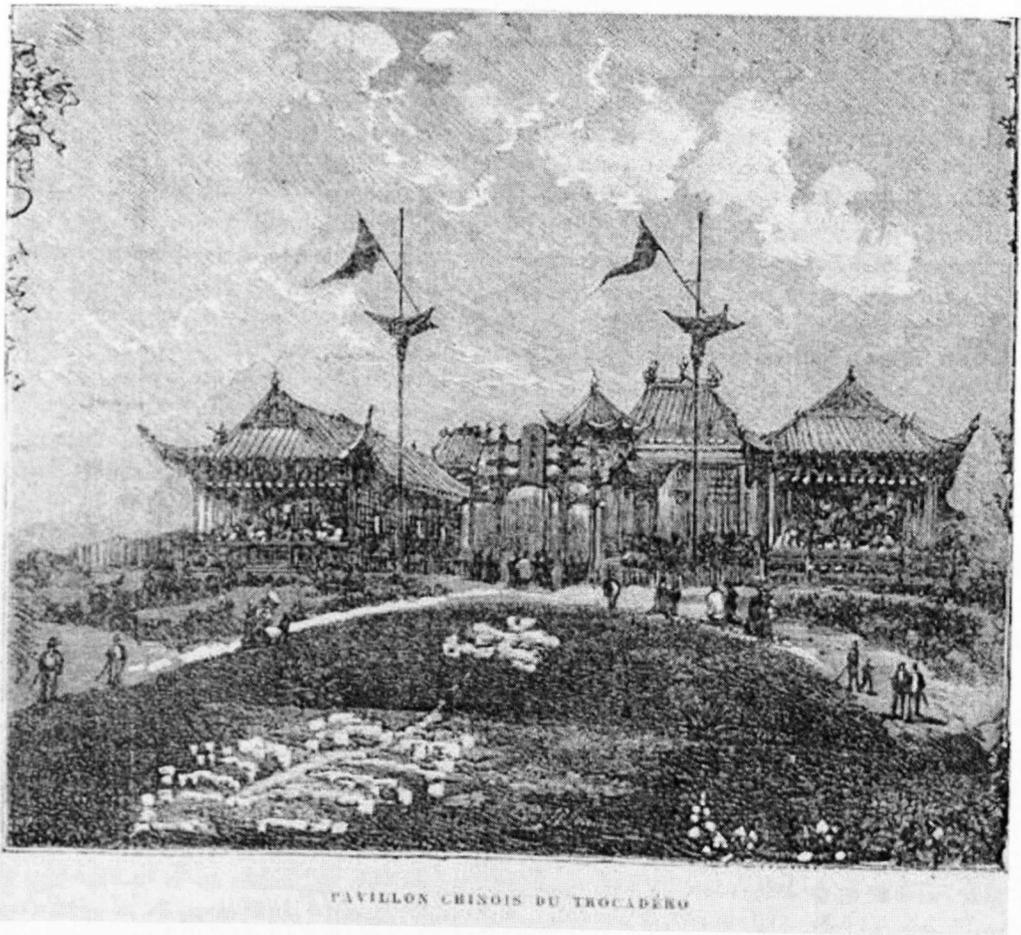


Figure 3.4: *L'art et L'industrie de Tous Les Peuples à L'exposition Universelle de 1878* (Paris: Librairie illustrée, 1880), 225.

The vogue for the revival of eighteenth-century furniture, which became apparent in France at this time, was partly inspired by a new appreciation of craftsmanship. But it also reflected a change of attitude towards the past. Amid the comforts and discomforts of the industrial age, people began to look back wistfully to that remote period before the Revolution when it had been possible, in Talleyrand's phrase, to savour 'la douceur de vivre'. Thus it was in this nostalgic mood that the Empress Eugénie (wife of Napoleon III), who seems at times to have thought herself a reincarnation of Marie-Antoinette, furnished her apartments at the Tuileries with genuine and reproduction Louis XVI

furniture. Her example was naturally followed by many of her aristocratic friends who shared her wish to slip back into the gay, carefree, pre-revolutionary world. From about 1852 onwards, following the collapse of the July monarchy with the 1848 revolution, and the dissolution that followed Napoleon III's rise to power, sealed with his coronation as emperor in 1852, and following the similar failure of a wave of revolutions across Europe, the desire to escape into a romantic past manifested itself more forcefully than ever before. Rich bourgeois surrounded themselves with decorative furniture and objects that provided a window into another, more attractive civilization. The fashion became widespread and a brisk demand for more affordable reproduction boiserie, furniture and bibelots meant that chinoiserie objects hit the mainstream market.

These images of a romantic, carefree Chinese landscape on chinoiserie objects were also prevalent in literature of this period. A case in point is Gustave Flaubert and his 1869 novel *Sentimental Education* which concerns love in the midst of revolution.⁶ According to Spence, in this novel, Flaubert uses Chinese images as markers for the major shifts in his characters' lives.⁷ Thus in the deep sensuality of Frederic's first visit to Madame Arnoux's home, he finds her hallway 'decorated in the Chinese style'. Chinese lanterns and porcelain, screens and curios,

⁶ Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education*, trans. Robert Baldick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964).

⁷ Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1998), 147.

yellow silks and Chinese blinds, provide their own rhythms of objects of beauty and regard. When Frederic, suffused with lust, takes Rosanette to the love nest he had prepared for Madame Arnoux 'Chinese lanterns were hanging from the houses, looking like garlands of fire', the bayonets of the guards 'gleamed white against the dark background', and the murderous fusillade that kills so many innocent people on the Boulevard des Capucines was 'like the sound of a huge piece of silk being ripped in two'.⁸

Despite the specificity and apparently deliberate placement of these items from China and their relationship to the plot, Flaubert's China remains entangled with a broader group of images from the Middle East that cumulatively remind us that this is still in part the mid-nineteenth century world of a more generalised 'Orientalism', and one that had not developed much from the eighteenth-century conflation of musical chinoiserie and turquerie discussed in the previous chapter. This was also an 'Orientalism' that had received a further boost in France after the Napoleonic campaigns in Egypt. Flaubert perpetuates this conflation with his choice of juxtapositions: the dance hall with the Chinese roof is called the 'Alhambra' and also boasts 'two parallel arcades in the Moorish style'; the pantomime of the Peking slave market is replete with 'bells, drums, and sultans' wives'; and Rosanette, even as she clasps

⁸ Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education*, trans. Robert Baldick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), 190, 406, 283.

her pagoda parasol, shows Frederic that she 'thought that Lebanon was in China'.⁹

This idea of a more generalised, or hybrid Orient is relevant to Debussy's very early and unpublished art song 'Rondel Chinois' (1881), as this art song reveals an exotic soundscape that can be said to sound more Middle Eastern than Chinese, despite its very clear title. The musical example below shows this rather more Middle Eastern inflection, with its raised fourth on the G# – perhaps more reminiscent of the harmonies found in Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila* (1877), or Rimsky Korsakov's *Sheharazade* (1889) (Ex. 3.1). In his discussion of the *alla turca* style Locke writes that 'the raised fourth served as an apparent allusion to the Lydian mode or to various non-Western scales that had been published in scientific and travel books over the past century or so'.¹⁰ A prime example of the raised fourth can be heard as early as 1782 when Mozart used it in his first janissary chorus of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. As suggested in chapter two, I would propose that the *alla turca* style, in many ways, set the pattern for other exotic styles which could embrace places such as China in Western music. One can only speculate on whether the *alla turca* style inspired Debussy to use this particular inflection, but nevertheless it was clearly regarded as an exotic sound suitable for his fantastical Chinese setting.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 80, 97, 205.

¹⁰ Ralph Locke, *Musical Exoticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 120.

6

11

Sur le lac bor - dé d'a - za - lée De né - nu - phar et de bam - bou

Generic Middle Eastern inflection

Example 3.1: Rondel Chinois, bars 6-14.

Despite offering a general exotic soundscape, Debussy's attention to some kind of authenticity is intriguing: on the title page is written 'Musique chinoise (d'après des manuscrits du temps)' (Chinese music [based on contemporary manuscripts]).¹¹ It is commonly assumed that Debussy got his first taste of Oriental music at the World Exhibition in Paris, but that was not until 1889. The phonograph was not invented until 1898, so no recording of Asian music was yet available. One might thus conclude that this song was not a serious attempt at all, but merely a novelty piece, one of perhaps hundreds from his 1880-1883 period.¹²

¹¹ Margaret G. Cobb, *The Poetic Debussy: A Collection of His Song Texts and Selected Letters* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1982), 29.

¹² For more information about Debussy's earlier vocal music see John Trevitt, 'Debussy Inconnu: An Inquiry, the Earlier Vocal Music', *The Musical Times* 114/1567 (1973): 881-6.

This was when he was working under Madame Von Meck, the patron of Tchaikovsky.¹³ Whilst travelling with her in France, Italy, and Russia, any number of people could have described to him what they heard while in Asia. Debussy was a pianist and music instructor within his patron's entourage, but he was also obliged to amuse his hostess, as is any courtier. One of his most successful means of entertaining her was to imitate different kinds of music. 'Rondel Chinois' could be labelled as a rather immature and playful attempt to mimic a Chinese soundworld, as the song still sounds overwhelmingly French, with some Chinese musical references thrown in amidst a rather more generic musical turquerie.

The opening of the song includes a long, ornate line sung without text in a high register (Ex. 3.2).

¹³ The 'Chinese Dance' from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite* (1892) is another example of early musical chinoiserie. For more information on Debussy and Madame Von Meck see Edward Lockspeiser, 'Debussy, Tchaikovsky, and Madame Von Meck', *The Musical Quarterly* 22/1 (1936): 38-44.

Example 3.2: *Rondel Chinois*, bars 1-10.

In the first phrase the piano accompaniment plays a series of descending seventh chords (outlining a fourth), which come to rest on a second inversion E major chord in bar 3. Over this, an ornamented leaping octave is sung with a wordless vocalize. Following this, a short piano transition echoes the vocal line of the first three bars before the second phrase enters at bar 7. The second phrase, once again, incorporates an embellished leaping octave, but this time with much more conventional diatonic harmony supporting it than the previous phrase, that is, until it tails off with the characteristic Middle Eastern motif with its raised fourth in bars 9 to 10. It seems Debussy made a clear attempt to evoke the otherness of China as in his dedication to Madame Vasnier he writes: 'A Madame Vasnier la seule qui peut

chanter et faire oublier tout ce que cette musique a d'enchante et de chinois. Ach. Debussy' (To Madame Vasnier, the only one who can sing and make one forget everything that is unsingable and Chinese).¹⁴ This idea of the 'unsingable' is perhaps due to the excessive arabesques and trills required of the singer. At bars 27 to 32, descending arabesque-like chromatic motifs are also sung with a wordless vocalize, further enhancing the idea of an unintelligible exotic sound. The cyclical descending chromaticism also evokes a dreamlike, mystical atmosphere (Ex. 3.3, bar 27 onwards).

¹⁴ Margaret G. Cobb, *The Poetic Debussy: A Collection of His Song Texts and Selected Letters* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1982), 29.

25

De né - nu - phar et de bam - bou.

28

30

Example 3.3: *Rondel Chinois*, bars 25-32.

At bar 19, a decorative and densely patterned accompaniment begins to sound distinctly more Chinese as it features fragments of the pentatonic scale, but still within a Western diatonic context; this can be described as a quasi-pentatonic soundscape (Ex. 3.4).

19

U - ne chi - noi - se dort Voi - lée d'un flot de

22

cré - pe jusqu' - au cou Sur le lac bor - dé d'a - za - lée

Example 3.4: *Rondel Chinois*, bars 19-24.

The overall effect of moving from leaping vocal octaves with pillared chords, Middle Eastern-like arabesques, to fussy patterned pentatonic passages, results in something more disordered than most music by Debussy and can be described as having an endearing awkward grace – an *acoustic sharawadgi*.

A major inspiration for his early songs came not only from poetry, literature and visual artefacts, but from his first great love, Madame Vasnier. By 1885 he had composed forty songs of which twenty-five were dedicated to her. 'Rondel Chinois' was one of these love dedications and like many other songs the text reveals his infatuation

with her. This nostalgic Chinese landscape where 'a mandarin stands watching with his owl's eyes the lady passing alone on the lake bordered with azaleas' provided a utopian space for his romantic imagination to take flight.

Avant Garde Chinese Soundscapes: 'Pagodes'

Written over twenty years later, Debussy's 'Pagodes' from *Estampes* (1903) reveals a more focussed and unique Chinese aesthetic. Musicologists such as Mervyn Cooke, Roy Howat, Ralph Locke, and Paul Roberts have focussed almost exclusively on the direct influence of gamelan with regard to its 'sound', and Japanese prints with regard to the 'visual'.¹⁵ However, one aspect of Oriental influence in Debussy's 'Pagodes' has been neglected: his exposure to Chinese art, literature, and philosophy. Chinese images in France (fictional, anthropological, and ethnomusicological) had been in circulation for far longer than gamelan and Japanese sources, and are here explored in relation to Debussy's general musical aesthetic in 'Pagodes'. One needs to remember that Debussy was not a literal imitator, and any particular trait in his music can often be argued back to several sources. Likewise, when a single source can be isolated, it is usually only one of several

¹⁵ Mervyn Cooke, 'The East in the West: Evocations of the Gamelan in Western Music' in Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 258-280. Roy Howat, 'Debussy and the Orient' in Andrew Gerstle and Anthony Milner, eds., *Recovering the Orient: Artists, Scholars, Appropriations* (Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994), 45-81. Ralph P Locke, *Musical Exoticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 233-236. Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland, Or.: Amadeus Press, 1996), 45-70, 153-161.

strands blended to produce something that sounds distinct from any models. The intent here is not, therefore, to provide a conclusive answer, but rather to offer some insight to one important and neglected aspect – the influence of chinoiserie, and the allure of its nostalgic landscape.

Estampes are essentially 'mood' pieces, and as the title suggests, like Japanese 'stamps' – miniature evocations of a given place or atmosphere. 'Pagodes' is the first of his three *Estampes* and reveals a meditative awareness of and approach towards space and silence, whether literal or as a lack of 'busyness' – exactly the idealised atmosphere of a pagoda, which were usually places of worship and commonly known as Buddhist temples. This idealised atmosphere was also characteristic in the works of French writers and diplomatic travellers of the time such as Gustave Flaubert, Pierre Loti, and Paul Claudel. In particular, Claudel's vision of China had a dream-laden and mystical quality that was evident in his Chinese prose poems. According to Spence, these poems were usually plotless, content to seize and hold a fugitive moment.¹⁶ One of the first of these poems was written in 1896 and called 'Pagoda':

...It is composed of three courts and three temples flanked by accessory chapels and outbuildings. In the East, places of religious observance do not, as in Europe, barricade and segregate the mystery of a circumscribed faith and dogma. Their

¹⁶ Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1998), 154.

function is not to defend the absolute from outside appearances, but to establish a certain atmosphere; and the structures, as if suspended from the sky, gather all nature into the offering they make. Manifold, on a level with the earth, they translate space by the relationships of height and distance between the three triumphal arches or by the temples they devote to it; and Buddha, prince of Peace, dwells inside with all the gods.¹⁷

This 'fugitive moment' is encapsulated in the physical description of the Chinese pagoda, which moves beyond the visual facts to more conceptual and idealistic notions where the pagoda is a 'place of religious observance' with a 'certain atmosphere', and is as if 'suspended from the sky'.

Debussy's exposure to Oriental art, literature, and philosophy is in general well known. He grew up in a Symbolist milieu where Oriental and esoteric ideas, from Buddhism through Sufism to Hermeticism, had been widespread since the end of the nineteenth-century. Among Debussy's close associates were at least two ethnomusicologists with Oriental interests. In the years around 1890 he knew Edmond Bailly, esoteric and Oriental scholar who published some of Debussy's works from his bookshop L'art Independant, a central rallying place for Symbolist arts.¹⁸ Debussy's long association with Victor Segalen also involved the discussion of Oriental subjects and other dramatic projects;

¹⁷ Paul Claudel, *Knowing the East*, trans. James Lawler (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 6.

¹⁸ Anthony Milner and Andrew Gerstle, ed., *Recovering the Orient* (Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994), 45-46.

Debussy had in fact encouraged Segalen to write studies of Polynesian and Indian music. Andre Schaeffner also mentions that Debussy's friend Paul-Jean Toulet returned to Paris in May 1903 two months before the composition of 'Pagodes' – from a visit to China and Japan.¹⁹ A crucial influence with regard to all things 'Chinese', however, was to be the sinologist, ethnomusicologist, and music critic Louis Laloy.

The *Estampes* date from 1903, soon after the friendship between Louis Laloy and Debussy began. Later Debussy dedicated 'Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut' [And the moon goes down over the temple which once was, *Images II*] to Laloy: Laloy confirms that the title is 'de style chinois'.²⁰ Evidently, the friendship between Debussy and Laloy was strong. According to the composer Gustave Samazeuilh, 'Claude Debussy, who chose his friends well, admitted him into the bosom of his family, and appreciated in him the most loyal and delicate of friends'.²¹ In 1908, Debussy wrote to Laloy that their friendship was 'of such a calibre that it seems to me to be almost invulnerable'.²² Eighty-two letters, notes and telegrams that Debussy wrote to Laloy survive and have been collected by François Lesure.²³ Laloy's

¹⁹ Andre Schaeffner and Annie Joly-Segalen, *Segalen et Debussy* (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 1961), 28.

²⁰ Louis Laloy, *La Musique Retrouvée 1902-1927* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1974), 177.

²¹ Louis Laloy, *Louis Laloy on Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky*, trans. Deborah Priest (Hampshire: Ashgate, 1999), 7.

²² *Ibid.*, 7.

²³ François Lesure, 'Correspondance De Claude Debussy Et De Louis Laloy (1902-1914)', *La Revue de musicologie* 48/125 (1962): 3-40.

published writings on Debussy reveal a considerable personal and domestic intimacy. For example, there is an entertaining account of a dinner with Gabriele D'Annunzio, around the time of *Le Martyre de Saint Sebastian*, at which Debussy, whose tastes in food were notoriously plain, refused to try the more exotic Chinese dishes that had been prepared.²⁴

Laloy was a central figure in the musical scene in Paris in the early decades of the twentieth century. Sadly forgotten today, like other music critics of his time, by all but specialists, he deserves a place in the history of French music by virtue of his relationships with composers, and also because of his ability to stay abreast of new musical trends and to explain them lucidly and elegantly to his readers. In fact Laloy's explanations of new directions in music in his time remain fresh today, and he has insights to offer us about this music which are not to be found in more recent literature. Laloy's intellectual curiosity and capacity were such that he extended his studies beyond music to include languages, mathematics and philosophy. Proficient in French, English, German, Russian, and Italian as well as Greek and Latin, Laloy published translations of various literary works and books about music. Overriding these interests, however, was his fascination with Chinese language and culture. He spoke fluent Mandarin, lectured on Chinese culture and metaphysics at the Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises,

²⁴ There are also descriptions of Debussy's habits, his study, his way of speaking, his interest in gossip, his piano playing, and even his singing. See Louis Laloy, *Louis Laloy on Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky*, trans. Deborah Priest (Hampshire: Ashgate, 1999), 8.

and translated Chinese literary works into French.²⁵ In 1931 he was sent to China on a cultural mission for the French government. According to Deborah Priest, Laloy had many friends in the Chinese community in Paris, and incorporated Chinese elements (including dress, and opium use) into his lifestyle to such an extent that he was known to friends and acquaintances as 'le Chinois'.²⁶

According to Paul Roberts, Debussy's tiny flat in Paris at the end of the century was a shrine to *objets d'art* ('your art nouveau den,' his close friend Pierre Louys called it).²⁷ We know that Debussy had jade animals and pieces of Chinese pottery in his study; Laloy also owned Chinese *objets d'art*, which Debussy would have seen on visits to his home. Marcel Dietschy's biography of Debussy describes how among the composer's desires and acquisitions were Satzouma vases, walking sticks fashioned of pale wood, vivid coloured silks, an ivory elephant, and a sailor's necktie of emerald silk. His study at his later home on the Avenue du Bois-de-Boulogne was filled with oriental objects, and in photos from around 1910 two framed Japanese prints can be seen on

²⁵ For information about Laloy's experiences in China see Louis Laloy, *Mirror of China*, trans. Catherine A. Philips (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1936). Some of Laloy's other translations and writings about China include *Légendes des immortels; d'après les auteurs chinois* (Paris, 1922); *Contes magiques, d'après l'ancien texte chinois de P'ou Soung-lin* (Paris: L'édition d'art, c.1925); *Poésies chinoises* (Paris: Egloff, 1944); *La Musique Chinoise*, (Paris: Laurens, 1912).

²⁶ Louis Laloy, *Louis Laloy on Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky*, trans. Deborah Priest (Hampshire: Ashgate, 1999), 3.

²⁷ Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland, Or.: Amadeus Press, 1996), 58.

the wall.²⁸ In a letter to Laloy dated 2 August 1909, Debussy says that he 'began the day well by reading some Chinese poems translated by Laloy. They are very fine and we must talk about them again'.²⁹ It is also interesting to note that references to Confucius and other Chinese philosophers in Debussy's reviews occur only from 1903 onwards; the same can be said for Classical Greek authors, and we may infer that Laloy, with his classical education, was an influence there too.

It is impossible to say precisely how Debussy's interest in visual art was translated into music. Clearly it extended beyond a pleasure in looking at pictures to a concern with the actual techniques of picture-making. In one of his articles for the arts magazine *La revue blanche*, in 1901, he wrote at length in praise of the 'divine arabesque', the art of the decorative, ornamental line which 'is at the root of all kinds of art' and which in music he found in the polyphony of Palestrina and Bach. As he said of Bach's music, 'it is not the character of the melody which affects us, but rather the curve'.³⁰ It is in this sense we might understand the decorative linear structure of 'Pagodes' – Debussy would have known that the arabesque originated as an art-historical term for the geometric shapes, tendril-like lines, and highly patterned calligraphy in decorative art of the Islamic Middle East. He would also have been familiar with the

²⁸ Marcel Dietschy, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy*, trans. Margaret Cobb and William Ashbrook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), x.

²⁹ Louis Laloy, *Louis Laloy on Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky*, trans. Deborah Priest (Hampshire: Ashgate, 1999), 10.

³⁰ Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, trans. Richard Langham Smith (London: Secker and Warburg, 1977), 27.

decorative style he so appreciated on his chinoiserie collection. According to Locke,

...in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, 'arabesque' had also acquired a broader meaning in European aesthetics. For Kant, it meant a form of artistic expression that stirred a purposeless sense of pleasure. Through Kant's influence, arabesque went on to become as one scholar has recently noted, 'a paradigm of aesthetic autonomy'. Later in the nineteenth century, the term 'arabesque', was put into broader circulation in France by writers associated with the Symbolist movement, notably Stephane Mallarmé, and it found practical embodiment in the work of artists and decorators associated with Art Nouveau and Jugendstil.³¹

Roy Howat has noted that the repeated opening melody in 'Pagodes' literally sketches (or etches) the rising layers of a pagoda roof (as shown by the curves added in bar 4 of Ex. 3.5).³²

³¹ Ralph P Locke, *Musical Exoticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 218.

³² Roy Howat, 'Debussy and the Orient' in Andrew Gerstle and Anthony Milner, eds., *Recovering the Orient: Artists, Scholars, Appropriations* (Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994), 53.

Modérément animé *délicatement et presque sans nuances*

The image shows a musical score for the first four bars of 'Pagodes' by Claude Debussy. The tempo is 'Modérément animé' and the performance instruction is 'délicatement et presque sans nuances'. The score is in 4/4 time and G major. The right hand has a melodic line with grace notes and slurs, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and a '2' marking. Dynamics include 'pp' and 'm.f.'. A 'Rit.' marking is present in the lower section.

Example 3.5: *Pagodes*, bars 1-4.

All this returns us to the question of what Debussy's full intentions were in 'Pagodes'. A year before its composition, in 1902, he had written that, for him, music 'is not limited to a more or less exact representation of nature, but rather to the mysterious affinity between Nature and the Imagination'.³³ Bearing in mind that a piano cannot imitate exact gamelan tuning in any case, we also have to look to where 'Pagodes' goes beyond the gamelan. Taken more broadly, the piece is a picture, an 'Estampe', a process of evoking in or through music a place, people, or social environment that differs profoundly from the home country or culture in attitudes, customs, and morals.³⁴ This was achieved radically

³³ Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, trans. Richard Langham Smith (London: Secker and Warburg, 1977), 74.

³⁴ Ralph P Locke, *Musical Exoticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 47.

through using 'black-note' pentatonicism more consistently in both melody and accompaniment than did any previous piece. Combined with the use of rhythms and timbres strongly related to those of the gamelan, and the evocative title 'Pagodes' which in literature and poetry of the time was most commonly associated with China, Debussy created an *acoustic sharadwadgi* that evoked freedom, difference, and newness.

Laloy provides a uniquely penetrating analysis of Debussy's musical language in 'Pagodes', which draws attention to its Chinese musical derivation:

...At other times, there are successions of whole tones, shyly indifferent; and, more frequently, incomplete scales, in which the whole tone alternates only with the minor third, according to the preference of Chinese taste: it is these incomplete scales which allow 'Pagodes' from the *Estampes*, to achieve a perfect resemblance...³⁵

Having written a book in 1912 entitled *La Musique Chinoise*, Laloy points out a perfect resemblance to a Chinese sound.³⁶ Indeed, pentatonicism can be made to sound more 'Chinese' by concentrating on its minor third and perfect fourth intervals, rather than its major third and perfect fifth (thus avoiding the implication of a Western-type cadence). Laloy

³⁵ Louis Laloy, *Claude Debussy* (Paris: Dorbon, 1909, rev. 1944), 75.

³⁶ Louis Laloy, *La Musique Chinoise* (Paris: Laurens, 1912, rev. 1979).

also identifies the use of 'incomplete scales' which allow 'Pagodes' to achieve a perfect resemblance (Ex. 3.6).

The image shows a musical score for 'Pagodes' by Debussy, specifically bars 22-26. The score is written for piano and is in G major, 3/4 time. It is marked 'Toujours animé'. The score consists of two systems of music. The first system has a treble clef staff with a melody of eighth notes, some grouped in triplets and slurred, and a bass clef staff with a steady eighth-note accompaniment, also with triplets and slurs. The second system continues this pattern. The piece is marked 'pp' (pianissimo).

Example 3.6: *Pagodes*, bars 22-26.

Most scholars have viewed moments like this as either directly related to specific gamelan tuning/rhythm, gamelan performance, or applied a purely formulaic analytical reading of its application. Another way to approach this, however, would be to view these 'incomplete scales' which combined with Chinese pentatonicism and cross rhythms (triplets against quavers) as contributing to the concept of a 'graceful disorder' – an *acoustic sharawadgi*. In this example, the lack of a resolving scale, does not lead to abruptness; its constant and circular repetition in various permutations instills a cyclic meditative quality that is free flowing. As Laloy describes:

It is, furthermore, improper to speak of scales, because a scale is a rule. Here the melody perpetually changes the order and nature of the intervals. This is music without scales and, indeed,

a time had to come when that support would become as unnecessary as the prop of the regular line for poetry; all that was required was that a composer had it within his power to sense the mutual affinity of sounds, as the poet senses the value of rhythms.³⁷

This 'mutual affinity of sounds' ties into the meditative awareness that is clearly evident in 'Pagodes'. In turn, this also goes to the heart of Debussy's aesthetic at its most un-occidental, whether viewed as Zen, Buddhist or Sufi (all possible through Debussy's known contacts). The gist of his advice to performers, besides exactitude, was not to 'will' or impose, but to play simply, to allow the music to speak for itself, to understand the architecture and yet to be in 'the moment'.³⁸ Alongside this went his awareness of space and silence. This awareness is particularly noticeable in the static moments of 'Pagodes', for example, right at the opening (see Ex. 3.5), and also in bars 31 to 32 (Ex. 3.7).



Example 3.7: *Pagodes*, bars 30-36.

³⁷ Louis Laloy, *Claude Debussy* (Paris: Dorbon, 1909, rev. 1944), 75.

³⁸ For more information on being in the 'moment' see Marguerite Long, *At the Piano with Debussy* (London: Dent, 1972).

These static moments are particularly noticeable amidst the busy decorative texture, and serve to emphasise the piece's quality of timelessness – a subject that is discussed in more detail in 'Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut' below. Laloy also suggests that Debussy's music goes beyond cheap representation as in *Estampes* as a whole 'there is nothing, in the way the idea has adorned itself, which owes anything to fashion or has been made especially with fashion in view'.³⁹ Debussy has a similar outlook on this, as in the following quotation he ridicules fashionable dilettantish Orientalism:

...nothing is more exciting than playing the little Buddha, living on an egg and two glasses of water a day and giving the rest to the poor; ruminating on interminable cosmogonical and pantheistic reveries of the nature of nature, and of luxurious confusions of ego and non-ego reabsorbing themselves into the cult of the universal soul...It's pretty, and makes nice conversation; unfortunately it's not worth two cents in practice and can even be dangerous'.⁴⁰

This dismissal of a more superficial orientalism suggests Debussy was striving for something that went beyond face value musical chinoiserie. An even more refined example of music inspired by China and perhaps the Far East in general can be found in 'Et la lune sur le temple descend qui fut', from *Images* (1907).

³⁹ Louis Laloy, *Claude Debussy* (Paris: Dorbon, 1909, rev. 1944), 33-34.

⁴⁰ Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, trans. Richard Langham Smith (London: Secker and Warburg, 1977), 106.

'Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut' (1907)

The second piece transports us to a different land, where distances and letter post do not exist, a dream country where we would go together, 'et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut'. More so than in 'Pagodes', in a less torrid, more serious Far East, the mind retires within itself and the music becomes condensed, pure of any egotistical mixing, a translucent, compressed gem, born of space and silence.⁴¹

In this extract, Laloy (to whom this piece was dedicated) considers that 'Et la lune' is able to transport us to a different land, which he defines as a 'dream country'. In this piece, more than any other, Debussy depicts a nostalgic Chinese landscape that is 'pure of any egotistical mixing, a translucent, compressed gem, born of space and silence'. The direct comparison with 'Pagodes' is particularly interesting, as Laloy seems to suggest that 'Et la lune' depicts a more serious Far East, as well as being 'de style chinoise'. Is this because in this piece, sound, space, and silence are refined to a higher level? Can we consider this to be a more sophisticated and informed rendering of musical chinoiserie, and one that would have particularly appealed to Laloy the sinologist? How are space, silence and the translucent in music actually realised?

⁴¹ Louis Laloy, *Claude Debussy* (Paris: Dorbon, 1909, rev. 1944), 95-96.

In the following article, Laloy connects 'Et la lune' to the idea of a sleeping landscape, and gives a clear description of the musicalisation of this landscape.

In 1907 there appeared a second set of *Images* for piano, the second of which achieved what was believed forbidden in modern times: an entirely melodic music. Here, there is no longer a tune resting on chords as in the Classical and Romantic periods, or emanating from them, as in Symbolist art. Under the title 'Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut', a vast, sleeping landscape, caressed and consoled by intermittent rays of moonlight, is evoked by a melody so sustained that it can do without any external support. A melodic line rises up and continues, isolated in silent, listening space; but this line is itself marked outlined by chords; it is no longer a line, it is a three-dimensional figure into which the composer, a sculptor of sounds, has condensed all the dispersed life around him.⁴²

Debussy's affinity with nature is a recurring theme throughout Laloy's reviews and articles, and is associated with the notion of naturalness and simplicity which Laloy also stresses. This is evident in the above quote where Laloy writes 'a vast, sleeping landscape, caressed and consoled by intermittent rays of moonlight, is evoked by a melody so sustained that it can do without any external support'. Furthermore, as Laloy points out, a significant way in which this piece evokes 'Et la lune

⁴² Louis Laloy. S.I.M. *Revue musicale* (August-September 1910) in Louis Laloy, *Louis Laloy on Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky*, trans. Deborah Priest (Hampshire: Ashgate, 1999), 94.

descend sur le temple qui fut' is through its 'silent, listening space'. This idea of sound, space, and silence is an aesthetic shared by Debussy's friend and one of the greatest French explorers and writers on China – Victor Segalen.

Born in 1878, Victor Segalen trained as a physician and also studied the Chinese classical language and culture with one of France's first great sinologues, Edouard Chavannes. In the spring of 1906, Segalen approached Debussy about their possible collaboration on a dramatic project, *Siddartha*. However, in a letter dated 26 August 1907, Debussy politely declined, 'It is a prodigious dream! However, in its present form (five acts), I cannot imagine any music capable of penetrating its depths!'.⁴³ Debussy suggested instead that 'something admirable might be done with the myth of Orpheus', and this was to become the subject of their most sustained collaboration.⁴⁴ This, too, was never to be realised in musical form, but three complete drafts of it survive, and extensive corrections in Debussy's hand bear testimony to the truly collaborative nature of the enterprise as it unfolded somewhat sporadically during the years 1907-1909, before Segalen's departure for China.⁴⁵ Despite these collaborative mishaps, Segalen shared with Debussy a keen interest in the exotic, and it is highly likely that he

⁴³ Robert Orledge, *Debussy and the Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 269.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 269. See also Andre Schaeffner and Annie Joly-Segalen, *Segalen et Debussy* (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 1961).

⁴⁵ Philip Weller, 'Sound-Silence-Space: Between Segalen and Debussy' in Charles Forsdick and Susan Marson, eds., *Segalen: Reading Diversity - Lectures Du Divers* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 2000), 115.

further informed and influenced Debussy with regard to exotic and Chinese subjects. Robert Orledge even suggests that ‘thinking about Segalen’s Buddhist drama *Siddhartha* in 1907 probably led to the Image for piano “Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut”’.⁴⁶ According to Philip Weller,

One of the things that Segalen brought to his friendship with Debussy, and which the composer must surely have valued, was a sensibility that was acutely attuned to the exotic not as something picturesque or cosmetic but as something distinctly and radically ‘other’ – something that operated at the deeper and perceptual level of mindset, attitude and value, rather than simply at the surface level of cultural style or local colour.⁴⁷

Pierre Boulez identifies ‘Et la lune’ as the transmutation of oriental influences at the deepest level, a piece in which ‘[oriental] concepts of time and sonority are clearly determined.’⁴⁸ The very opening of ‘Et la lune’ is a prime example of a passage that can be thought to operate at the deeper and perceptual level of mindset, attitude, and value. In this opening, Debussy does not employ the most obvious pentatonic gestures as he does in *Pagodes*; something distinct and radically other

⁴⁶ Robert Orledge, *Debussy and the Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 294.

⁴⁷ Philip Weller, ‘Sound-Silence-Space: Between Segalen and Debussy’ in Charles Forsdick and Susan Marson, eds., *Segalen: Reading Diversity - Lectures du Divers* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 2000), 115-142 [120].

⁴⁸ Pierre Boulez, *Orientations*, ed., Jean-Jacques Nattiez, trans. Martin Cooper (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 422.

is achieved through the combination of a very unconventional (and Chinese sounding) rhythmic and textural effect (Ex. 3.8).

Et la lune descend sur la temple qui fut

Lent (M.M. 68 = ♩)
doux et sans rigueur

Example 3.8: *Et la lune descend sur la temple qui fut*, bars 1-6.

As is characteristic of Debussy, bar lines become meaningless as propulsion in this music is not dependent on metre, but on the widely spaced chords that sound like 'chimes' or 'gongs'. It is these chiming chords that initiate the singular melodic lines out of which the whole piece is constructed. There is little sense of progressive harmony, no cause and effect which conveys time as movement. Timelessness and meditative stillness are therefore a strong component in conveying this nostalgic landscape, achieved through harmony that functions only as

texture and sonority, melodic fragments that begin and have no definite end, and the effects of space and silence which are closely observed.

In bar 12, a widely spaced 'chime' or gong-like chord made up of stacked fourths and fifths is struck (Ex. 3.9). The physical components of this chord extend to the extreme low and high notes of the piano, and create an evocative resonating space waiting to be filled in by the singular Chinese motif that eventually sounds. This 'resonating space' can perhaps be aligned with Laloy's pictorial description of the piece: 'My feeling is that never had [Debussy] attained a similar hollowing of the sound material, which is scooped out like a jade flower with translucent petals'.⁴⁹ Focusing on the Chinese-sounding motif that eventually emerges allows one to show how Debussy used single melodic lines in varying permutations to add to the general effect of timelessness and meditative stillness that runs throughout this piece. The following Chinese motif first occurs at bars 12 to 15 (Ex. 3.9).

⁴⁹ Louis Laloy, *La Musique Retrouvée 1902-1927* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1974), 177.

Chime / Gong Sound

Chinese Motif

8^{va}

più p

pp

pp

m. g.

8^{va} bassa - !

un peu en dehors

Cédez

au Mouvt

m. d.

m. d.

m. d.

m. d.

p

Bar 14

Example 3.9: *Et la lune descend sur la temple qui fut*, bars 10-16.

At this point the Chinese motif (which is characteristically pentatonic) emerges from the texture in the lower part (F#, A, B, C#, E), and it is through the delicately split octaves which emphasise the open fifths of B and F# that a particularly Chinese soundscape comes to the fore. The triplets in the upper part at bar 14-15 which are set against the quavers in the lower part serve to create a delicate, brittle, glass-like sound.

This is a quality in musical works evocative of China that is explored in more detail in the following chapter. When we next hear the pentatonic motif in bars 29-30, it is somewhat obscured by the richer harmonies which overpower its need for simplicity and bareness in order to be heard. The preceding black note pentatonic flourish, however, reminds us of the oriental atmosphere (Ex. 3.10).

Pentatonic flourish Chinese Motif

(M.M. 66 = ♩)

pp

pp

pp

pp *en dehors*

p

p très expressif

Example 3.10: *Et la lune descend sur la temple qui fut*, bars 27-32.

At bars 41-42, this Chinese motif is now left unfinished on C# as it seems to start again in diminution at bar 42 (Ex. 3.11).

Chinese motif in diminution and unfinished

pp

Cédez

Example 3.11: *Et la lune descend sur la temple qui fut*, bars 41-42.

The way such fragments of melody come and go throughout the piece, interpreted anew each time, contributes to this musical pictorialisation of a melancholic and nostalgic Chinese landscape. Roberts writes that ‘the sonorities of “Et la lune” induce acquiescence in the listener, like the acceptance of half understood images in a dream’.⁵⁰ This is also the impulse conveyed by the title, which we catch from the vague image it evokes – And the Moon Sets Over the Temple That Was – as well as from the sounds of the words themselves.

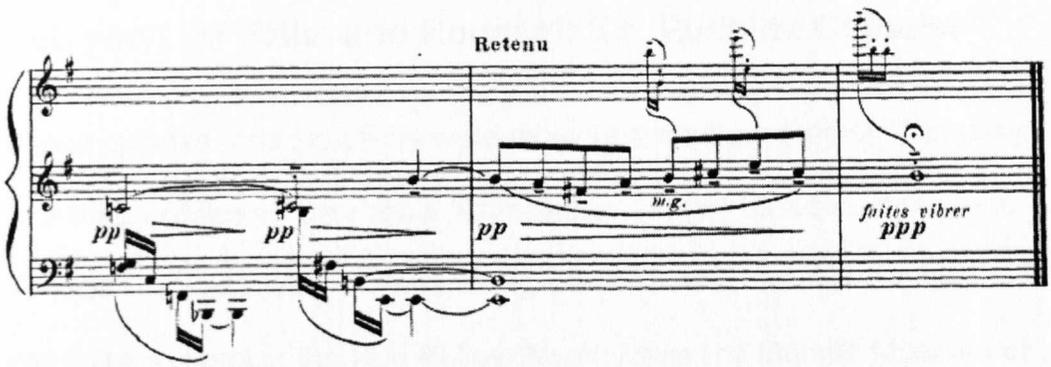
Debussy was acutely sensitized to the role of silence as an expressive means to convey a spiritual or contemplative China, not only to frame but (in this case) to embrace and convey a nostalgic Chinese

⁵⁰ Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland, Or.: Amadeus Press, 1996), 171.

landscape. The silence invoked in this piece through resonating gong like piano chords, and isolated melodic lines provokes a very particular mode of hearing, of aural sensitivity and awareness, and furthermore has a strong relationship to the notion of naturalness and simplicity so strongly advocated by Debussy, Laloy, and Segalen. As Laloy wrote in 1908: 'never had a composer ventured such pure lines, a style so simple and bare, a form which is at once so natural and so sustained. These are works to which one cannot listen without abandoning one's soul to them; and for that reason, in spite of the great success which welcomed them, they are perhaps less well suited to the undifferentiated crowd at a concert than to an intimate, invited audience'.⁵¹ Weller writes that 'Segalen regarded the profound silence of China as something nearly absolute: unremitting, unsettling, at times even disturbing',⁵² and such feelings are clearly documented in his correspondences with Debussy. The closing of this piece showcases the final entry of the Chinese motif in its simplest form – isolated and singular – coming to rest ever so 'silently' on a resonating B (Ex. 3.12).

⁵¹ Louis Laloy, *La Grande revue* (10 March 1908) in Louis Laloy, *Louis Laloy on Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky*, trans. Deborah Priest (Hampshire: Ashgate, 1999), 207.

⁵² Philip Weller, 'Sound-Silence-Space: Between Segalen and Debussy' in Charles Forsdick and Susan Marson, eds., *Segalen: Reading Diversity - Lectures Du Divers* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 2000), 123.



Example 3.12: *Et la lune descend sur la temple qui fut*, last 3 bars.

These preoccupations of Debussy – his attitude towards silence, his ‘open air aesthetic’, sensitivity to atmosphere, his creative use of Chinese gestures and improvisation, and his search for an exotic soundscape that went beyond a superficial musical chinoiserie, resulted in a highly personalized and timeless quality that can be related not only to similar perceptions of close friends Laloy and Segalen, but also to their common interest in Chinese art, philosophy, and anthropology. As we have seen, this shared enthusiasm was one of the key influential elements in their relationship. All three were strong creative personalities in their own right, with strong aesthetic preferences, as well as highly individual artistic needs and expressive imperatives. But the wide ranging nature of the conversations, together with their agreement on certain issues, provided an intellectual space for Debussy to embrace (intellectually and imaginatively) a much broader range of topics concerning exoticism and more specifically China.

Debussy, De Falla, and Roussel: 'La Machine Chinoise'

Space, silence, and simplicity were to solve a musical problem Debussy identified in Manuel De Falla's 'Chinoserie' (1909) for voice and piano. In 1909 De Falla was in Paris, living on the fourth floor of a small but comfortable hotel in the Rue Belloy. Nearby was the Guimet Museum of Oriental Art, which contained exhibits ranging from Egyptian mummies to collections of chinoiserie. Jaime Pahissa, a close friend who visited De Falla frequently in his last years documents how the composer used to go there to steep himself in the oriental atmosphere he wished to express in 'Chinoserie'.⁵³

'Chinoserie' is the second piece from *Trois Melodies* for voice and piano, based on poems by Theophile Gautier. According to Pahissa, when he had completed the *Trois Melodies* he took them to Debussy, who liked and praised them. However, in 'Chinoserie' he felt that the introduction, or rather the vocal part preceding what Debussy described as 'la machine chinoise' with its whimsical air, was not in keeping with the song proper in this kind of music. De Falla was reluctant to revise a work which he thought he had finished, but he still asked what was to be done about it, 'I don't know', replied Debussy, 'You will find out. "Seek and ye shall find", as Jesus said'.⁵⁴ De Falla's solution was to eliminate the piano part, for after some thought he realised that the heavy piano part which underlay the vocal section was unnecessary.

⁵³ Jaime Pahissa, *Manuel De Falla*, trans. Jean Wagstaff (London: Museum Press Limited, 1954), 72-73.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Once it had been removed, to leave only the melodic line with an introductory chord and a transitional chord leading into 'la machine chinoise', Debussy thought the piece was very good. This observation of Debussy's was most useful to De Falla, as he realised that sometimes one thinks one can improve things by making them more complex when in fact the opposite is the case.⁵⁵ The stripping away of excessive 'sound' to leave a simpler and more silent vocal line is something we know is completely in line with Debussy's general aesthetic. Unfortunately the original piano accompaniment for 'Chinosierie' has not survived, the only evidence we have of its existence is from the memoirs of Jaime Pahissa.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

CHANT *Moderato (quasi recitativo) avec simplicité*

Ce n'est pas vous, non, ma - da - me, que

PIANO *Moderato sf p*

j'ai - me, Ni vous non plus, Ju - li - et - te, ni vous, O - phé - li -

a, ni Bé - a - trix, ni mé - me Lau - re la blon - de,

poco

a - veo ses grands yeux doux. — Cel - le que

poco rit. *p* *a Tempo* *presque murmuré*

j'aime — à pré - sent, est en

Allegretto scherzando. Mouvement moyen 116=

Chi Allegretto scherzando ne;

pp

2 Ped.

Example 3.13: *Chinoiserie*, bars 1-22.

From the score (Ex. 3.13), we can see the use of a chime-like introductory chord; a delicate C# grace note falls onto the open fifths of B – F# which as a chord (V of E major, with the third omitted) immediately sets up the framework for an ambiguous harmonic and melodic soundscape. An isolated, almost chant like vocal declamation emerges from this resonating chord where small compass intervals (F#-B) initially outline open fourths. The chant like vocal line also sounds improvisatory due to its repetitive and cyclical scoring, which gives the overall effect of a meditative rhythmic stasis that transports us into a new and foreign musical soundscape – a soundscape that was already established by the likes of Debussy. Carol A. Hess remarks that De Falla's decision to strip away the accompaniment makes sense when we consider the contrasting texts of both sections. As she writes,

...the twenty measure introduction is a suspense-building recitation concerning the identity of a mysterious amour in which the singer asserts who she is not ('ce n'est pas vous, madame...ni vous, Juliette...ni vous Ophelia, ni Beatrix, ni...Laure, la blonde avec ses grands yeux doux'). The body of the song, on the other hand, is an exuberant paean to the beloved, now identified as an exotic Chinese woman ('des yeux retroussés vers les tempes, un pied petit à tenir dans la main'), colored with pentatonicism and bell-like effects throughout in a bustling, *moto perpetuo piano* part, or 'la machine chinoise', as Debussy called it. In effect, a dividing line is drawn between the bevy of European beauties, dismissed in silence, and 'celle que

j'aime a present'. Thus Falla opposes European self and exotic Other.⁵⁶

Whilst Hess provides a fairly convincing reading when the text is aligned to musical subdivisions, it seems unlikely that De Falla would have made a conscious decision to contrast European self and exotic Other in his music. The suspense-building recitation Hess identifies, with its exposed vocal line outlining intervals of fourths and fifths is in fact a widely used exotic marker in itself, and rather than to denote the 'European self' it is far more convincing to read this stripping away of accompaniment as an attempt to invoke a Chinese and mystical soundscape right from the start.

De Falla's Chinese soundscape is inspired by Theophile Gautier's 1838 poem entitled 'Chinoiserie' and brings to the fore another image of China in early twentieth-century France; one of sensuality, eroticism, and femininity. The text portrays a nostalgic, quasi-mythical fairytale China steeped in history, and reveals a fascination and desire for the Chinese female entwined with archetypal images of China as a country (Table 3.2).

⁵⁶ Carol A. Hess, *Sacred Passions: The Life and Music of Manuel De Falla* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 36-37.

CHINOISERIE

Ce n'est pas vous, non, madame, que j'aime,
Ni vous non plus, Juliette ni vous,
Ophélie, ni Béatrix, ni même
Laure la blonde, avec ses grands yeux doux.

Celle que j'aime, à présent, est en Chine;
Elle demeure avec ses vieux parents,
Dans une tour de porcelaine fine,
Au fleuve Jaune, où sont les cormorans.

Elle a des yeux retroussés vers les tempes,
Un pied petit à tenir dans la main,
Le teint plus clair que le cuivre des lampes,
Les ongles longs et rougis de carmin.

Par son treillis elle passe sa tête,
Que l'hirondelle, en volant, vient toucher;
Et, chaque soir, aussi bien qu'un poète,
Chante le saule et la fleur du pêcher.

It is not you, fair lady, whom I love,
No longer you, nor you my Juliet,
Ophelia, nor Beatrice; nor golden
Laura's large sweet eyes with vows beset.

The maiden whom I love now, has her bower
In China, by the Yellow River's tide
And dwells with her aged parents in a tower
Of porcelain; with cormorants beside.

She has her eyes upturned; a foot so small
It fits within the hand; and to this weds
Skin clearer than the brass lamps; and all
Her nails are long and deeply flushed with red.

Her head the swallow brushes with his wings,
She sways before the lattice in her room;
And every night, like any poet sings
Of the willow, and the peach-tree's bloom.

Table 3.2: Song text of 'Chinoiserie' from Theophile Gautier, *La Comedie De La Mort* (Bruxelles: E. Laurent, Imprimeur-Editeur, 1838). Translated by Thea Astley.

The mysteriousness, exotic, and ancient physical appearance of the Chinese female subject is encapsulated in the lines 'Her almond eyes accent her beauty / Her foot is small enough to hold in your hand / Her skin reflects the copper of the lamps / And her tapered nails are carmine red'. In this poem, Gautier sets up a sharp dialogue between Western history (thesis) and ancient civilization (antithesis), finding his synthesis in a China that defies time as the subject of the poem is 'by the river where the cormorants are' and 'sings of the willow and flowering peach'. Edward Said and others have noted that the 'Orient' was produced discursively and epistemologically as a feminized location, (im)penetrable by the West. The metaphorical feminization of China resulted in the metonymic hyperfeminization of 'oriental women,'

as if culture, and in this case Chinese landscape, compounded gender (this is an area discussed in further detail in chapters 4 and 5).⁵⁷

At bar 21, Debussy's labelling of 'la machine chinoise' breaks the silent and sparse texture set up in the introduction. What did Debussy mean by 'la machine chinoise'? The word 'machine' certainly has implications of a mechanical and somewhat formulaic aspect, and this is something discussed in more detail in the following chapter. The 'machine chinoise' of De Falla's 'Chinoiserie' consists of delicately interwoven high pitched octaves and fifths that create a uniform pattern which sounds mechanical, or rather like a music box with its light, fragile, repetitive, and percussive timbre. As we reach bar 25, fragments of pentatonic scales and ornaments are added to the mix (Ex. 3.14). It is some significance that the 'machine chinois' accompaniment commences only once the text reaches the word 'Chine', and thereby aurally informs the listener where the poem is set geographically. Not only does it cement the connection between the music and the geographical location, it also conjures up the landscape in advance the text.

⁵⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 190. See also Linda Phyllis Austern, 'Forreine Conceites and Wandering Devises: The Exotic, the Erotic, and the Feminine' in Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 26-42; Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1995) and Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Allegretto scherzando. Mouvement moyen 116♩

Bar 25

douce, mais bien accentuée

Ped.

Example 3.14: *Chinoiserie*, bars 18-29.

At bar 37, the 'la machine chinoise' section identified by Debussy becomes even more decorative. While the vocal line continues in its chant-like declamation with its repetition of pitches, the piano accompaniment consists of repetitive figures which produce a busy and intricately woven texture. These repetitive figures are scored for high pitches on the piano and combine octave doublings, staccato, and fifth intervals to produce a slightly awkward jaunty rhythm that is light, fragile, and delicately percussive; a musical timbre perhaps well suited

to the archetypal feminine subject of the song. This musical timbre is both orderly (mechanical and repetitive) and disorderly (jaunty rhythm, triplets against quavers) and conveys a 'graceful disorder' which we might describe as the particular beauty of an *acoustic sharawadgi* (Ex. 3.15).

mp

Elle a des yeux re - trous.

grazioso

p leger et transparent

2 Ped. sempre

sés vers les tem - pes, Un pied pe - tit à te - nir dans la main. Le teint plus clair que le

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

cui - vre des lam - pes. Les on - gles longs et rou - gis de carmin.

Ped. Ped. Ped. (gardez la Ped.) p

Example 3.15: *Chinoiserie*, bars 37- 45.

A similar – if much simpler – musical timbre is evident in Albert Roussel's (1869-1937) art song 'Deux Poèmes Chinoise' (1907-8). This

is yet another example of the Western fascination with the Chinese female as the lyrics place her in the context of a light-hearted romantic narrative. The mechanical, light, fragile, and delicately percussive aesthetic of 'la machiné chinoise' is however applied to the entire piece. The opening of the first song, 'À un jeune gentilhomme', uses the pentatonic scale in a lively and rhythmical piano accompaniment (Ex. 3.16).

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece. The top system is labeled 'CHANT' and 'Vif et léger'. The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics: 'N'entrez pas, Monsieur, s'il vous / Don't come in, good Sir, if you'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'p' and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and chords. The bottom system is marked 'en retenant un peu' and contains the lyrics: 'plait, — Ne bri - sez pas mes fougè - res, Non pas que ce - la me fas - se grand' / please, — Don't break my wil - low - trees, — 'Tis not that your en - trance would much dis.' The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern.

Example 3.16: *À un jeune gentilhomme*, bars 1-7.

The text concerns a stereotypically coy and traditional Chinese female who spurns her interested male admirer for fear of how her family would react (see Table 3.3). Her apprehension and connection to a nostalgic Chinese landscape is evident by the opening words 'Don't come in sir,

please! / Don't break my willow-trees'.⁵⁸ Muscially, this is perhaps represented by the rhythmic 'jilt' or 'stammer' portrayed through the repetition of the same notes in beats 2 and 4 of each bar (Ex. 16). This repetition also conveys a slight rhythmic imbalance, but an imbalance that is made to sound ordered and regular (mechanical) through incessant repetition (functioning rather like an ostinato). The 'machine chinoise' piano accompaniment then develops into a new decorative and mechanical pattern that is once again percussive, high-pitched, light, fragile, and repetitive. Although bars 46-51 appear to be mechanical and ordered, there is an imbalanced 7+7 quaver phrase structure (Ex. 3.17). Example 3.18 demonstrates how triplets are set against quavers to create a jaunty rhythm that is still pleasingly consistent. Together, these elements suggest the graceful disorder of acoustic sharawadgi.

⁵⁸ The two songs are based on poems by H.P. Roche, after the English poem by Herbert Allen Giles (these poems therefore do not possess authentic Chinese origins).

À UN JEUNE GENTILHOMME	TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN
<p>N'entrez pas, Monsieur, s'il vous plaît, Ne brisez pas mes fougères, Non pas que cela me fasse grand'peine, Mais que diraient mon père et ma mère? Et même si je vous aime, Je n'ose penser à ce qui arriverait.</p> <p>Ne passez pas mon mur, Monsieur, s'il vous plaît, N'abîmez pas mes primevères, Non pas que cela me fasse grand'peine Mais, mon Dieu! que diraient mes frères? Et même si je vous aime, Je n'ose penser à ce qui arriverait.</p> <p>Restez dehors, Monsieur, s'il vous plaît, Ne poussez pas mon paravent, Non pas que cela me fasse grand'peine, Mais, mon Dieu! qu'en diraient les gens? Et même si je vous aime, Je n'ose penser à ce qui arriverait.</p>	<p>Don't come in, sir, please! Don't break my willow-trees! Not that <i>that</i> would very much grieve me; But, alack-a-day! what would my parents say? And love you as I may, I cannot bear to think what that would be.</p> <p>Don't cross my wall, sir, please! Don't spoil my mulberry-trees! Not that <i>that</i> would very much grieve me; But, alack-a-day! what would my brothers say? And love you as I may, I cannot bear to think what that would be.</p> <p>Keep outside, sir, please! Don't spoil my sandal-trees! Not that <i>that</i> would very much grieve me; But, alack-a-day! what the world would say! And love you as I may, I cannot bear to think what that would be.</p>

Table 3.3: Song text for 'À un jeune gentilhomme'. Translated by Geoffrey Wieting.

plait, — Ne pous-sez pas mon pa-ra-vent, — Non pas que ce-
please, — He-tween my shut-ters do not squeeze; — 'Tis not that your

—la me fas-se grand'pei-ne, Mais, mon Dieu! qu'en di-raient les
pres-ure would much dis-tress me, But, O dear, what the world might

Example 3.17: À un jeune gentilhomme, bars 46-51.

p *mf*
 Ne pas-sez pas mon mur, Mon-sieur, s'il vous plaît, — N'a-bi-mez
 Don't climb my wall, good Sir, if you please, — Don't spoil my

pen retenant un peu
 pas mes pri-me-ve-res, Non pas que ce-la me fas-se grand'
 mul-ber-ry trees; — 'Tis not that their ru-in would much dis-

Example 3.18: *À un jeune gentilhomme*, bars 23-28.

In conclusion, the nostalgic Chinese landscape embraces the desire for an untouched, untainted, pre-modern, natural, simple, and utopian world. Debussy's 'Rondel Chinois' immediately sets this scene in the first line of the song text: 'On the lake, bordered with azaleas, water lilies, and bamboo'. De Falla's Chinese character in 'Chinoiserie' basks in her idyllic landscape 'as every night, like any poet [she] sings of the willow, and the peach tree's bloom'. And Roussel's female character practically implores the preservation of her utopian world: 'Don't break my willow trees... Don't spoil my mulberry trees'.

Clearly then, the incorporation of this nostalgic Chinese landscape goes beyond a mere description of a utopian and exotic land. It is a place in which cultural meanings and values are encoded. Using the words of W. J. T. Mitchell in his writing about landscape and power, the nostalgic

Chinese landscape 'always greets us as space, as environment, as that within which 'we' (figured as 'the figures' in the landscape) find – or lose – ourselves'.⁵⁹ Debussy's 'Pagodes' and 'Et la lune' musically encode idealized notions of an esoteric, spiritual, and mystical China through the attentive use of silence and musical stasis. Foucault similarly envisioned an unchanging and timeless China: 'we think of it [China] as a civilization of dikes and dams beneath the eternal face of the sky, we see it, spread and frozen, over the entire surface of a continent surrounded by walls'.⁶⁰ Musically, this vision was realized through a sparse texture, sporadic yet mesmerizing ceremonial gong-like chords, a freer rhythm and tonality that was still coherent due to its cyclical and repetitive nature. The overall result was the creation of a meditative and almost spiritual soundscape that aligned with well-known Chinese sensibilities in Chinese landscape painting which were 'bound up with mystical reverence for the powers of nature'.⁶¹

De Falla's 'Chinoiserie' and Roussel's 'À un jeune gentilhomme' show how this desire to represent nostalgic Chinese landscapes in music was often eroticized in French art songs with the inclusion of a female subject. As Linda Phyllis Austern writes '...woman is unequivocally united with the distant, the pagan, the unearthly, and the unexplored,

⁵⁹ W. J. T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 2.

⁶⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1973), xix.

⁶¹ W. J. T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 13.

primal realm of nature. She becomes every remotely imagined region of physical space, and even suggests the portal into the mystical regions of eternity'.⁶² This chapter reveals that something else happens to the musical sound and atmosphere when a feminine subject is included – the mechanical, delicately patterned, high-pitched, percussive, and repetitive timbre of 'la machine chinoise'. While De Falla's 'Chinoiserie' begins with a meditative and chant-like soundscape, it soon progresses into the distinctly delicate and percussive timbre of 'la machine chinoise', which can be considered to depict the femininity of the Chinese character. However, it also serves to project her and the nostalgic Chinese landscape in which she resides, into the realm of fairytale. This imaginary, magical, and utopian realm is ideally matched with the child-like simplicity of 'la machine chinoise', with its delicate, tinkling, percussive bell-like sounds.

⁶² Linda Phylliss Austern, 'Forreine Conceites and Wandring Devises: The Exotic, the Erotic, and the Feminine' in Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 31.

Chapter Four

La Machine Chinoise and Acoustic Sharawadgi

In considering the musicalisation of nostalgic Chinese landscapes in the works of Debussy, De Falla, and Roussel in chapter three, the point was made that silence and space contributed to a Chinese soundscape that went beyond the use of superficial devices. Furthermore, the term 'la machine chinoise' was taken to more broadly convey a particular 'Chinese' musical timbre that was delicately percussive, light, fragile, and high-pitched. This chapter develops these findings and explores the notion of 'la machine chinoise' as a mechanistic trope that could be used to convey Chinese subjects such as porcelain palaces, Chinese marches, evil stereotypes, and a particular Chinese brutality. In contrast to this, the second half of this chapter further explores the term 'acoustic sharawadgi' as a bucolic and natural trope that could be used to convey the notion of a more spiritual and meditative China. Although these terms are not mutually exclusive as demonstrated towards the end of chapter three, musical chinoiserie is about extremes. This chapter therefore explores this by examining these terms in their own right and putting them into dialogue.

Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (1908), Stravinsky's *The Nightingale* (1914), and Puccini's *Turandot* (1926) reveal highly individual aesthetic

goals that invite closer cross examination with regard to ideology, compositional method, and reception. One may question the reasoning behind analyzing Chinese inspired musical works by these composers side by side. But the purpose is not to draw similarities or make comparisons between the works, methods, ideologies, and musical construction. These works are selected to showcase well-known examples of early twentieth-century Western musical imaginings of China which display psychologically elaborate treatments of Chinese topics which are personal and unique.

For *Das Lied von der Erde* Mahler was drawn to the Chinese poetry of Li-Tai-Po at a time of great personal crisis. According to his wife Alma Mahler 'these poems came back to his mind; and their infinite melancholy answered to his own' in the wake of three devastating life events; his departure from the Vienna court opera, the death of his eldest daughter, and the diagnosis of his potentially fatal heart condition. It was in this context that the music of 'Das Lied' was conceived, and therefore it reveals a very personal musical sensitivity that responded to the profound themes of life and death. The exotic Chinese subject can be considered to have enhanced and influenced the enigmatic and ethereal qualities sought after in this composition. Mahler himself described it as the most 'personal thing I have done so far'.¹

¹ Letter 378 in Knud Martner, ed., *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, trans. Ernst Kaiser, Eithne Wilkins, and Bill Hopkins (London: John Murray, 1979), 326. See also

Stravinsky used China as a location to explore a fairytale, imaginary and fantasy world which harked back to eighteenth-century notions of luxurious and extravagant Chinese dynasties. With *The Nightingale* it can be considered that he wanted to revisit his boyhood nostalgia through Hans Christian Andersons fairytale. Stravinsky clearly viewed this opera as a 'fantasy' as he wrote that this was to be an 'exotic fantasy that obviously demanded a different musical idiom'.² Stravinsky's personal vision of China in *The Nightingale* reveals a tendency towards choosing archaic and traditional visuals on stage; musically, however, the Chinese element is combined with his distinctive modernistic and innovative style which accentuates the bizarre, supernatural, and fantastical nature of the fairytale.

Puccini's *Turandot* reveals yet another unique and psychologically elaborate view of China. An awareness of Puccini's well documented personality traits, ambitious nature, and good head for business may lead one to speculate that *Turandot* was written in order to appeal to the popular mass. Perhaps Puccini recognised (as he did with *Madame Butterfly*) that the Chinese subject of *Turandot* would tie in with the current vogue for exoticism and therefore be a commercial success. His ability to cater towards a popular audience is reflected in his transformation of Gozzi's original play into a China that that was much

letter 409 in Herta Blaukopf, ed., *Gustav Mahler: Unbekannte Briefe* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay, 1983), 347-348.

² Igor Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life* (London: V. Gollancz, 1936), 87-88.

more cold, barbarous, and violent; it also promulgated popular Chinese stereotypes of the time. For Puccini, it was important to intellectually engage with and seek out authentic Chinese musical sources. As he wrote, 'I shall get some old Chinese music too, and descriptions and drawings of different instruments which we shall have on stage (not in the orchestra)'.³

This chapter shows two ways in which musical chinoiserie can be employed. In order to explain this, let us recall the analogy of the china tea cup in chapter one, which was characterized by the use of blue and white decorative motifs (Fig. 4.1). On the one hand, decorative motifs were used overtly and repetitively: the overall effect can be described as an obvious, superficial, and exaggerated Chinese style. On the other hand, these motifs could also be applied sparingly to the china cup, revealing a more subtle approach that gestured towards more philosophical or conceptual Chinese sensibilities.

³ Giuseppe Adami, ed., *Epistolario Giacomo Puccini* (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1982), [EGP, ltr 176].



Figure 4.1: Chinese porcelain cups. Unknown artists. Made between 1620-1720. (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, C.779-1910 and 36-1883)

In a similar way, Chinese-inspired compositions used decorative *musical* motifs (e.g. grace-notes, open-fifth chords, pentatonic figures, etc), which could either be applied to the musical work in order to produce a densely patterned and exaggerated decorative soundscape, or more subtly used to evoke Western conceptions of China as a place of nostalgia, peace, and tranquility.

This chapter brings these contrasting decorative styles into dialogue, and is in two parts. Part one, 'Overt Sounds: La Machine Chinoise' focuses on the literary and visual symbol of the Chinese porcelain pavilion in Mahler's 'Von der Jugend' ['Of Youth'] – third movement of *Das Lied*, Stravinsky's *Nightingale* (Act II), and Puccini's *Turandot* (Act II). In all these examples the Chinese porcelain palace provides a space to locate and represent a peopled landscape, and therefore exhibits lively, busy, ritualistic, and even chaotic musical visions of Chinese life. Furthermore, these examples occur at crucial musico-dramatic points in

the composition and are pinnacle moments in 'obvious' musical chinoiserie. The term 'La Machine Chinoise' can on the one hand recognise the immediate impact of a foreign sound, and on the other hand allow one to consider the way in which the chinoiserie is rooted well below the decorative surface of its immediate sound, i.e. in specific compositional techniques, and psychological aims.

In contrast, the second part of this chapter, entitled 'Submerged Sounds: Acoustic Sharawadgi' centres on musical examples that focus on the solo female voice in order to radiate an alluring, ethereal, spiritual, and almost haunting Chinese ambience into the overall soundscape. It is no coincidence then that these musical examples showcase a section in the work that is softer, quieter, and less imposing. A sudden reduction in volume and orchestral texture has the effect of making the sound of the solo female voice a particularly marked moment. One may therefore describe the following examples as a kind of 'submerged' exoticism whereby the decorative style is used sparingly, but to maximum effect – arabesques, exposed vocal lines, and the treatment of time and tonality are carefully manipulated to evoke space, silence, and tranquility. Furthermore, these examples occur at intense and emotional climaxes in the musical narrative, where the exotic female character is somewhat disengaged from reality, almost supernatural - on the cusp of life and death, suggestive of an eternal hope and beauty beyond mortal reach. An example of this is the final movement of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* ('Der Abschied' –

The Farewell), which has been described as his farewell to life.⁴ Focusing on the profoundly moving conclusion to this work, the way in which this submerged decorative style articulates the final words: 'I go, I wander, I seek peace for my lonely heart' is examined. This is followed by an analysis of the supernatural and ethereal deliverance of Stravinsky's 'Nightingale Aria' – a female voice in the orchestral pit represents the nightingale and is to be heard soaring above. Finally, Liu's aria 'Signore Ascolta' from Puccini's *Turandot* provides another example of an alluring and ethereal solo female voice, a voice that represents absolute devotion and sacrificial love, which ultimately results in her death.

Overt Sounds: 'La Machine Chinois'

MAHLER AND DAS LIED VON DER ERDE (1908)

In a green and white porcelain pavilion surrounded by water, sophisticated and carefree youths are drinking tea, chatting animatedly, and scribbling down verses: that is the premise for movement three of *Das Lied von der Erde*, entitled 'Von der Jugend' [Of Youth] (Table. 4.1).

⁴ Stephen E. Hefling, *Mahler: Das Lied Von Der Erde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 59.

VON DER JUGEND	OF YOUTH
<p>Mitten in dem kleinen Teiche Steht ein Pavillon aus grünem Und aus weißem Porzellan.</p> <p>Wie der Rücken eines Tigers Wölbt die Brücke sich aus Jade Zu dem Pavillon hinüber.</p> <p>In dem Häuschen sitzen Freunde, Schön gekleidet, trinken, plaudern. Manche schreiben Verse nieder.</p> <p>Ihre seidnen Ärmel gleiten Rückwärts, ihre seidnen Mützen Hocken lustig tief im Nacken.</p> <p>Auf des kleinen Teiches stiller Oberfläche zeigt sich alles Wunderlich im Spiegelbilde.</p> <p>Wie ein Halbmond scheint die Brücke, Umgekehrter Bogen. Freunde, Schön gekleidet, trinken, plaudern.</p> <p>Alles auf dem Kopfe stehend In dem Pavillon aus grünem Und aus weißem Porzellan;</p>	<p>In the middle of the little pool Stands a pavilion of green And white porcelain</p> <p>Like a tiger's back Arches the bridge of jade Over to the pavilion</p> <p>In the little house friends are sitting, Beautifully dressed, drinking, chatting. Several are writing verses.</p> <p>Their silken sleeves slip Backwards, their silken caps Perch gaily on the back of their necks.</p> <p>On the little pool's still Surface everything appears Fantastically in a mirror image.</p> <p>Everything is standing on its head In the pavilion of green And white porcelain;</p> <p>The bridge seems like a half-moon, It's arch upside-down. Friends, Beautifully dressed, are drinking and chatting.</p>

Table 4.1: 'Von der Jugend' [Of Youth]. Text and translation from Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 248-259. Mahler's 'Von der Jugend' can be traced back to three sources; a) 'Le pavillon de porcelaine' from Judith Gautier's *Le Livre de Jade* (1867); b) 'Der Porzellan-Pavillon' from Hans Heilmann's *Chinesische Lyrik* (1905); c) 'Der Pavillon aus Porzellan' from Hans Bethge's *Die chinesische Flöte* (1907).

'Von der Jugend' [Of Youth] presents a peopled landscape, an open air scene, and, while the poem does not specify the season, it must surely be summer.⁵ Inspired by the poem 'Der Pavillon aus Porzellan' from Hans Bethge's *Die Chinesische Flöte* (1907), 'Von der Jugend' can also be traced back to Judith Gautier's 'Pavillon de porcelaine' (1867) which

⁵ Refer to Donald Mitchell for an explanation of how Mahler's manipulation of the cyclic image deviates from conventional seasonal order. In *Das Lied*, summer comes before spring and after autumn. According to Mitchell, the central movements (3 and 4) represent summer. See Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 252-253.

is in turn attributed to the legendary Tang dynasty poet Li-Tai-Po.⁶ According to Alma Mahler's memoirs, an old consumptive friend of her father's, who had transferred all the love he had had for him to Mahler, sought out songs for him to set to music and brought to notice anything that might be of stimulus to him. It was he who gave Mahler a copy of Hans Bethge's *Die Chinesische Flöte* (1907). Alma Mahler goes on to write that for Mahler 'after the loss of his child and the alarming verdict on his heart, exiled from his home and his workshop, these poems came back to his mind; and their infinite melancholy answered to his own'.⁷ In the afterword to *Die Chinesische Flöte*, Hans Bethge reveals his own admiration for the unique atmosphere Li-Tai-Po exudes in his Chinese poems, and why these would also have appealed to Mahler.

He [Li Po] turns poetry into the volatile, wind-swept, unutterable beauty of the world, the eternal sadness and enigma of all being. All the gloomy melancholy of the world took root in his breast, and even in moments of greatest joy he cannot free himself from the shadows of the earth. 'Transitoriness' is the constantly admonishing stamp of his feeling.⁸

⁶ There is no poem with the title 'Pavillon de porcelaine' in Li-Tai-Po's corpus. Fusako Hamao demonstrates that it actually originates from Li-Tai-Po's poem 'A Banquet at Tao's Pavilion'. Judith Gautier mistranslated or misconstrued the surname *Tao* in the title to mean 'porcelain' (the word *tao* means ceramic). Another plausible reason is the influence of fanciful images of porcelain pavilions on delftware and in paintings. See Fusako Hamao, 'The Sources of the Texts in Mahler's "Lied von der Erde"', *Nineteenth-Century Music* 19/ 1 (1995), 91-94, and Teng-Leong Chew, 'The Identity of the Chinese Poem Mahler Adapted for "Von Der Jugend"', *Naturlaut* 3/2 (2004), 15-17.

⁷ Donald Mitchell, ed., *Gustav Mahler: Memories and Letters by Alma Mahler*, trans. Basil Creighton, 3rd ed. (London: John Murray Publishers, 1973), 123.

⁸ Hans Bethge, *Die Chinesische Flöte: Nachdichtungen Chinesischer Lyrik* (Leipzig, 1907), 109.

This mode of thought and sentiment presumably resonated deeply within Mahler as *Das Lied* was written in the wake of three devastating crises: his departure from the Vienna Court opera, the death of his eldest daughter, and the diagnosis of his potentially fatal heart condition. Such 'gloomy melancholy' might well characterise 'Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde' [The Drinking Song of Earth's Sorrow], but the 'unutterable beauty of the world', the 'moments of greatest joy', and 'transitoriness' surely applies to the vivacious musical aesthetic of 'Von der Jugend'.

'Von der Jugend' is a crucial musico-dramatic moment in *Das Lied* as we encounter for the first time an absence of tension and conflict – the mood is joyful, light, and carefree. Donald Mitchell describes this as a 'delicate chinoiserie', and Stephen E. Hefling as 'the most transparent in its chinoiserie'.⁹ At only three and a half minutes long, this central movement is the shortest and most fleeting episode. 'Leicht und phantastisch' [Light and fantastic] was Mahler's provisional tempo marking in the piano autograph (Fig. 4.2). Mahler captures the lively setting of this Chinese inspired poem through his own unique use of the Chinese decorative style, which serves to convey the most instantly recognizable and overtly Chinese sounds of the entire work. On the surface, one hears the delicate ornamentation, jangling bell-sounds,

⁹ Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 251. Stephen E. Hefling, *Mahler: Das Lied Von Der Erde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 95.

carefully nuanced orchestration, and pentatonic and whole tone configurations which produce a texture that is sparse, yet intricately patterned and treble-oriented. If we delve a little deeper, however, an analysis of this movement reveals how the Chinese inspired images of the poem are precisely and thoughtfully reflected in musical gestures, and also conveyed in the overall structure.

Leicht: phantastisch

Sopra. *sempre pp*

Clarin

Mit den in dem Rheinische steh'n die silbernen grünen und aus weissem Porzellan

wie der Rücken eines Tigers willk' der Rücken sich aus

1914

Figure 4.2: 'Der Pavillon aus Porzellan', piano autograph, folio 1. Taken from Stephen E. Hefling, 'Das Lied Von Der Erde: Mahler's Symphony for Voices and Orchestra - or Piano', *Journal of Musicology* 10/3 (1992), 323.

The orchestral introduction of twelve bars introduces a very particular Chinese-like musical timbre through the simple application of sustained horn and chiming triangle in the first two bars, followed by a pentatonic motif played in unison by the flute and oboe. By bar 6, a flowing pace has been instigated by the addition of the rest of the woodwind section

which emits a fuller, ornamented, and treble-oriented sound. The orchestral introduction not only establishes the sudden change in style and mood from one of melancholy and gloom to one that is joyful and carefree; but also sets up the image of friends drinking and gossiping in the pavilion through the chattering and delicately patterned woodwind (Ex. 4.1).

III. VON DER JUGEND.

Behaglich heiter.

The score is divided into two systems, each marked with a box containing the number '1' or '2'. The first system includes parts for Kleine Flöte, 1. Flöte, 2. Flöte, 1. Oboe, 1.2 Klarinette in B, 1. Horn in F, and Triangel. The second system includes parts for Kl. Fl., 1. Fl., 2. Fl., 1. Ob., 1.2 Kl. in B, 1. Hr. in F, 1. Vi., 2. Vi., Br., Tenor-Stimme, and Vcl. The Tenor voice part includes the lyrics: "Mit-ten in dem klei-nen Teil-che steht ein Pa-vil-".

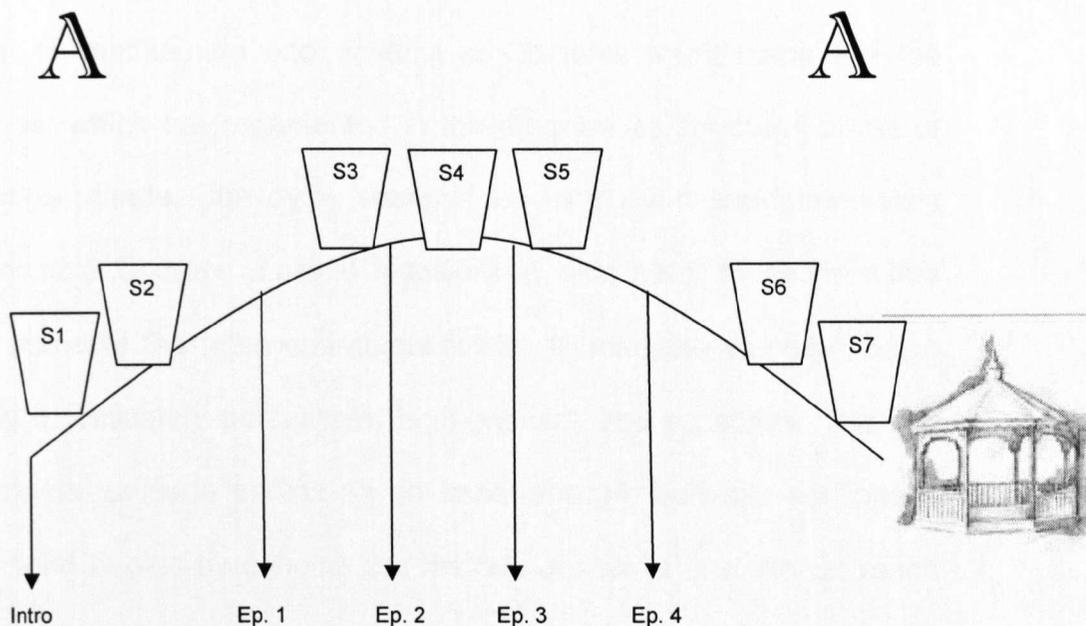
Dynamic markings include *ppp*, *p*, *fp*, *f*, *dim.*, and *pp*. Performance instructions include *sempre staccato e p*, *saltando*, and *sempre staccato*. A box labeled '1' is placed above the first system and below the second system. A box labeled '2' is placed above the second system and below the third system.

Example 4.1: 'Von der Jugend'

Mahler evidently made use of the Chinese decorative style to musically depict the narrative framework of a Chinese social scene set in an idyllic porcelain pavilion.¹⁰ Underscoring what may be heard as a more superficial (surface-level) chinoiserie is a careful and nuanced musical interpretation of the Chinese subject. The text plays on the image of an arch: a bridge of jade arches over to the pavilion like a tiger's back, on the surface of the water everything appears in mirror image so that the reflected shape of the bridge resembles that of a half-moon. Through a small and ingenious alteration, Mahler conveys the image of the bridge of jade in the overall structure of the poem. By inverting the order of Bethge's last two stanzas, the piece ends as it began with carefree youths drinking tea, chatting animatedly, and scribbling down verses (refer back to Table 4.1). Furthermore, this image of the bridge of jade (an arch structure) was also incorporated in the overall form of the music, where the division of seven stanzas into three sections (2+3+2) forms a musical arch (ABA) (See Fig. 4.3).

¹⁰ Although there is no evidence as to whether Mahler heard the French works in chapter 3, Western interest in oriental culture had been both widespread and eclectic – as demonstrated in France in the previous chapter. For example, Mahler was well acquainted with the exoticism in the poetry of Rückert and Goethe, as well as the allusions to classics of Eastern literature in the writings of Schopenhauer.

B



Key: S1 = Stanza 1, Ep.1 = Episode 1

Figure 4.3: Diagram to show 'arch structure' of 'Von der Jugend'.

Figure 4.3 illustrates a literal image of the bridge of jade as it arches over to the pavilion. As the music progresses through stanzas one to seven, we also cross an arch to a pavilion where reflections in the pool now make 'its arch seem upside-down', and everything appear to stand on its head.¹¹ The two outer A sections frame the piece in a delicately patterned, pentatonic, rhythmically vibrant, and staccato treble-oriented sound. Contrastingly, the central B section is sensuous and less fussy,

¹¹ In the sixth stanza of the poem 'Everything is standing on its head / In the pavilion of green and white porcelain'. And by the seventh stanza 'The bridge seems like a half-moon / It's arch upside-down'.

with a fuller orchestral texture where the strings eventually abandon their hitherto staccato role, for one that is increasingly expressive and harmonically adventurous.

Crucial to maintaining and emitting a Chinese soundscape are the episodes, which are represented in the diagram as structural pillars of the bridge of jade. Conveying some of the most overt and immediately recognizable Chinese musical signifiers in *Das Lied*, these episodes share some of the main characteristics of 'la machine chinoise' being also light, delicately percussive, high-pitched, and repetitive. The first instrumental episode serves as an important link between sections A and B, and begins by echoing the melody of stanza one. As we reach figure 5 (of the score), a brash and vibrant musical chinoiserie comes to the fore as the orchestra modulates from Bb major to G major. Clarinets outline a repeated fifth which are played in time with the jangling triangle, whilst the piccolo, flutes, and oboes play a rapid succession of staccato (and almost entirely) pentatonic quavers (Ex. 4.2). The second episode (figure 7 in the score) is similarly overt, and is shortened to repeat only the prominent last four bars of episode one. Episode 3 opens pronouncedly on E minor, the reedy timbre of the oboes and clarinets emphasizing the drone of incessantly repeated open fifths. Once again, this is a prominently percussive episode with jangling triangle sounds and high pitched woodwind which emphasize the playful and disjointed pentatonic quavers. This is, however, an extended episode, which is more elaborate and richer in harmonic

texture and modulatory movement than its predecessors. Part of its function is to eventually to slow down and lead into the following stanza (Ex. 4.3).

Section A

Episode 1

3

4

Hürcke sich aus Ja - de zu dem Pa-vil-ien hin - li - ber.

Episode 1 continued

Section B

5

6

in H. mit Dämpfer

Grifflorett
pp Zart, aber

GriffDaect
pp Zart, aber

In dem

Example 4.2: 'Von der Jugend', Episode 1.

The following stanza is the fifth one, and here a striking musical change occurs in order to articulate the text:

Auf des kleinen Teiches stiller	On the little pool's still
Oberfläche zeigt sich alles	Surface everything appears
Wunderlich im Spiegelbilde.	Fantastically in a mirror image.

Mahler, as ever, shows himself to be a close reader of his text. The calm surface of the water is reflected in the slower tempo (*Ruhiger* [quietly] – *Langsam* [slowly]). It is the only strophe to stand outside the otherwise unbroken, unmodified main tempo. Hefling writes that ‘in response to this moment the orchestra grinds to a halt with faltering offbeats, as though the gramophone’s spring had just wound down midway through a march or polka’.¹² Mahler also conveys the mysterious and magical atmosphere of the text through chromatic harmonies, wide ranging and surprising harmonizations, and a decisive move to a minor key. Mitchell writes: ‘As for the “fantastic” element, it is surely in the unpredictable harmonizations of the voice part that Mahler reflects the strangeness of the images mirrored by the surface of the water’.¹³ This strangeness of reflected images can perhaps also be related to the mysteriousness of entering a Chinese place, another alien world, where everything appears topsy-turvy and distorted. Mitchell

¹² Stephen E. Hefling, *Mahler: Das Lied Von Der Erde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 96.

¹³ Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 258.

adds that 'the actual vocal line in strophe 5 freely, and yet methodically, assembles itself out of reflections, that is to say inversions, between bars or phrases, or for that matter within bars. The method may be free, but the application is surprisingly systematic and always poetically apt' (Ex. 4.3).¹⁴

¹⁴ Ibid., 258.

Episode 3

9

Musical score for 'Von der Jugend', Episode 3 leading into Stanza 5. The score includes parts for woodwinds, strings, brass, and vocal soloist. The woodwind section (1. Fl., 2. Fl., 1. Ob., 2. Ob., 1. Kl., 2. Kl., 1. & 2. Fag.) features complex rhythmic patterns with dynamic markings such as *pp*, *fp*, *f*, and *p*. The string section (1. & 2. Hr., Trgl., gr. Tr., Beck., 1. & 2. Vl., Br., Trau-Bl., Vic., Kb.) includes dynamic markings like *pp*, *espress.*, *pizz.*, and *f*. The vocal soloist part (Tenor) has the lyrics: "Mit - sen bok - ken lustig tief im Nak - ken." A boxed number '9' is present at the bottom of the page.

Example 4.3: 'Von der Jugend', Episode 3 leading into Stanza 5.

Stanza 5 continued

11 **Langsam.**

1. Fl. I
1. Fl. II
1. Oboe
1. Kl. in B.
1. Fag.
2. Hr. in F.
gr. Tr. Beck.
1. Vl.
2. Vl.
Er.
Ten-St.
Vcl.
Cb.

klei - nen Teil - ches stil - ler, stil - ler Was - ser - flä - che zeigt sich ei - les wun - der.

11

Episode 4

12 **Poco rit. Rit. molto.**

Tempo (etwas mäßig).

1. Fl. I
1. Oboe
1. Kl. in B.
1. Fag.
1. Hr. in F.
2. Vl.
Hr.
Ten-St.
Vcl.
Cb.

lich im Spie - gel - bil - de.

12

Example 4.3 continued...

In summary, the close relationship between the Chinese images conveyed in the text, and the desire to reflect these in the music is made evident. The bridge of jade, the reflections in the water, the chattering people, and the porcelain palace are all musically realized in minute detail (arguably some will not even be noticed upon hearing). Using the narrative framework of an idyllic porcelain pavilion, Mahler incorporated an overt Chinese decorative style into his unique musical idiom to create the overall effect of a delicate, playful, and joyful chinoiserie.

STRAVINSKY AND THE NIGHTINGALE (1914)

Over five years later, Stravinsky's opera *The Nightingale* (1914) demonstrates how the Chinese decorative style may not only be used for delicate, fragile, or playful musical effects, but also for the more ritualistic, dramatic, and brutal archetype of the Chinese court. *The Nightingale* harks back to eighteenth-century ideals, which in Stravinsky's eyes are viewed with an extra dimension of exoticism due to its historical as well as geographical distance. Concerning the second act of the opera (which was written some four years after the first act), Stravinsky wrote:

As there is no action until the second act, I told myself that it would not be unreasonable if the music of the Prologue bore a somewhat different character from that of the rest. And, indeed,

the forest, with its nightingale, the pure soul of the child who falls in love with its song...all this gentle poetry of Hans Andersen's could not be expressed in the same way as the baroque luxury of the Chinese Court, with its bizarre etiquette, its palace fetes, its thousands of little bells and lanterns, and the grotesque humming of the mechanical Japanese nightingale...in short, all this exotic fantasy obviously demanded a different musical idiom.¹⁵

What was this 'different' musical idiom to be? Was this a modernistic portrayal of an eighteenth-century Chinese court with its 'bizarre etiquette'? How was this represented on stage? How did Stravinsky make use of an overt Chinese decorative style?

The answer to this is most evident in the extravagant and overt Chinese-style of 'The Chinese March' in Act II. Set in the symbolic Chinese porcelain palace, the stage designer Alexandre Benois deployed the most decorative and spectacular visuals in order to evoke the 'baroque luxury of the Chinese court', 'bizarre etiquette', 'palace fetes', and its thousands of 'little bells and lanterns' so envisaged by Stravinsky. According to the stage directions when the 'Chinese March' takes place, the gauze curtains slowly rise to reveal 'The porcelain palace of the Emperor of China. Fantastic Architecture. Festive decoration, with lights in abundance'.¹⁶ Benois's surviving sketches

¹⁵ Igor Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life* (London: V. Gollancz, 1936), 87-88.

¹⁶ Igor Stravinsky, *Le Rossignol - Orchestral Score* (Boosey and Hawkes, 1947), 92-93.

reveal that the colour scheme of blue and white, derived from the so popular chinoiserie porcelain, dominated the set design of the second act. Also evident is the portrayal of an *actual* porcelain palace, its delicacy and fragility emphasized by the many lanterns and porcelain vases set in this opulent and rococo inspired chinoiserie (Fig. 4.4).

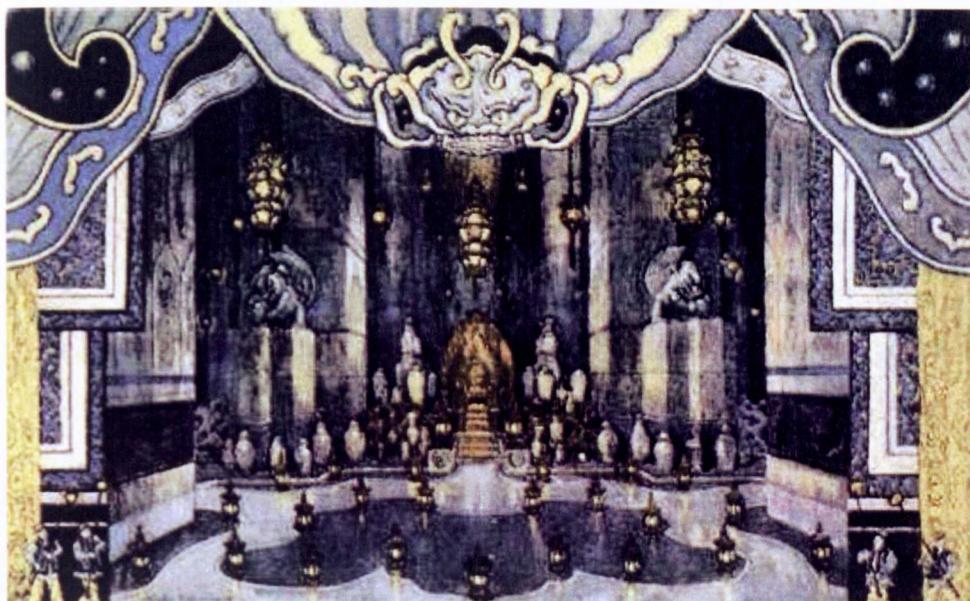


Figure 4.4: Stage design of *The Nightingale* for the 1914 premiere in Paris, by Alexandre Benois. Watercolour gouache on paper (The Russian Museum, St. Petersburg).

Stravinsky was especially keen to collaborate with Benois; in a letter dated July 1911 he wrote, 'I am determined to continue what I have begun. It will be great fun to create a "Chinoiserie" of this kind. Think about it, dear friend. For me it would be a great happiness'.¹⁷ In his memoirs and commentaries, Stravinsky wrote that 'scenically, thanks to Alexandre Benois who designed the costumes and sets, it was the most

¹⁷ Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), 114.

beautiful of all my early Diaghilev works'.¹⁸ Benois's 1941 book *Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet* reveals his personal delight with the stage spectacle and particularly the 'Chinese March'.

When all of this was repeated at the performance itself in all the vividness of the fanciful costumery under the enormous dark blue lantern-chandeliers, against a background of white and blue porcelain columns, when from beneath his parasol his Imperial Majesty appeared all glittering with gold and jewels and his assembled subjects all prostrated themselves before him, the effect of it all had a force that I myself did not expect; and for perhaps the first time in my whole theatrical career I had the experience of being touched to the quick by my own creation.¹⁹

Correspondences reveal that Stravinsky took an exceptional interest in Benois's work, demanding full descriptions of the sets and costumes well in advance.²⁰ Benois's sketches give us some idea of how brightly coloured Chinese costumes would have stood out so vividly against the blue and white porcelain setting. These costumes were designed to be as dramatic and authentically Chinese as possible, and are clearly inspired by traditional Chinese Beijing opera (Fig. 4.5).

¹⁸ Igor Stravinsky, *Memories and Commentaries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 124 and 132.

¹⁹ Alexandre Benois, *Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet*, trans. Mary Britnieva (London: Putnam & Co Ltd, 1941), 389.

²⁰ See Benois's letters of January and February 1914 in Igor Stravinsky, *Memories and Commentaries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 126-33/136-41, and Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), 114-18.



a)



b)



c)

Costume sketches by Alexandre Benois

- a) The Leading Dancer in the Chinese Emperor's Procession
- b) Chinese March dancer
- c) The Courtier carrying the Nightingale in the Chinese March

Figure 4.5: Costume designs by Alexandre Benois. Watercolour on paper (The Russian Museum, St. Petersburg).

So how exactly did Stravinsky go about creating music to accompany these stereotypically lavish and fantastical Chinese visuals? How did he choose to represent a 'Chinese March' in music? Upon listening, one acknowledges that the 'Chinese March' is full of pomp, celebratory, and at times brutally percussive – an effect primarily achieved through sporadic brass fanfares, crashing cymbals, and pounding timpani. Richard Taruskin has noted the use of the term 'fausse-chinoiserie' which derives from Stravinsky himself, as documented in a letter to Benois in July 1913.²¹ What did Stravinsky mean by 'fausse-chinoiserie'? Something artificial?²² Was it perhaps something mechanical or machine like? And if so, how was this rendered musically?

The 'Chinese March' begins gallantly with declamatory brass fanfares, pentatonic motifs, percussive clashes, and eventually leads into a prime example of a delicate and mechanical chinoiserie at figure 70 (Ex. 4.4). At this point, the full orchestral texture is suddenly reduced to two flutes, one horn and arpeggiated piano accompaniment and gives the effect of an intricately patterned and bell-like sound, similar in soundscape to the 'la machine chinoise' identified by Debussy.²³ This then leads into the purely percussive and pentatonic soundscape of figure 71, which is

²¹ Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works through Mavra*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1091.

²² Eric Walter White discusses how the 'artificial' ceremony of the Chinese court seemed to call for a bizarre form of musical chinoiserie. See Eric Walter White, *Stravinsky: The Composer and His Works* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), 188.

²³ Refer to chapter three, p.151, where Debussy discusses the 'la machine chinoise' section of De Falla's 'Chinoiserie' (1909) for voice and piano.

made up of piano and pizzicato strings playing stacked fourths in unison, plus two harps. The glistening bell-like sonority is further enhanced at figure 72 when the celesta takes over the stacked fourths, accompanied by a tremolo mandolin (*played ad lib.*), and a more densely patterned harp accompaniment. The frequent changes of metre from 2/4, 4/8, 5/8, 3/8, and 2/8 contribute towards the general build up of dramatic tension in this movement. In addition to this, the piccolo trumpet contributes to the increasingly complex rhythmic layering with triplets pitched against quavers. Together, the delicate instrumentation, rapid metre changes, and cross-rhythms convey a kind of graceful disorder that can be described as an acoustic sharawadgi (Ex. 4.4).²⁴

²⁴ For more details on the meaning of 'sharawadgi', refer to chapter three, pages 103-104.

70

I
Fl. gr.
II

Cor. I
in Fa

Solo molto ritmato e marcato

P. forte

71

I
Fl. gr.
II

Cor. I
in Fa

Timp.

P. forte

Arpa I

Arpa II

71

VI. I div.
tutti a 4

una corda come al organo
stacc. sempre mf

(pizz.)

Timp.

mf sempre

P. forte

Arpa I

Arpa II

mf sempre

VI. I div.
tutti a 4

* Placer chaque corde (avec la m. d.) à son extrémité basse - tout près de la table.

B. & H. 18926

Example 4.4: 'Chinese March'

72

Sola
ppp

Tr. picc.
la Re

Celesta

Mand.
ad lib.

Arpa I

Arpa II

Tris.

Piatti

Gr. Cassa

poco a poco cresc.

touches légèrement (f) au bord, avec le manche l'un bag. et posc.

avec une bag. à tête et capot.

73

ppp

poco rall.

a tempo

sempre up

I
Fag.

II

C. Fag.

Tr. picc.
la Re

Celesta

Mand.
ad lib.

Arpa I

Arpa II

Tris.

Piatti

Gr. Cassa

ritardando sul pont. sino al segno

arco gliss.

73

ritardando sul pont. sino al segno

arco gliss.

Vis.
Solo

Vc.
Solo

ritardando sul pont. sino al segno

arco gliss.

R. & H. 18950

Example 4.4 continued...

The particularly bell-like sonority of Example 4.4 with its high-pitched, delicate and percussive timbre can be described as artificial or mechanical with its patterned texture and cyclical repetition. Louis Laloy, however, provides a vivid description of *The Nightingale* in *La Musique retrouvée* (1928) which reveals a musical listening that goes beyond this surface level chinoiserie.

...those who are content to listen to the music and give themselves up to their impressions will be inspired by bells, drums, gongs, suspended stones, as also by waves shuddering, droplets of water falling or stars twinkling, but which surpass them in beauty. Music which admits only simple chords – those which are directly deduced from the given scale – is all on the surface. But this music, in which notes chosen by design intersect, brush past each other and give each other colour, half opens translucent depths which obliterate rays of light, It has the supple strength of jade: the blended lustre, the variable grain and the sense of inner movement.²⁵

Laloy, the music critic and sinologist discussed in relation to Debussy in chapter three was also a keen admirer of Stravinsky, and had a particularly strong admiration for *The Nightingale*.²⁶ His description suggests that the musical timbre of the 'Chinese March' gives the

²⁵ Louis Laloy, *Louis Laloy on Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky*, trans. Deborah Priest (Hampshire: Ashgate, 1999), 286.

²⁶ In *La Musique retrouvée* (1928), Louis Laloy wrote: '...for *Le Rossignol* I have a predilection whose causes must perhaps be sought in the Far East. Stravinsky well knows this, and as he likes to make jokes, he says to me, "*Le Rossignol* is a present I've given you. It's a flask of marc-brandey I've slipped into your pocket". See Louis Laloy, *Louis Laloy on Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky*, trans. Deborah Priest (Hampshire: Ashgate, 1999), 288.

impression of bells, drums, gongs, suspended stones, waves shuddering, droplets of water or stars twinkling which are given depth and colour by Stravinsky's unique compositional voice and penchant for experimentation. Indeed, Stravinsky's neighbour and friend in Clarens, C. Stanley Wise, recalled 'the eagerness with which he hurried me to the piano one day to exhibit the capabilities that he had just discovered in that Chinese pentatonic scale'.²⁷ A 1913 letter to Benois also reveals an illustration in musical notation of the 'black-key scale' with which he was experimenting. According to Taruskin the capabilities Stravinsky was investigating 'had not so much to do with the scale itself as with the various "polymodal" contexts in which it might be ensconced'.²⁸ These 'polymodal' contexts contributed to creating a Chinese soundscape that was dissonant and foreign, and could be executed in either a delicate or a brutal percussive style.

A brutal and ritualistic percussive style is employed in the frenzied lead up to the arrival of the Chinese Emperor towards the end of the 'Chinese March'. Percussive polyharmonic and polytonal dissonances are employed to produce a cacophonous grandeur of sound. The sounds inspired by bells, drums, and gongs are now rendered with a pompous, forceful, brutal, and militaristic tension (Ex. 4.5). Roman Vlad writes that 'the polyharmonic and polytonal fragmentation serves admirably to create a dazzling profusion of tonal places which are brought to life in

²⁷ C. Stanley Wise, 'Impressions of Igor Stravinsky', *The Musical Quarterly* 2/2 (1916), 253.

²⁸ Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works through Mavra*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1092.

the rich, kaleidoscopic glitter of instrumental timbres'.²⁹ Taruskin's analysis of figure 77 summarizes the musical construction of this section, and highlights the way in which Stravinsky delightfully manipulated the capabilities he found in the pentatonic scale.

The 'Chinese scale' is cast as a series of four fifths that rise and fall in a *basso ostinato* pattern. Above it, a simple chromatic scale ascends and descends. The piano part from the full score shows the maximalistic, *Rite*-like harmonies with which Stravinsky contrived to flesh out this linear skeleton. The chromatic scale is doubled at the major seventh (diminished octave). The resultant frame is filled out on the downbeats with what, two chapters back, were dubbed 'Rite chords', and on the offbeats with double-inflected (i.e., major/minor) triads. Not the least remarkable feature of this complex is the fact that it is so devised that every vertical aggregate is referable to one of the three octatonic collections, in a constant, regular circulation that reverses in the middle. Against it, one of the pentatonic march themes, hypostatized at its original pitch despite the radically altered harmonic environment, sounds forth with reckless abandon.³⁰

'Rite-like' harmonies certainly add to the anticipation, and perhaps terrifying arrival of the Chinese Emperor. However, the 'reckless

²⁹ Roman Vlad, *Stravinsky*, trans. Frederick Fuller (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), 47.

³⁰ Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works through Mavra*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1093.

abandon' of the pentatonic march theme is eventually overpowered by a terrifying and ruthless chromatic descent (dominated by the brass) into what can perhaps be described as an 'authentic' portrayal of raucous Chinese celebratory music.³¹ This is evident from figure 79, where we encounter the loudest, most overpowering, and strongly percussive example of musical chinoiserie in the entire opera. A constant stream of booming *Rite*-like chords, coloured with clashing gong-like cymbals and timpani dominates the soundscape. On top of this is a semiquaver pentatonic scale, relentlessly oscillating in various permutations with rapid metre changes (Ex. 4.5).

³¹ Authentic Chinese music was often viewed by Westerners as raucous, percussive, unbearable, and primitive. See Colin Mackerras, *The Chinese Theatre in Modern Times: From 1840 to the Present Day* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975) and Bell Yung, *Cantonese Opera: Performance as Creative Process* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Fl. picc.
 I
 Fl. gr.
 II
 Os. I II
 Cor. ing.
 Cl. picc.
 in Re
 I
 Fag.
 II
 C. Fag.
 I
 Cor. in Fa
 II
 Cor. in Fa
 III
 Tr. in La
 I
 II
 Timp.
 P. forte
 Mand.
 ad lib.
 Arpe. I II
 mix
 VI. I
 div. a 3
 VI. II
 div.
 Vln. div.
 Vc. Solo
 gli altri
 Vc. div.
 Cb.
 div.

senza sord.
 senza sord.
 senza sord.
staccato

B. & H. 15936

Example 4.5 continued...

79 Dieser tragen feierlich den Kaiser von China auf seinem Baldachin-Sessel herein.
 Servants bear in with pomp the Emperor of China, seated in his canopy chair,
 del Tempo I (Marcia)

The musical score is arranged in systems. The first system includes:

- Fl. picc.
- Fl. gr. I, II
- Ob. I, II
- Cor. ing.
- picc. in Re
- Cl.
- Fag. I, II
- C. Fag.
- I
- II
- Cor. in Fa
- III
- IV
- Tr. I, II in La
- picc. in Re
- Tr. in Do
- Trb. I, II
- Trb. III e Tubu
- Timp.
- Camp.
- Trin.
- Piatti
- Gr. Cassa
- P-forte
- Arpe. I, II unit.

The second system includes:

- VI. I
- VI. II
- Vie.
- Vc. div.
- Co.

Tempo markings include *del Tempo I (Marcia)* and *sempre ff*. A box with the number 79 is present above the vocal line.

Example 4.5 continued...

The musical score is arranged in systems. The instruments listed on the left are:

- Fl. piccolo
- Fl. Gr. I
- Fl. Gr. II
- Ob. I II
- Cor. Ing.
- picc. in Re Cl.
- Te III in La
- Fag. I
- Fag. II
- C. Fag.
- Cor. in Fa I
- Cor. in Fa II
- Cor. in Fa III
- Cor. in Fa IV
- Tr. I II in La
- picc. in Re Tr.
- Tr. in Do
- T. I
- T. II
- T. III
- Tab. II
- Tim. II
- Piatti
- Gr. Cassa
- P. forte
- Arpa I
- Arpa II
- VI. I
- VI. II
- Vie.
- Vc.
- Cb.

The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (e.g., *ppp*, *fff*), articulation (e.g., *acc.*, *rit.*), and performance instructions like *Solo* and *rubatissimo*. A tempo marking of 80 is present in two locations. The bottom of the page features the number 18956.

Example 4.5 continued...

The labels 'la machine chinoise' and 'fausse chinoiserie' can be applied to the Chinese March, particularly with its pounding percussive beats, tinkling music-box-like pentatonicism, and rigid brass fanfare motifs, which combine to convey a brash and overt chinoiserie soundscape. Arman Schwartz suggests that several modernist works 'use chinoiserie as a screen for the mechanical'.³² Prime examples of this can be found in wind-up characters like the Chinese tea-cup in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, the Chinese conjurer in Satie's *Parade*, and of course the mechanical nightingale bird from Stravinsky's *The Nightingale*. By using chinoiserie as a screen for the mechanical, it served to enhance the bizarre and unfamiliar element of the Chinese subject. The label of 'la machine chinoise' not only suggests a repetitive, delicate and bell-like soundscape, but also implies an impulse towards an abstraction and a de-humanisation of the subject.

PUCCINI AND TURANDOT (1926)

Described invariably as 'puppet-like-creatures', 'marionette like', and as having 'mechanical movements', The Three Masks (Ping, Pong, and Pang) can be related to the notion of 'la machine chinoise'.³³ The appearance of The Masks at the start of Act II is one of the most delightful and original moments of chinoiserie in *Turandot*. At this point,

³² Arman Schwartz, 'Mechanism and Tradition in Puccini's *Turandot*', *The Opera Quarterly* 25/1-2 (2009), 28-50 [37].

³³ See Mosco Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, 3rd ed. (London: Holmes & Meier Pub, 1992), 480, and Michele Girardi, *Puccini, His International Art*, trans. Laura Basini (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 455.

the stage directions read: 'a vast tent (pavilion) decorated with fantastic Chinese symbols. The tent has three openings, one in the centre and one on either side. Ping peeps through the central aperture [and] calls his companions from right and left'.³⁴

The world premiere of *Turandot* took place at La Scala on 25 April 1926. It is highly significant that Puccini turned to a Chinese subject for the opera that would constitute a decisive turning point in his theatre. To depict the atmosphere of a legendary China, Puccini used both borrowed and invented Chinese sources. He drew from two main sources for 'authentic' Chinese tunes; the first was a Chinese music box belonging to Baron Fassini,³⁵ and the second was an 1884 book entitled *Chinese Music* by J.A. Van-Aalst.³⁶

The characters of *The Masks* originate from Carlo Gozzi's 'Fiabe Cinese teatrale tragicomica' *Turandot* (1762).³⁷ The transformation from

³⁴ Giacomo Puccini, *Turandot* - Orchestral Score (Ricordi Music Publishing, 1926), 143.

³⁵ Ashbrook and Powers provide a detailed history of the Fassini music box, which was tracked down by William Weaver and two English colleagues. On this music box is the 'Mo-li-hua' (Jasmine Flower) tune that *The Masks* sing at their first appearance ('Ferma! che fai?'); and the so called 'Imperial hymn'. For more details refer to William Ashbrook and Harold Powers, *Puccini's Turandot: The End of the Great Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 94-95.

³⁶ J. A. Van-Aalst, *Chinese Music* (Shanghai: The Inspector General of Customs, 1884). This book contains transcriptions of Chinese folk melodies; each transcription has detailed information about the historical specificity and social function bound to it. The book is divided into chapters that focus on Chinese music theory; Ancient, Ritual, and Popular music; and an extensive chapter on Chinese instruments.

³⁷ Puccini's librettists came upon Carlo Gozzi's 'Fiaba Cinese teatrale tragicomica,' *Turandot*, of 1762 not directly, but through a curious chain of intermediaries. Gozzi's 5-act play was translated into German prose in 1779 by August Clemens Werthes, and this in turn was re-written by Schiller in verse, for performance in Weimer in 1802. Many years later, in 1863, Andrea Maffei made a word-for-word Italian translation of

Gozzi's four royal officials (Pantalone, Tartaglia, Brighella, and Truffaldino) to the The Masks in Puccini's *Turandot*, reveals the imaginative process by which Puccini and his librettists moulded these characters. This context eventually turned out to embody many of the prevailing stereotypes of the Chinese male in Western society. Caricatured with long black moustaches and ancient Chinese robes, The Masks were 'to be the clowns and philosophers that now and then inject a jest or an opinion'.³⁸ Their mechanical and 'puppet-like' mannerisms can be linked to the way in which they seem to be 'cast as a single symbolic character, offering cynical comments on the action in the manner of Shakespearean fools, and express judicious opinions on the insane reality that surrounds them'.³⁹ Changes of accent and irregular metres also add to the 'marionette-like' character to their music.⁴⁰ Their Chinese stereotype and inherent comedy are to be found in the way Puccini makes them swiftly and abruptly change their vocal expression. For example, one moment they sing in a mysterious and serious fashion, the next moment with a lighthearted spirit and comic desolation. This is achieved partly by changing suddenly from a staccato and legato singing style, to using *falseto* and closed mouths, to retreating back to their natural voices.

Schiller's version, and it was this translation that Puccini and his two librettists first consulted.

³⁸ Giuseppe Adami, ed., *Epistolario Giacomo Puccini* (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1982), [EGP, ltr 177].

³⁹ Michele Girardi, *Puccini, His International Art*, trans. Laura Basini (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 463.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

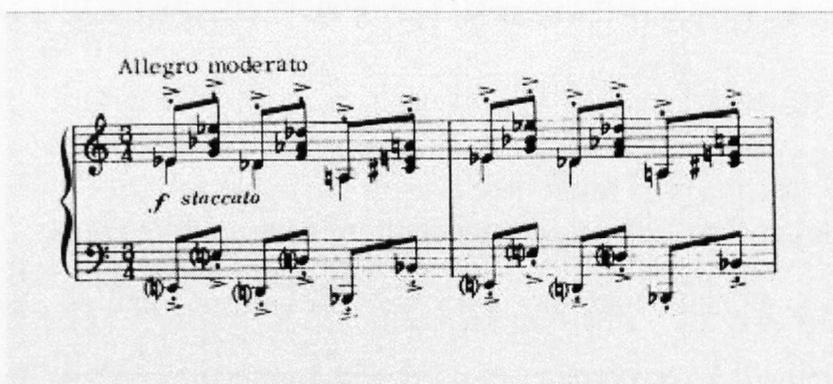
The Masks are used as a crucial vessel to convey the Chinese subject, evident by the fact that the entire first scene of Act II does not serve to further the plot. Rather, the function of this scene is to project a lively Chinese ambience into the operatic setting. Furthermore, Puccini clearly made a particular effort to convey a quasi-authentic Chinese soundscape with these characters as he assigned the majority of Van-Aalst's Chinese melodies to them. Puccini wrote: 'I shall get some old Chinese music too, and descriptions and drawings of different instruments which we shall have on stage (not in the orchestra)'.⁴¹ Concerning the music of this central and significant scene, he also wrote: 'This piece is very difficult, and is enormously important because it is a section without a scenic presence, and so almost academic'.⁴² He succeeded nevertheless in treating this very long trio (more than fifteen minutes long) as a fascinating exploration of musical chinoiserie, where Chinese motifs (both authentic and invented) were manipulated in order to coincide with the montage of Chinese images presented in the libretto. These images ranged from a Chinese wedding, to a nostalgic Chinese landscape, and a barbaric, violent China.

The three-bar orchestral introduction immediately establishes a slightly unnerving exotic soundscape, one that characterises The Masks as simultaneously sinister and comical. This unsettling mood owes much to the underlying tritone that prevails, in addition to dissonances which

⁴¹ Giuseppe Adami, ed., *Epistolario Giacomo Puccini* (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1982), [EGP, ltr 176].

⁴² *Ibid.*

are achieved through the bass line mirroring the top line at a minor second interval (Ex. 4.6). Their stereotypically comedic Chinese demeanour is emphasized with pizzicato strings, bass xylophone, snare drum, woodwind and horns which are combined in such a way to create a sound that is brittle, dissonant, and percussive. Furthermore, an awkward accent is placed on the third beat of each bar, punctuated by a harp glissandi, timpani and chord for three trombones.⁴³



Example 4.6: *Turandot*, Act II, scene i, orchestral introduction (two-stave orchestral reduction)

Following this, The Masks contemplate preparing for the wedding of Turandot at figure 1 of the score (Ex. 4.8). At this point, Puccini appropriated one of four melodies taken from Van-Aalst's 1884 book on Chinese music. This particular melody, entitled 'Oh, mamma! You understand me well', is taken from Van-Aalst's chapter on 'Popular [Chinese] Music' (Ex. 4.7).

⁴³ William Ashbrook, *The Operas of Puccini* (London: Cassel & Company Ltd, 1968), 220.



The following air is exceedingly popular in North China; it is entitled (Ma-ma hao ming-pai). 'Oh, mamma! You understand me well.' (J.A. Van Aalst)

Example 4.7: J. A. Van-Aalst, *Chinese Music* (Shanghai: The Inspector General of Customs, 1884).

Puccini weaves this melody intricately into the orchestral score. However, he only uses the first four bars, and then continues by adding his own pentatonic gestures based on the same dotted rhythm. Within this image of a Chinese wedding, the use of the pentatonic scale comes to the fore and the music begins to sound distinctly 'Chinese' as fragments of the authentic Chinese melody are presented in a frivolous, jaunty fashion. The jerky dotted rhythms and playful repetitions of melodic fragments tossed between *The Masks*, also contributes to their comedic characterization (Ex. 4.8).

1 Allegretto $\text{♩} = 112$

Fl. *p*

Ob. *p*

Cl. *p*

Cl. in Sib

in Fa *con Sordina* *p*

Cr. in Fa

Trb. in Fa *(con Sordina)* *pp*

Trg. *p*

G.C. *pp*

PING

PONG *(cavatone)*
i lu pre - pa - ro le noz - ze! Le ros - se lan - ter - ne di

PANG *(cupamente)*
Ed io le e - se - quie!

1 Allegretto $\text{♩} = 112$

Vni I. *divisi* *Pizz. div. p*

Vni II. *Pizz. p*

Vle. *unite* *Pizz. p*

Ve. *p*

Cb. *p*

Example 4.8: *Turandot*, Act II, scene i

Fl. 2

Ob.

Cl. *dim.*

Cl. in Sib *dim.*

in Fa
Cr.
in Fa

Trb. in Fa *dim.*

Trg. *p*

G.C. *pp dim.*

PING

PONG
fe - stal

PAVG
Le bian - che lan - ter - re di lui - to!

Gli in - con - si - e - to - li - fer - re -

Gli in -

uniti

uniti

Vi I. *dim.*

Vi II. *dim.*

Vle. *dim.*

Ve. *dim.*

Cb. *dim.*

Example 4.8 continued...

The central section of their trio is an exquisite example of an idealized China translated into music. At this point The Masks seem to forget their ancestry and no longer act like descendents of the *commedia dell'arte*. Ping wants to return to his little blue lake, Pong to his forests, and Pang to his neglected garden. The idyllic China they describe with nostalgia clearly has strong ties with nature, simplicity and beauty. In their nostalgia, they lose their porcelain-like brittleness and become, musically speaking, humanized and completely lyrical. An idealized vision of China is translated into music through the orchestration as it now becomes delicate and evocative (Ex. 4.9). Puccini combines two flutes, two clarinets, celeste and harp, all supported by the bassoon playing a gentle ostinato. It is significant that as this moment shows the more human side of the Masks, they are presented in a more diatonic and rich harmony. They are momentarily allowed to enter the harmonic world of the 'civilized' and are stripped of their comic gestures. This is the only point in the opera where sympathy for them may be felt and in order to draw this in, they are momentarily 'de-orientalized'.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ This 'stripping' of musical chinoiserie to evoke utopian ideals is the focus of the following chapter.

9 Andantino mosso $\text{♩} = 104$ poco rit.

dolce
più piano possibile

Fl.

dolce
più piano possibile

in Sib
 Cl.

in Sib

F.c.

pp

dolce
più piano possibile

C.-I.

A.

(armonici)
dolce più piano possibile

PiNG

(a mezza voce) *dolce* *pp*

Ho u-na ca-sa nell'Ho-nan con il suo laghetto biù tut-to cin-to di bam.

PONG

PANG

9 Andantino mosso $\text{♩} = 104$ poco rit.

Vni

Vle

unite Arco
pp

Vc.

tutti
pp

Cb.

Example 4.9: Turandot, Act II, scene i

However, this relatively peaceful mood quickly changes in example 4.10 as The Masks begin to reminisce about the brutal executions of Turandot's failed suitors. The libretto portrays a horrific scene of extreme violence, torture and death. As the chorus chant the words 'Ungi, arrota, che la lama sprizzi sangue' [Oil, sharpen, let the blade spurt blood!] The Masks add to the frenzy by proclaiming and repeating the words 'Decapita, uccidi, ammazza, estingui' [Decapitate, kill, extinguish]. Example 4.10 illustrates the dramatic climax of their scene.

The interplay between The Masks and the chorus is a vital aspect of portraying the intensely dramatic and horrific scene of events. Mass hysteria erupts as the chorus interjects with brutal words in a chant-like manner. The presence of the chorus becomes terrifying as a gradual build up in tension is conveyed through increasing forces, power and volume. Dramatic tension is also achieved by narrowing the metre from 3/8 to 2/8. At the same time, the dialogue between The Masks and the chorus becomes increasingly erratic and rapid, fuelling the nightmare image of a barbaric China. Despite this, overriding their entire scene is a delicious sense of delight in their re-telling of events which is encapsulated in the persistent sound of the glockenspiel, xylophone and celeste which play typical chinoiserie bell-like pentatonic gestures that double the melodic line.

Fl. *a 2*

Ob. *I.*

Cl. in Sib

Fg.

in Fa *a 2*

Cr. in Fa *a 2*

Trb. in Fa *I. II. senza Sordina*

Tp.

G.C.

A.

Trb. (sulla scena) *ff*

Trbn. *ff*

PLNG

POVG

PAVG

Sop. *ff* *p*

O Ten. *ff* *p*

R. *ff* *p*

C. Bassi *ff* *p*

Vni. *Pizz.* *ff* *Pizz.*

Vle. *Pizz.* *ff* *Pizz.* *Arco stacc.* *p*

Ve. *Pizz. div.* *ff* *uniti* *ff* *p*

Cb. *ff* *p*

Tar - taro dal lar - co di sei cu - bito di ric. che pel. li cin - to?

Ungi, ar. ro. ta, che la lama sprizzi san - gue! Dove

Ungi, ar. ro. ta, che la lama sprizzi san - gue! Dove

Ungi, ar. ro. ta, che la lama sprizzi san - gue! Dove

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Example 4.10: Turandot, Act II, scene i

Ott. *pp*

Fl.

Fg. I. *pp*

Trb. in Fa *con Sordina pp*

A.

PING *E de . ca - pi.ta... Ue.ci.di!*

PONG *E - stin.to! Ammaz.za...*

PANG *E - stin - to! Ue - ci.di... e - stingui... ue -*

regna Tu.ran.dot, il la - vo - ro mainon lan - gue! Ungl.ar.ro - ta,

regna Tu.ran.dot, il la - vo - ro mainon lan - gue! Ungl.ar.ro - ta,

regna Tu.ran.dot, il la - vo - ro mainon lan - gue! Ungl.ar.ro - ta,

divisi pp

Vni

Vle

Vc.

Cb.

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Example 4.10 continued...

poco rall.

The musical score consists of the following parts:

- Ott.** (Oboe): Treble clef, playing a melodic line with a *dim.* marking.
- Fl.** (Flute): Treble clef, playing a melodic line with a *dim.* marking.
- Fg.** (Fagotto): Bass clef, playing a melodic line with a *dim.* marking.
- Trb. in Fa** (Trumpet in F): Treble clef, playing a melodic line with a *dim.* marking.
- A.** (Violini): Treble and Bass clefs, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- PING** (Soprano): Treble clef, lyrics: "Ue.ci.di! Ue.ci.di! Am-maz - za! Ad."
- PONG** (Alto): Treble clef, lyrics: "Ammazza... Am-maz - za! Ad."
- PANG** (Tenore): Treble clef, lyrics: "ci.di e - stinguì... ue.ci.di... e stinguì,ammaz - za! Ad."
- Chorus**: Treble and Bass clefs, lyrics: "che la la - ma sprizzi san - gue!"
- Vni** (Violini): Treble clef, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Vle** (Viola): Treble clef, playing a melodic line with a *dim.* marking.
- Vc.** (Violoncello): Bass clef, playing a melodic line with a *dim.* marking.
- Cb.** (Contrabbasso): Bass clef, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.

poco rall.

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Example 4.10 continued...

In summary, the overt decorative style of 'la machine chinois' can be used to convey Chinese characters as well as ritualistic, celebratory, or joyful and frivolous Chinese settings. The sense of a mechanical, artificial, or 'fausse chinoiserie' element in these examples is rooted in the surface-level rendering of what appears to be an exaggerated Chinese decorative soundscape. But it is also related to the idea of the Chinese as detached and inscrutable, or barbaric and emotionless. Mahler's 'Von der Jugend' has been described by Michael Kennedy as being 'all very artificial and mannered, as formal as the mirror-image of the pavilion and the bridge of jade reflected in the pool. Every note, every solo, is polished and precise. The effect is of detached emotion'.⁴⁵ The 'la machine chinoise' of chapter 3 was identified as a particular musical timbre that was delicate, percussive, decorative and high pitched, and associated with an idealized, untouchable female beauty tied to a nostalgic Chinese landscape. This chapter demonstrates how it can also be used to convey a Chinese musical aesthetic that is bold, extroverted, and to some extent kitsch. Gong-like crashes, brass fanfares, percussive dissonances, repetitive pentatonic motifs and awkward rhythmic patterns are all utilized to depict chaotic, social, and lively Chinese scenes which are set in the narrative framework of a Chinese pavilion, in contrast to the tranquility and seclusion of the *jardin anglo-chinois*. Stravinsky's and Puccini's use of dissonance or polymodal scoring adds a distinctive outlandish and foreign aspect to

⁴⁵ Michael Kennedy, *Mahler* (London: J.M. Dent, 1974), 160.

the predominantly percussive soundscape of their most obvious Chinese inspired musical moments.

Submerged Sounds: 'Acoustic Sharawadgi'

This section centres on musical examples that apply a more submerged decorative Chinese style to a solo female voice in order to radiate an alluring, ethereal, spiritual, and almost haunting Chinese ambience into the overall soundscape. The term 'acoustic sharawadgi' is used to denote a particular musical atmosphere that can convey a meditative, spiritual, and tranquil Chinese exotic. This section therefore identifies moments in *Das Lied von der Erde*, *The Nightingale*, and *Turandot* which are particularly emotional and touching, and where the decorative style of chinoiserie is more submerged; it is used sparingly with the sensitive use of arabesques, exposed vocal lines, sparse orchestration, and the treatment of time and tonality are carefully manipulated to evoke space, silence, and tranquility.

'DER ABSCHIED' [THE FAREWELL]

'Der Abschied' [The Farewell] is the final movement of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (1908) and is musically distinct from the rest of the work. Unlike previous examples, there is nothing immediately Chinese sounding about it; however, something conveyed in the sombre and melancholic atmosphere evokes a particularly Chinese meditative and ritualistic quality. Indeed, Adorno was aware of the Chinese idiom in

Das Lied and believed there was more to it than mere chinoiserie, as he wrote: 'The exoticism [of *Das Lied*] does not confine itself to the deployment of pentatonic and whole-tone scales, but moulds the entire texture'.⁴⁶ The texture of 'Der Abschied' evokes spaciousness and freedom which can be attributed to Mahler's innovative rhythmic liberation, sparse orchestration, cyclic repetition of motifs, isolation of the female voice, symbolic use of the gong, reedy timbre of the solo oboe, and pastoral-like use of the solo flute. Importantly, it is *the way in which* these aspects are combined that serves to evoke the particularly spiritual, supernatural, and ritualistic atmosphere of this final movement.

According to Stephen Hefling 'the kernels of march music inherent in the movements [Der Abschied] introduction flourish into a long funeral march, coloured by wailing wind band texture'.⁴⁷ This 'ritualistic' atmosphere is evident in the introductory two ominous low Cs played on cellos, basses, harp, contra-bassoon, and horns, which are punctuated by a deep booming gong, and is an obvious and direct ritualistic gesture. Mahler must have been aware of the traditions and history of the large gong, and it's chiming mystical qualities that are suggestive of Chinese temple gongs as well as its symbolic sound of death.⁴⁸ The 'wailing wind band texture' can also be attributed to a particularly

⁴⁶ Theodor W Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), xx.

⁴⁷ Stephen E. Hefling, *Mahler: Das Lied Von Der Erde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 113.

⁴⁸ In the right hand margin of the original short score, Mahler had scribbled the word 'Death knell' (*Grabgeläute*) at the entrance of the gong beats. See Stephen E. Hefling, *Mahler: Das Lied Von Der Erde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 105.

Chinese musical aesthetic as the orchestral make-up of *Das Lied* exhibits a clarity of instrumentation; it is scored for normal orchestra with *extra* wind. The result is perhaps as Deryck Cooke describes, with 'sharper and thinner lines, which are fainter and more disembodied'.⁴⁹ Indeed, following the ritualistic low Cs and booming gong, an isolated solo oboe line emerges; the foregrounding of the reedy timbre of this instrument combined with its chromatic decorative inflections can be read as conveying an 'exotic' – maybe 'exotically Chinese' – dimension which has an enchanting effect apt for the dream-like imagery and melancholic overtones of Bethge's text.⁵⁰ (See Ex. 4.11 and Table 4.2).

⁴⁹ Deryck Cooke, *Gustav Mahler: An Introduction to His Music* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), 104.

⁵⁰ 'Der Abschied' has been structurally analysed as comprising two distinct parts; this is in line with the text which is based on two adjacent poems from Bethge's *Die chinesische Flöte*: 'In Expectation of the Friend' by Mong-Kao-Jen, and 'Departure of the Friend' by Wang-Wei. Bethge's version arose from various other translations and was eventually slightly adapted by Mahler to fit in with his musical vision. For more information on the history of the various translations see Fusako Hamao, 'The Sources of the Texts in Mahler's "Lied Von Der Erde"', *Nineteenth-Century Music* 19/1 (1995): 83-95.

DER ABSCHIED	THE FAREWELL
<p>Die Sonne scheidet hinter dem Gebirge. In alle Täler steigt der Abend nieder Mit seinen Schatten, die voll Kühlung sind. O sieh! Wie eine Silberbarke schwebt Der Mond am blauen Himmelssee herauf. Ich spüre eines feinen Windes Wehn Hinter den dunklen Fichten!</p> <p>Der Bach singt voller Wohllaut durch das Dunkel. Die Blumen blassen im Dämmerchein. Die Erde atmet voll von Ruh und Schlaf, Alle Sehnsucht will nun träumen. Die müden Menschen gehn heimwärts, Um im Schlaf vergeßnes Glück Und Jugend neu zu lernen! Die Vögel hocken still in ihren Zweigen. Die Welt schläft ein!</p> <p>Es wehet kühl im Schatten meiner Fichten. Ich stehe hier und harre meines Freundes; Ich harre sein zum letzten Lebewohl. Ich sehne mich, o Freund, an deiner Seite Die Schönheit dieses Abends zu genießen. Wo bleibst du? Du läßt mich lang allein! Ich wandle auf und nieder mit meiner Laute Auf Wegen, die vom weichen Grase schwellen. O Schönheit! O ewigen Liebens - Lebenstrunkne Welt!</p> <p>Er stieg vom Pferd und reichte ihm den Trunk Des Abschieds dar. Er fragte ihn, wohin er führe Und auch warum es müßte sein. Er sprach, seine Stimme war umflort: Du, mein Freund, Mir war auf dieser Welt das Glück nicht hold!</p> <p>Wohin ich geh? Ich geh, ich wandre in die Berge. Ich suche Ruhe für mein einsam Herz. Ich wandle nach der Heimat, meiner Stätte. Ich werde niemals in die Ferne schweifen. Still ist mein Herz und harret seiner Stunde!</p> <p>Die liebe Erde allüberall Blüht auf im Lenz und grünt aufs neu! Allüberall und ewig blauen licht die Fernen! Ewig... ewig!</p>	<p>The sun is going down behind the mountains In every valley evening is descending, Bringing its shadows, which are full of coolness. Oh look! Like a silver bark The moon floats up through the blue lake of heaven. I sense a delicate breeze shimmering Behind the dark fir trees.</p> <p>The brook sings melodiously through the darkness. The flowers grow pale in the twilight. The earth takes deep breaths of rest and sleep; All desire now turns to dreaming. Weary people go homewards, So that, in sleep, they may learn anew Forgotten joy and youth. The birds huddle silent on their branches. The world is falling asleep!</p> <p>A cool breeze flows in a shadow of my fir trees. I stand here and wait for my friend. I wait for him to take a last farewell. I long, Oh my friend, to be by your side, To enjoy the beauty of this evening. Where are you? You leave me long alone! I wander to and fro with my lute On pathways which billow with soft grass. Oh beauty! Oh eternal love and life intoxicated world!</p> <p>He alighted from his horse and handed him the drink of farewell. He asked him where he was going, And also why it had to be. He spoke, his voice was veiled: 'Ah!, my friend- Fortune was not kind to me in this world!</p> <p>Where am I going? I am going to wander in the mountains, I seek rest for my lonely heart! I am journeying to the homeland, to my resting place; I shall never again go seeking the far distance. My heart is still and awaits its hour!</p> <p>The dear earth everywhere Blossoms in spring and grows green again! Everywhere and forever the distance shines bright and blue! Forever...forever...</p>

Table 4.2: 'Der Abschied' [The Farewell]. Translated by Deryck Cooke. Text from Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 336-337.

2

1. Fl. *veloce*

1. Ob. *cresc.* *pp* *ff* *pp*

1.2. Kl. in B.

1.2. Fag. *pp*

K. Fag.

1. S. Hr. in F. *su 2*

2. A. Hr. *p*

1. Harfe. *sempre p*

2. Harfe. *sempre p*

1. Vl. *f* *pp*

Vc. *pizz.*

Kb.

2

Fließend. Im Takt. 3

1. Fl. *p* *dim.* *pp*

1. Ob. *f* *p*

1.2. Fag. *pp*

2. A. Hr. in F. *su 2* *p*

1. Harfe. *f* *dim.*

2. Harfe. *f* *dim.*

Al-Stimme. (In ersätkendem Ton, ohne Ausdruck) *sempre p*

Die Son - ne schei - det hin - ter dem Ge -

Vc. *arco* *pp sempre*

3

Example 4.11 continued...

This distinctive oboe motive recurs throughout 'Der Abschied' in a variety of permutations; its cyclical repetition is a contributing factor to the meditative, static quality of this movement. For example, it is heard again in the second section of 'Der Abschied' with an even more ambiguous tonality. At this point, the oboe solo eventually becomes an accompaniment to the soloist as she begins to describe the brook singing in the darkness, and nature and the world going to sleep, the birds roosting on the branches, while the poet awaits his friend 'to take the last farewell' (Ex. 4.12).

7

Sehr mäßig. (d wie vorher d)

1. Ob. *f* *p*

1. & 2. Kl. in B. *p*

1. Hfe. *p* mit Mediator

2. Hfe. *p*

7

8

1. Ob. *f* *p*

1. & 2. Kl. in B.

1. Hfe.

Br. *p*

8

9

* *molto espress.*, sehr hervortretend

1. Fl. *f* *f-p*

1. & 2. Kl. in B. *pp*

1. Hfe. *pp*

2. Hfe. *pp*

Alt-St. *pp* *espress. pp*

Der Bach singt voll-er Wohl-laut durch das Dun-

Vlc.

9

Example 4.12: 'Der Abschied' - second section

One can ponder whether Mahler may have heard the reedy timbre of the traditional and popular Chinese instrument called the Sheng on the wax cylinders given to him by his friend Paul Hammerschlag. M. De La Grange gives an account of an event which may have strongly influenced the Chinese dimension in *Das Lied*:

During the last fortnight [of the summer of 1908] Mahler had a visit [at Toblach] from Paul Hammerschlag and his wife. Later, the banker recalled two memories of that summer, particularly one of a lively discussion during which, to his great surprise, Mahler suddenly threw up his table napkin so that all the guests could see that he had slashed it with his knife as it was on his knees. Another, more interesting, concerned some cylinders of Chinese music, recorded in China itself, that Paul Hammerschlag had bought in Vienna in a shop near the cathedral, and that he had given to Mahler at that time. This makes it quite certain that Mahler had not only read, but actually heard music from that far-off land before composing *Das Lied*.

There is no evidence with regard to what types of music the cylinders contained, and whether it was instrumental, percussive, or vocal music. And one can only speculate whether it was popular, celebratory, religious, or funeral-like. Traditional Chinese music tended to be categorized according to social function.⁵¹ Aside from the possible influence of the wax cylinders, there was also research being

⁵¹ See J. A. Van-Aalst, *Chinese Music* (Shanghai: The Inspector General of Customs, 1884), George Soulié, *La Musique En Chine* (Paris: Chez E. Leroux, 1911), and John Hazedel Levis, *Foundations of Chinese Musical Art* (Shanghai: Henri Vetch, Peiping, 1936).

undertaken in Vienna on non-Western techniques (as in other major centres of musical creativity). This was no doubt as a result of current fashion, thinking, and growing academic interest in sinology and ethnomusicology as we have already witnessed in France in chapter 3. Guido Adler's article 'Über Heterophonie' (1908) is a prime example of the fascination with and thinking about non-Western traditions that was common in Vienna at that time.⁵² Adler writes:

Although there is as yet a very incomplete, and largely unreliable body of exotic music extant, it is, nevertheless, possible – thanks to reliable material on music for several voices, whether vocal or instrumental – clearly to distinguish one kind of treatment that is essentially different from both homophony and polyphony. We may then sum up the main corpus of the kind of exotic music just referred to as follows: the voices begin in unison, in harmony or in octaves, only to separate from one another subsequently. The main theme is paraphrased and distorted, so that secondary and transitional melodies arise to join the main theme, now consonantly, now dissonantly. This paraphrasing and distorting, then, lead one to suppose that the instrumentalists and singers wanted to add something of their own, whether in individual deviatory sounds or merely in grace notes. But these deviations soon give the impression that the instrumentalist or singer has only unconsciously deviated from the right path, that the deviation is merely a coincidence, either because the performers

⁵² Guido Adler (1855-1914) was a musicologist and historian, as well as an old friend of Mahler's and a student of his music.

have had a mental aberration or because they do not consider these middle sections worthy of their attention. As at the beginning, the voices then approach the end almost invariably in unison, or in a regular parallel movement. This kind of movement of several voices is the main branch, even the stem, of heterophony.⁵³

Adler's notion of heterophony has particular relevance to the innovative freedom in rhythm, tonality, and motivic development found in 'Der Abschied'. This movement, at thirty minutes long takes up almost half the entire work; the music is allowed to flow freely and almost endlessly. Bruno Walter (who conducted the first performance of the work in 1911, after the composer's death) recalls in his memories:

He turned the manuscript over to me to study...When I brought it back to him, almost unable to utter a word, he turned to the Abschied and said: 'What do you think? Is this to be endured at all? Will not people make away with themselves after hearing it? Then he pointed out the rhythmical difficulties and asked jestingly: 'Have you any idea of how this is to be conducted? I haven't'.⁵⁴

This quotation highlights that Mahler was well aware that conducting it would be difficult. This was due to the rhythmic innovations in 'Der Abschied' which Mitchell describes as the 'very beatlessness' which

⁵³ Guido Adler, 'Über Heterophonie', *Peters Jahrbuch* (1908): 17-27. See also Edward R. Reilly, *Gustav Mahler and Guido Adler: Records of a Friendship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

⁵⁴ Bruno Walter, *Gustav Mahler*, trans. James Austin Galston (New York: H. Reichner, 1937), 59-60.

arises from Mahler's methodical variation and reorganization of the beats within the individual bar, within the metrical unit.⁵⁵ Furthermore, his frequent omission of bar lines through cross-rhythms and ties across bars results in a 'suspended pulse' or a metre which is in a continuous state of change. However, the overall effect is still one of musical connectivity and fluidity because of the cyclical design.

Cyclical repetition of pentatonic or chromatically inflected motifs is a key aspect of the submerged exoticism of this movement. As Hefling writes:

Above all 'Der Abschied' is repetitious – in the foreground, through the virtually endless recycling of ostinato-like components. Eventually these recurring motifs seem to lose distinct identity, blurring into a static and apparently endless background. They are intertwined by a subtle web of relationships, yet only rarely (but then significantly) do these connections develop into distinctive musical events.⁵⁶

This 'blurring into a static and endless background' can be related to Adorno's identification of an 'indistinct unison' whereby parts are rhythmically a little out of step with one another.⁵⁷ An example of this can be heard through figures 27 to 30 where there is an unsynchronised connection between the voice and the first violins – it is

⁵⁵ Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 342.

⁵⁶ Stephen E. Hefling, *Mahler: Das Lied Von Der Erde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 107.

⁵⁷ Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), xx.

a displaced unison that creates the counterpoint – which not only discloses the principle that was to be elevated almost to the status of a compositional rule in 'Der Abschied' but also clearly represents Adorno's classification: 'identical parts...rhythmically a little out of step with one another' (Ex. 4.13).⁵⁸

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, xx.

27

Sehr ruhige ganze Takte.

zu 2

1. & 2. Fl. *erac.*

1. Kl. in B. *erac.*

2. Kl. *erac.*

B. Kl. in B.

4. Hr. in E.

1. Harfe. *erac.*

2. Harfe. *erac.*

1. VI. *pp*

2. VI. *pp*

Fr. *pp*

All. St. *pp*

Vcl. *pp* arco

Kb. *pp*

Sehr ruhige ganze Takte.

Griffbrett.

pp subito ma molto espress.

Ich seh - - - ne mich, -

27

Nicht schleppen.

28

zu 2

1. & 2. Kl. in B. *p*

1. Hr. in E. *p espress.*

1. Harfe.

Nicht schleppen.

1. VI. *p subito*

2. VI. *cresc.*

Fr. *cresc.*

All. St. *p subito*

o Freund, an del - ner Sei - - te die Schön - - heit die - ses

Vcl. *pizz.* arco *p espress.*

Kb. *p subito*

28

Example 4.13: 'Der Abschied'

Example 4.13 also supports the ideas set out in Adler's article on non-Western music, where he considers how 'the main theme is paraphrased and distorted, so that secondary and transitional melodies arise to join the main theme, now consonantly, now dissonantly. ...these deviations soon give the impression that the instrumentalist or singer has only unconsciously deviated from the right path...'.⁵⁹ This combination recalls the 'acoustic sharawadgi' explored in chapter three.

Finally, one must acknowledge that these particular musical characteristics of space, silence, reedy timbre, and 'indistinct unison' function not only to convey a 'submerged' exotic soundscape, but also to embrace Mahler's deeply personal intentions, and confront his feelings towards life and death, loneliness and pain – (which is why Bethge's text was so poignant for him). Mahler himself described it as the most 'personal thing I have done so far'.⁶⁰ The overall effect of this movement is described by Benjamin Britten as follows:

The same harmonic progressions that Wagner used to colour his essentially morbid love scenes are used here to paint a serenity literally supernatural. I cannot understand it – it passes over me like a tidal wave – and that matters not a jot either, because it

⁵⁹ Guido Adler, 'Über Heterophonie', *Peters Jahrbuch* (1908): 17-27.

⁶⁰ Letter 378 in Knud Martner, ed., *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, trans. Ernst Kaiser, Eithne Wilkins, and Bill Hopkins (London: John Murray, 1979), 326. See also letter 409 in Herta Blaukopf, ed., *Gustav Mahler: Unbekannte Briefe* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay, 1983), 347-348.

goes on forever, even if it is never performed again – that final chord is printed on the atmosphere.⁶¹

Here Britten is referring to the ending of this movement where the hypnotic repetition of the word 'ewig' [forever] eventually fades out into silence amidst the sounds of a twinkling celeste and incessantly repeated motifs on the oboe. Whilst 'Der Abschied' is not inherently 'Chinese' in soundscape, one can consider Adorno's suggestion that China (particularly in 'Der Abschied') is used as a stylization principle where 'that visionary China, which appears throughout as no more than a discreetly sketched background, plays a role similar to that which folksong had played earlier – a pseudomorphosis, not to be taken literally but eloquent by reason of its very unreality, its visionary nature'.⁶²

A HAUNTING VOICE: THE NIGHTINGALE

This 'unreality and visionary nature' characterises the bird in Stravinsky's opera *The Nightingale* (1914). The haunting sound of the mystical Nightingale is the main impetus of the opera's narrative, and naturally lends itself to the fairytale Chinese world rendered by Stravinsky. Its otherworldly, spiritual, and almost supernatural qualities are conveyed in the lyrics of the Chinese fisherman.

⁶¹ Donald Mitchell, ed., *Letters from a Life: The Selected Letters and Diaries of Benjamin Britten*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 493.

⁶² Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: Eine Musikalische Physiognomik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1960), 190-191.

Pale, how pale is the young moon.
Morning will break too soon.
The waves are murmuring.
Where is the nightingale?
I wait to hear the nightingale
It is his time to sing
Oh, come pure voice and fill
The night with your sweet song!
Ah! I have listened to him long,
Forgetting fishing nets,
Forgetting all my worries.
Heavenly spirit,
In your sea are all the fish you have caught and made free,
Changed into birds, birds singing heavenly...⁶³

The nightingale is regarded as a 'pure voice' and 'heavenly spirit' that has the power to release one from worries, and can metaphorically set the fish free by changing them into heavenly singing birds. Furthermore, in the final act the fisherman proclaims, 'But in the spirits voice, heaven will conquer death and set the stars free'. The nightingale bird has the power to mesmerize both the audience and the characters on stage. For Stravinsky, the nightingale was 'the personification of soul', as he wrote:

In general the first scene is full of the most vivid (don't be afraid) contrasts. On the one hand, the Nightingale* and the bosom of

⁶³ Igor Stravinsky, *Le Rossignol - Orchestral Score*, trans. Basil. T. Timotheieff and Charles C. Hayne (Boosey and Hawkes, 1947), 10.

nature; on the other hand, the gang of semi-farcical Chinese nobility. Because of the latter the Nightingale comes still more into relief in all the beauty of its intimacy.

*The personification of soul (God! How opaque this word has become in our time!)⁶⁴

As Stravinsky suggests, the 'beauty of its [the nightingale's] intimacy' or vocal solitude is particularly engaging because of the dramatic contrast between the overt and exaggerated (*fausse chinoiserie*) musical style of the Chinese court.

The Nightingale makes its debut in Act I, scene 3, mesmerizing the Chinese fisherman with its elusive song. Let us remember that this act was written in 1909, and that Stravinsky had written in his *Chronicle* that 'the forest with its nightingale, the pure soul of the child who falls in love with its song – all this gentle poetry of Hans Anderson's could not be expressed in the same way as the baroque luxury of the Chinese court'.⁶⁵ One thing to consider was how to present the physical role of the nightingale and its song – and what to do with the singer? Stravinsky decided to treat the bird as a *coloratura soprano*, which would be placed in the orchestra pit. Obviously, this meant there would be no character on stage to represent the nightingale; a miniscule, almost invisible bird for a small part of the action was used instead. The first entrance of the Nightingale is signaled by a flute motif that closely

⁶⁴ Letter of 21 July / 3 August 1909: *PRK*, 214-5 in Stephen Walsh, *Stravinsky: A Creative Spring* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 126. The footnote is Stravinsky's own.

⁶⁵ Igor Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life* (London: V. Gollancz, 1936), 87.

replicates the sound of a bird with its sophisticated attention to intervals, and intuitive placing of grace notes and trills. In the last two bars, which anticipate the entry of the nightingale's aria, the flute bird-motif is exoticised with unusual intervals (See Ex. 4.14).

Example 4.14: *The Nightingale*, Act I, scene iii

In a 1913 letter to the stage director Alexander Sanine, Stravinsky wrote, 'I composed *The Nightingale* in the period of my infatuation with birds (at any rate, when I was at my bird-best)'.⁶⁶ This 'outdoor aesthetic' rendered by the flute bird motif sets up the quiet and mysterious atmosphere required for the Nightingale's song, which begins on a leaping octave with an open vowel sound – 'Ah' – supported by shimmering tremolo strings (Ex. 4.15).⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Robert Craft, ed., *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence*, vol. 2 (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 199.

⁶⁷ This is very similar to the opening vocal line of Debussy's 'Rondel Chinois' (1881) for voice and piano in chapter three.

COUQUILLÉ (Голоса оркестра)
 Le ROSSIGNOL (Vox dans l'orchestre)
 NACHTIGALL (Stimme aus dem Orchester)
 NIGHTINGALE (Voice from the Orchestra)

Ah! Ah! Ah!
 Ah!
 Ah!
 Ah!

Example 4.15: *The Nightingale*, Act I, scene iii

This wordless vocalize has the effect of immediately drawing in the listener as the bare orchestral texture and lack of pulse elicits a sense of timelessness and suspense. However, by figure 19 (of the score), the coloratura soprano is supported by gently pulsating divisi strings (tremolo and pizzicato), and the melodic line is relatively conventional compared to the Nightingale's song in the more avant garde style of Acts II and III (written four years later). The obscure symbolism and imagery in the libretto for the Nightingale's first aria evoke a fantastical scene of nature, where glittering diamond dew falls from the sky on garden roses – the text of which coincides masterfully with the delicate bell-like sounds of the celeste. As the Nightingale, like a siren, sings 'Ah, do you hear my voice,' both nature and humans (in this instance the Chinese fisherman) are mesmerized by its spell.

Ah! Ah! Ah!
 From the sky a star
 In diamond dew fell scattered
 Fell on the garden roses, fell in the diamond dew
 The gardens of the palace,
 The gardens of the God above,
 How beautiful it is!
 Ah, do you hear my voice,

Oh roses, do you hear?
Your heads bowed low with glittering dew,
Bowed down with diamond dew?
Oh weep you diamond tears,
In diamond tears your weeping.
Ah, ah...⁶⁸

The Nightingale is described as a bewitching 'heavenly spirit', and is shown to have the ability to entrance. This special characteristic is realised musically in two dizzying and rising chromatic flourishes in the orchestra, which continues slickly the abandoned vocal line of the Nightingale (Ex. 4.16). In the midst of this giddy chromaticism, the fisherman is compelled to proclaim 'how beautiful it is!'

⁶⁸ Igor Stravinsky, *Le Rossignol - Orchestral Score*, trans. Basil. T. Timotheieff and Charles C. Hayne (Boosey and Hawkes, 1947), 21-30.

Fl. picc.

1

Fl. gr.

II

CO. I. II

1

Cl. in E♭

II

Cl. Bass

in Sib.

I. II

Cor. in F♯

III. IV

Calista

Arpa I

(lab) (reb) (lab)

Arpa II

(lab) (reb) (lab)

Concerti

Russ.

Nacht

Night.

ist

die

Kelch

rose.

Dieu

pas

sonf.

mich

ti

ger.

God

a

bose.

kirk

quel

welch

kon

chaut

himm

beau

TO

so

DO

de

li

ci

li

scher

Go

ti

ful

il

sozza soia.

VI. Solo

VI. I

div.

VI. II

div.

VII. div.

Vc.

div.

Cb.

div.

B. & H. 18938

Example 4.16 continued...

The Nightingale's ability to enchant is also extended to large crowds, and is exhibited in the second act, written four years later. After the cacophonous grandeur of the Chinese March, the subdued and exquisite sound of the Nightingale is presented and immediately captivates the whole palace, mesmerizing and delighting those with its initial wash of unaccompanied wordless coloratura (Ex. 4.17).

CHANSON DU ROSSIGNOL

The musical score is titled "CHANSON DU ROSSIGNOL". It features several staves: Fl. gr. I, P-forte, Arpa I, Arpa II, VI. Solo, and Viola Solo. The vocal line is for the Nightingale, with lyrics in Russian (СОЛОВЕЙ), German (NACHTIGALL), and French (Le ROSSIGNOL). The score shows a chromatic, wordless vocalization starting at measure 82. The tempo is marked "Allegretto" and the time signature is 3/4. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The vocal line is characterized by a continuous, chromatic melodic line that is not constrained by bar lines, creating a sense of time suspension.

Example 4.17: *The Nightingale*, Act II, scene iv

The exotic, otherworldliness of the bird is conveyed in the chromatic wordless vocalize, which is unrestrained by bar lines, having the overall effect of suspending time. This improvisatory vocalizing is what first fascinates the crowd, and moves them into a state of utter serenity, as a closed circle of listeners. As Carolyn Abbate writes,

Pure voice commands instant attention (both ours and that of the onstage audience), in a passage that is shockingly bare of other

sound. In opera, we rarely hear the voice both unaccompanied and stripped of text – and when we do (in the vocal cadenzas typical of Italian arias, for instance), the sonority is disturbing, perhaps because such vocalizing so pointedly focuses our sense of the singing voice as one that can compel without benefit of words. Such moments enact in pure form familiar western tropes on the suspicious power of music and its capacity to move us without rational speech.⁶⁹

Towards the close of this aria, there is another vocal cadenza; this one has a rather disturbing sonority at the end. The non-human sound of the Nightingale unnaturally and rather primitively squeals up to an exceptionally high pitch. Uncomfortable glass-like string harmonics accompany this and continue to squeal upwards into oblivion, adding to the simultaneously fascinating and disturbing sound (Ex. 4.18).

⁶⁹ Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 4.

86 *Andante (tempo come prima cantata)* *poco allarg.*

Conoscet
Roz.
Nacht.
Nacht.

Ass
da
Ah
da

Fl. picc.

I

Fl. gr.
II

P. forte

Celеста

Conoscet
Roz.
Nacht.
Nacht.

IMPERATORI L'EMPEREUR
KAISER EMPEROR

87 *Sostenuto* $\text{♩} = 66$

87 *Sostenuto* $\text{♩} = 66$

VI. I Solo

VI. II Solo

Vla. Solo

sezza sord. *f* *ritardando* *ppp* *sezza sord.* *sezza sord.* *sezza sord.*

giva.
cal Re

*Maes so - po - sto ve canta.
Ouf chent de - li - es - eux!
O, wai - cher schö - ne Sang!
Your song is beau - ti - ful!*

B. & H. 18936

Example 4.18: *The Nightingale*, Act II, scene iv

This 'pure voice' of the Nightingale is represented by a woman who transforms herself into a kind of musical instrument, a sonorous line without words and unsupported by any orchestral sound. This 'sonorous line' is made to sound 'supernatural' and hauntingly soars above as if from nowhere, an effect achieved by embedding the singer in the orchestra so as not to be visible on stage. As Abbate suggests, moments like this are indeed captivating, precisely because the isolation of the vocal sound brings it into the limelight. The fetishization of voice as pure sound is interwoven with the telling of the story, for the

Chinese Emperor 'the diva's voice is the object of pursuit'.⁷⁰ The purity and soulfulness represented by the iconic Nightingale is the only thing that has the power to save the emperor from dying.

'SIGNORE ASCOLTA!' [LORD, LISTEN!]

The character of Liù from Puccini's *Turandot* (1926) conveys a purity and soulfulness in her solo moments in a rather different way. She was to become the vessel with which to express the tragic, inexplicable, almost sacrilegious power of love, as opposed to the mechanical and inhuman characterisation of *The Masks*. In 1920, Puccini wrote in a letter to his librettist Adami: 'For the third [act], I was thinking of another ending – I thought her death would be more meaningful, and I would have wanted her, in front of the people, to burst out with love. In an excessive, violent, shameless way, like a bomb exploding...'.⁷¹ This idea was followed through in the final act of the opera as Liù eventually embraces torture and death rather than reveal the secret of Calaf's identity. In her anguish, she tells Turandot that she is guided by 'such love, secret and unconfessed, so great that these torments are sweetness to me because I offer them to my lord....because keeping them silent, I give him, I give him your love'.⁷² Liù is the only one of the three protagonists who is central to the musical chinoiserie of the opera.

⁷⁰ Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, trans. Arthur Denner (New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 96.

⁷¹ Giuseppe Adami, ed., *Epistolario Giacomo Puccini* (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1982), [EGP, ltr 181, 168].

⁷² Giacomo Puccini, *Turandot*, piano-vocal score series. Ricordi pl. no. 121329 (with Alfano II), 334-335.

However, in direct contrast to *The Masks*, her contribution to the Chinese ambience of the opera reveals a more 'submerged' chinoiserie; in a similar way to the previous examples a pentatonic and chromatically inflected voice is foregrounded amidst sparse orchestration, a freer rhythm and more ambiguous tonality.

Devoting three of the opera's six arias to Liù, Puccini assigned her some of his most inspiring music. Many writers have focused on Liu's fatal defeat in the operatic plot, but what has been neglected is the triumph: the sound of her singing voice. Mosco Carner suggests that Liù's first aria, 'Signore Ascolta', portrays her as a 'gentle, affectionate and warm-hearted creature whose musical portrait recalls the limpidity and delicacy of a Chinese pen-drawing'.⁷³ This archetypal description of 'limpidity and delicacy' can be attributed to Puccini's sparse orchestration, with static muted violins and the mournful sound of the oboe which at times simply doubles the vocal line. A lack of harmonization brings to the fore the *sound* of Liu's voice, and emphasizes her purely pentatonic melody (Ex. 4.19).

⁷³ Mosco Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography* (London: Holmes and Meier, 1958, 3rd ed. 1992), 479.

Liù's isolated vocal line is decorated with musical gestures designed to project a Chinese ambience into the operatic setting. This was evidently an aspect given some thought, as in 1921 Adami wrote to Puccini: 'I entrust to you Liù in [Act] III. You will need to use an unusual metre – I have a bit of Chinese-sounding music, and it will need to be adapted slightly'.⁷⁴ Adami, the librettist, was also a sinologist, and one can assume that he would have given some specialised insight to the Chinese aspect of this opera, although this extract is the only documented evidence.⁷⁵ In 'Signore Ascolta', an unusual metre is adopted through the use of a static vocal line that moves through phrases that disregard the bar lines.⁷⁶ This rhythmic freedom of the isolated voice amidst a sparse orchestral texture draws in the listener, and conveys a similar ambience of timelessness and meditative stillness found in 'Der Abschied' and the 'Nightingale Aria'.

Michele Girardi also points out that Liù's vocal writing is characterized by a prominent use of the perfect fourth, as well as a rhythmic cell formed by a quaver and two semiquavers (Ex. 4.20).⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Giuseppe Adami, ed., *Epistolario Giacomo Puccini* (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1982), [EGP, ltr 186, 171].

⁷⁵ The Chinese-sounding music has not been traced, and most scholars discuss Liu's music as an example of Puccini's invented musical Chinoiserie.

⁷⁶ Ashbrook and Powers also relate this irregular metre to Liu's second aria: 'The expression "irregular metre" suggests something like the eventual text of Liu's "Tanto amore segreto" (III.C.2), with its mixture of mostly unrhymed *imparisillabo* lines of different lengths'. See William Ashbrook and Harold Powers, *Puccini's Turandot: The End of the Great Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 99.

⁷⁷ Michele Girardi, *Puccini, His International Art*, trans. Laura Basini (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 468.

a. *Turandot*, I, [8]

Liù

Nul-la so - no ... U - na schiava, mio si- gno- re ...

b. *Turandot*, I, [42]

Liù

Signo-re a-scolta! Ah, signore a-scol-ta! Liù non regge più! ... Si spezza ilcuor! Ahimé, ahimé.

Example 4.20: Michele Girardi, *Puccini, His International Art*, 468.

But what needs to be considered is *how* and *if* we actually hear this as contributing to Liù's Chinese soundscape. What makes it sound so distinctive is the fact that the rhythmic cell almost always outlines a perfect fourth, and that nuanced instrumental combinations are used (eg. pizzicato strings, celeste, solo oboe) to create what can be perceived as a Chinese exotic timbre. Associating this particular Chinese exotic timbre with Liù serves another function; as William Ashbrook writes, 'it is important to remember that she [Liù] exists as a point of contrast and indirectly as a means for softening Turandot's heart'.⁷⁸

Liù is central to the staged creation of a legendary and mythical China. She contributes to the ideological notion of the ultimate sacrifice and honour in ancient China. As Ralph Locke writes, 'she displays an almost super-human willingness to give her life, for love of the heedless

⁷⁸ William Ashbrook, *The Operas of Puccini* (London: Cassel & Company Ltd, 1968), 214.

tenor who (she recalls) once smiled at her in the palace'.⁷⁹ This superhuman willingness can be related to Petty and Tuttle's assertion that Liù's tonal space of G flat in 'Signore Ascolta' distinguishes her from the rest of the characters. For Turandot, this particular key 'carries every fantasy-projection of purity, sanctity, virginity, serenity, and holiness'.⁸⁰ In the final moment of 'Signore Ascolta', these notions of purity, sanctity, and superhuman devotion are realized musically as Liù languishes in exquisite open octaves which culminate with an eerie high B flat sung *pianissimo*. Her words, 'Liù non regge più! Ah pietà!' [Liu can bear no more, Oh mercy!] are accompanied by barely audible sustained strings and harp glissandi that in combination with her voice evoke a dream-like state (Ex. 4.21).

⁷⁹ Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 188.

⁸⁰ Jonathan Christian Petty and Marshall Tuttle, 'Tonal Psychology in Puccini's Turandot', *British Postgraduate Musicology* 4/2 (2001), 245. According to Petty and Tuttle, as Turandot blames men for the rape and murder of her ancestor Lo-u-Ling, it results in her transferring every fantasy-projection of purity, sanctity, virginity, serenity, and holiness to her. They also state that Lo-u-Ling languishes in the key of F sharp minor, while Turandot identifies herself as the victim's reborn spirit in Gb, and therefore transfers that ascribed purity and serenity to this key. The point here is that for Liu, the key of Gb is not a fantasy but a reality. Superficially in every respect Lo-u-u's opposite, Liu is no celestial daughter of heaven, but merely a slave. The Highest confronts the Lowest to find the embodiment of every reality of feminine virtue to which Turandot can only pretend. In Liu's first aria *Signore, ascolta*, and her final aria, *Tu che di gel sei cinta*, a G flat tonality is a crucial factor. Liu is surrounded by poetic resonances of lowliness and nothingness. This is reflected in the libretto of her first aria as she proclaims that it was the 'shadow of a smile' that kept her and Timur alive. Barely in this world, surviving on a departed shadow, Liu, like Lo-u-Ling, is a ghost. Through this imagery, one could argue that Liu is more connected to Lo-u-Ling than to any of the living protagonists. Timur recognizes this when, mourning Liu's death, he cries out a warning against her avenging ghost.

This moment encapsulates the 'Otherness' of her character through her extraordinarily high vocal sound. It seems we are transported to a level of mesmerizing, almost hypnotic sound in which her inhuman capabilities of sacrificial love and extreme femininity are represented. Having laid bare her soul exclaiming her secret love, a sense of release and euphoria is conveyed. This, however, can never be fully exalted as her utter despair and beyond human selflessness is portrayed in the sheer vocal control that is required to sing a high B flat – *softly!*

Liù's Chinese musical identity and dramatic profile is established in 'Signore Ascolta' – her first aria. Ashbrook and Powers refer to this memorable solo as 'Liù's sweetly pathetic pentatonic aria'.⁸¹ Peter Schatt argues that Liù is trapped in her pentatonicism and that, later in the opera, her growing independence and courage in Act III are seen in her vocal lines – now fully diatonic – and their harmonically sophisticated accompaniment.⁸² Close analysis of Liù's three arias does indeed reveal how a more Western diatonic idiom is assimilated into her music to coincide with the development of her character. On Puccini's part, this may have been a subconscious effort to musically convey her increasing independence and strength, or more simply, to ensure audience recognition and sympathy. Unlike *The Masks*, one can consider that her character is allowed to develop, as this gradual shift to

⁸¹ William Ashbrook and Harold Powers, *Puccini's Turandot : The End of the Great Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 98.

⁸² Peter W. Schatt, *Exotik in Der Musik Des 20. Jahrhunderts: Historisch-Systematische Untersuchungen Zur Metamorphose Einer Ästhetischen Fiktion* (Munich: Musikverlag E. Katzschler, 1986), 47.

a more diatonic idiom can be described as an attempt to 'de-orientalize' or 'humanize' her. This can be considered as a technique which permits the Western audience to engage and identify more easily with her emotional plight. However, despite this increasing diatonicism – specific Chinese musical gestures are still deeply embedded within the music by her final aria. Liù's Chinese identity in the drama remains salient, and her contribution to a 'submerged' musical chinoiserie continues right until her death.

In conclusion, this section has revealed how the Chinese decorative style can be applied to great effect in moments of 'submerged' musical chinoiserie. 'Der Abschied' [The Farewell], 'The Nightingale Aria', and 'Signore Ascolta' occur at crucial emotional climaxes and through carefully nuanced orchestration draw the listener in to a Chinese soundscape that is meditative, natural, and to some extent mystical. These examples reveal that a key means to achieve this effect is through sparse orchestration, cyclical repetition, free rhythm, tonal ambiguity, and the subtle use of pentatonic motifs. There is also the prominent use of either a solo oboe or flute to double the vocal melody, embellish it, or to play solo above a very thin orchestral accompaniment. Devoid of a definite rhythmic framework the music sounds improvisatory; the overall effect is one of musical stasis, or timelessness. These qualities abound in traditional Chinese music and philosophy; making a direct connection, however, is not entirely convincing or the main aim. What these musical examples show,

however, is that at the other extreme of overt chinoiserie (la machine chinoise) is a well-acknowledged formula that appeals to those searching for a spiritual, ritualistic, or supernatural Chinese exotic that engages the heart (acoustic sharawadgi). It is no coincidence then, that all these examples are bound to the eternal themes of the human spirit, sacrificial love, and desire.

Traversing the Foreign and Familiar: Chinoiserie in the Popular Songs of Tin Pan Alley

The popular music of Tin Pan Alley provides an intriguing parallel to the archaic visions prevalent in the Western art music explored in previous chapters. Faced with the reality of Chinese immigration to the West in the mid-nineteenth century, it was becoming increasingly evident that not all 'Chinese' of the time lived in nostalgic landscapes or porcelain palaces. This chapter focuses on how popular songs directly responded to the social and political reality of Chinese immigration to America. Stimulated by anxieties over a sudden influx of Chinese citizens, these popular songs demonstrate how musical chinoiserie was not only used for decorative or meditative effect, but also used as a communicative tool for the creation of increasingly nuanced Chinese stereotypes. These songs, which were composed to appeal to a mass commercial market, showcase explicit examples of musical chinoiserie. At first glance, these songs may appear simple and formulaic in their construction; however, upon closer examination they reveal a variety of hidden beliefs, prejudices, aspirations and idealized visions of China.

Chinese-inspired popular songs were deeply-rooted in dealing with and understanding Chinese immigration to America. For in the mid-

nineteenth century, tens of thousands of Chinese laborers came to America to make their fortunes in the California gold rush, work on farms, or to help build the transcontinental railroad. They were amongst the many other immigrants from Latin America, Europe, and Australia, who also travelled to America in search of gold, riches, and the promise of a better life. The Chinese, however, were particularly notable for their sheer numbers; their distinctive dress and appearance was also highly recognizable.¹ While American businesses appreciated their conscientious, hard-working ethic and cheap labour, America's established working class felt threatened by the wave of Chinese immigration, which kindled fear of the 'Yellow Peril'.² Racial tensions and the belief that Chinese mass immigration threatened white wages and standards of living lead to the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. This was the first law to exclude immigrants based on race, nationality, and class, and remained in place for eighty years and effectively slowed the growth of the Chinese immigrant population.³ Such hostility during an era of legalized segregation also prompted discriminatory laws regarding Chinese land ownership as well as frequent outbreaks of

¹ For more information see Susie Lan Cassel, ed., *The Chinese in America: A History from Gold Mountain to the New Millennium* (California: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002), 24-33. Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America: A Narrative History* (New York: Viking, 2003), 20-28. Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 122-144. Benson Tong, *The Chinese in America* (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2003), 19-25.

² The term originated in the late nineteenth-century, when Chinese labourers immigrated to Western countries, most notably America. It refers to the skin color of the Chinese, and the belief that the mass immigration of Chinese people threatened local white American wages and standards of living.

³ Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 62-67.

racially motivated violence in rural areas.⁴ As a result, after the Gold Rush and the completion of the railroad, Chinese immigrants began to congregate in urban communities. By the turn of the century San Francisco boasted the nation's largest Chinatown. Other Chinatowns also emerged in Philadelphia, Boston, Washington, and New York, and were essentially physically segregated neighborhoods within white-dominated cities and towns.⁵

Growing out of these social tensions, and day to day encounters, existing Chinese stereotypes were reinforced, reconfigured, and often tinged with negativity. While the nostalgic and romantic allure of China remained, a legacy of forbidden sensuality and violence had come down from Chinatown fictions. The simultaneous threat and genuine curiosity that Chinese immigration provoked led to the Chinese being increasingly stereotyped as variously cruel and treacherous, the male as comical effeminate china man or evil gangster, and the female objectified as demure 'China doll' or flirtatious 'Sing-song girl'. In order to convey these stereotypes musically, songwriters intuitively adopted the most 'overt' aspects of musical chinoiserie. This resulted in the prolific use of a limited, yet familiar collection of clichéd, immediately recognisable Chinese signifiers that served to maintain a broad

⁴ Charles Hiroshi-Garret, 'Chinatown, Whose Chinatown? Defining America's Borders with Musical Orientalism', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57/1 (2004), 119-173 [126].

⁵ Benson Tong, *The Chinese in America* (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2003), 40.

audience appeal. As John C. Tibbetts writes, 'Tin Pan Alley and film entrepreneurs shared in common an understanding of public taste, an expertise in merchandising and marketing stemming from their backgrounds in sales and retail'.⁶ Ultimately, the aim of manufacturers and songwriters was the 'creation of desire for a product'.⁷ Indeed, the publishing houses of Tin Pan Alley both exploited and fuelled a widespread curiosity and interest in the Far East by promulgating Western visions of China that were nuanced by the Chinese immigration experience on attractive sheet music covers, posters, magazines, costumes, and set designs for musicals and operettas.

Focussing on popular songs that reflect the most significant social and political concerns of the time also brings to light the broader trajectory of the evolving fashion for chinoiserie in popular music. Beginning in 1860, Tin Pan Alley songs with Chinese subjects were frequently based on the solitary Chinese immigrant man. Bret Harte's poem 'The Heathen Chinee' (1870) was first set to music by F. Boote, Charles Towner, and Henry Tucker, and is representative of the anxiety and hatred felt towards Chinese men who were considered to be a threat by the local American work force. As Chinese immigrants began to congregate in urban communities at the turn of the century, Tin Pan Alley composers began to draw inspiration from the many Chinatowns that sprang up.

⁶ John C Tibbetts, *Composers in the Movies: Studies in Musical Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 106.

⁷ Daniel Goldmark, 'Creating Desire on Tin Pan Alley', *The Musical Quarterly* 90 (2008), 197-229 [198].

These Chinatowns became popular tourist destinations for white Americans who were seeking new and exciting experiences in a place that came to signify 'the embodiment of the exotic Orient'.⁸ 'Chinatown, My Chinatown' (1910) by Jean Schwartz and William Jerome, and 'Limehouse Nights' (1920) by George Gershwin reveal how what was once conditional hatred for the Chinese evolved into a form of intense fascination. Chinatown was viewed as a place of danger and desire, where tales of forbidden romance and opium-induced dreams were interwoven with alluring Chinese female characters. 'Sing-song girl' (1930) by James F. Hanley, and 'Chinese lullaby' (1918) by Robert H. Bowers demonstrate how Chinese female stereotypes were used in popular song to explore these notions of forbidden desire, opium-induced fantasies, and sexual liberation.

In creating and disseminating these Chinese inspired songs, white Americans imagined and pondered new ways where (and how) Chinese immigrants belonged in relation to other races and ethnicities. More importantly, by focussing on Chinese stereotypes, white Americans were provided with the 'otherness' they needed to define 'who they were and were not'.⁹ For example, the masculine white American male was vastly different to the supposedly effeminate, deceitful, and awkward Chinese male; and American people were morally civilized, as

⁸ Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 175.

⁹ John Kuo-Wei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture. 1776-1882* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), xvi.

opposed to Chinatown residents who were viewed as primitive and dangerous. Taking this a step further, this chapter demonstrates how songwriters expressed an instinctive urge to demarcate these cultural differences in music. By creating a distance from the perceived norms of Western cultural perception, these popular songs engendered a polarity between obvious musical chinoiserie and a more Western-inspired diatonic idiom that maintained a 'conservative appeal to the predictable and universally understood'.¹⁰ This divergence between 'foreign' and 'familiar' sounds is discernable by a decisive shift in musical styles, in which all musical chinoiserie is stripped and a more familiar 'Western' style emerges. The placing and context of this shift, reveals not only the centrality of Western cultural perception, but also discloses the very essence of an instinctive moment of cultural reference. Ultimately, this chapter attempts to answer fundamental questions about how we should conceive of difference in music, and more specifically *how* and *why* these popular songs traversed 'foreign' (obvious chinoiserie) and 'familiar' (Western diatonic) soundscapes, that in our day and age appear to be crude and to some extent childishly naive.

The Arrival of 'The Heathen Chinee' (1870)

In September 1870, the *Overland Monthly* published a humorous poem by the famous newspaperman, writer, and poet Bret Harte that depicted

¹⁰ Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Milton Keynes, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1990), 37.

the growing animosity between the Irish and the Chinese. The verse was originally titled 'Plain Language from Truthful James', but eventually came to be known almost exclusively as 'The Heathen Chinee'. It recounts a card game between two fictional characters: Ah Sin, a Chinese man, and William Nye, an Irishman. Even though Nye blatantly cheats with cards stuffed up his sleeves, he keeps losing to Ah Sin. Finally Nye, losing patience, shouts, 'We are ruined by Chinese cheap labour!' and then assaults Ah Sin, knocking hidden cards out of the Chinese man's sleeves.¹¹ This poem became an immediate sensation across America. One bookshop reported sales of twelve hundred copies within a two-month period, several newspapers ran the poem twice, and two illustrated editions were closely followed by three musical versions.¹² As Gary Scharnhorst writes 'the frequency with which it was reprinted, the number of parodies it inspired, the times it was cited or set to music – Bret Harte's "The Heathen Chinee", was one of the most popular poems ever published'.¹³

'The Heathen Chinee' struck a chord deep within the American psyche, as it helped bring debates about Chinese immigration into the national

¹¹ Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America: A Narrative History* (New York: Viking, 2003), 118.

¹² William Purviance Fenn, *Ah Sin and His Brethren in American Literature* (College of Chinese Studies cooperating with California College in China, 1933). Robert McClellan, *The Heathen Chinee: A Study of American Attitudes toward China, 1890-1905* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971). Charles R. Shepherd, *The Ways of Ah Sin: A Composite Narrative of Things as They Are* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1923). Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 128.

¹³ Gary Scharnhorst, 'Ways That Are Dark: Appropriations of Bret Harte's Plain Language from Truthful James,' *Nineteenth Century Literature* 51/3 (1996), 377.

spotlight. At this time, especially in California, there was tremendous fear of the Chinese as many working class whites felt that their livelihoods were threatened by the Chinese. By the late 1860s, the gold had started to disappear, forcing male Chinese immigrants to seek work in the mines, on the railroads, agricultural labour, and manufacturing companies. Many employers viewed the Chinese favourably as they were hard working and prepared to work for less money, which further aggravated xenophobic fear of the Chinese amongst local workers. As a result, the Chinese moved from being objects of amused curiosity to 'targets of sarcasm, economic discrimination, legal harassment, and outright violence, sometimes ending in murder by lynch mobs'.¹⁴ Furthermore, the Chinese were easy scapegoats to demonize, as everything about them from their appearance, their language, to their food and habits, struck many locals as foreign and bizarre.

It was surely in the context of this discrimination and violence that musical versions of Bret Harte's 'Heathen Chinee' became so successful. In 1870 to 1871, F. Boote, Charles Towner, and Henry Tucker, were among the first composers to set the poem to music. The elaborate cover designs for these musical works focused on alienating the Chinese immigrant, as he was depicted being violently caught in the act of cheating at cards (Figs. 5.1 – 5.2). From a visual perspective, 'The Heathen Chinee' was marked as completely foreign to white Americans, with emphasis placed on his long *queue* and loose silk

¹⁴ Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 123.

garments.¹⁵ According to Sean Metzger 'this long braid appears more than any other signifier in various nineteenth-century visual portrayals of Chinese immigrants' and that 'its ubiquity in print media meant that it would have been easy for urban audiences to recognize it as a signifier for Chineseness'.¹⁶ Furthermore, the *queue* was picked upon by the media in order to portray Chinese men as 'less than manly', suggesting not only his effeminacy, but also his primitiveness and inferiority to the American and white masculine male.

¹⁵ The *queue* was a specific male hairstyle worn by the Manchus from central Manchuria and was later imposed on the Han Chinese during the Qing dynasty. The hairstyle consisted of the hair on the front of the head being shaved off above the temples, and the rest of the hair was braided into a long ponytail.

¹⁶ Sean Metzger, 'Charles Parsloe's Chinese Fetish: An Example of Yellowface Performance in Nineteenth-Century American Melodrama', *Theatre Journal* 56/4 (2004), 635.



Figure 5.1: (Left) 'The Heathen Chinee', music written by F. Boote (Boston: Oliver Ditson & Co, 1870). Courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Special Collections, Johns Hopkins University.

Figure 5.2: (Right) 'The Heathen Chinee', music written by Charles Towner (Cleveland: S. Brainard's Sons, 1870). Courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Special Collections, Johns Hopkins University.

'The Heathen Chinee' highlights a decisive shift from representations in Western art music that romanticized Chinese men as noble emperors or imperial wise scholars, to representations based on the reality and anxiety posed by Chinese male immigrants. As Bret Harte has mentioned, 'The Heathen Chinee' was written in order to encapsulate his memories of the tough gold-mining camps in which he had lived in the 1850s and 1860s.¹⁷ These scattered mining camps solely comprised males, and resulted in a lively Chinese bachelor culture at

¹⁷ Cited in William Purviance Fenn, *Ah Sin and His Brethren in American Literature* (College of Chinese Studies cooperating with California College in China, 1933), xiv, n.15; in Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 126.

night. Entertainment on these lonely expeditions comprised of music-making, cooking, eating, and gambling. In fact gambling, the very subject of Harte's poem, was possibly the greatest Chinese vice in the American West.¹⁸ 'The Heathen Chinee' begins boldly and mysteriously, immediately setting the scene of a gambling session (Fig. 5.3).

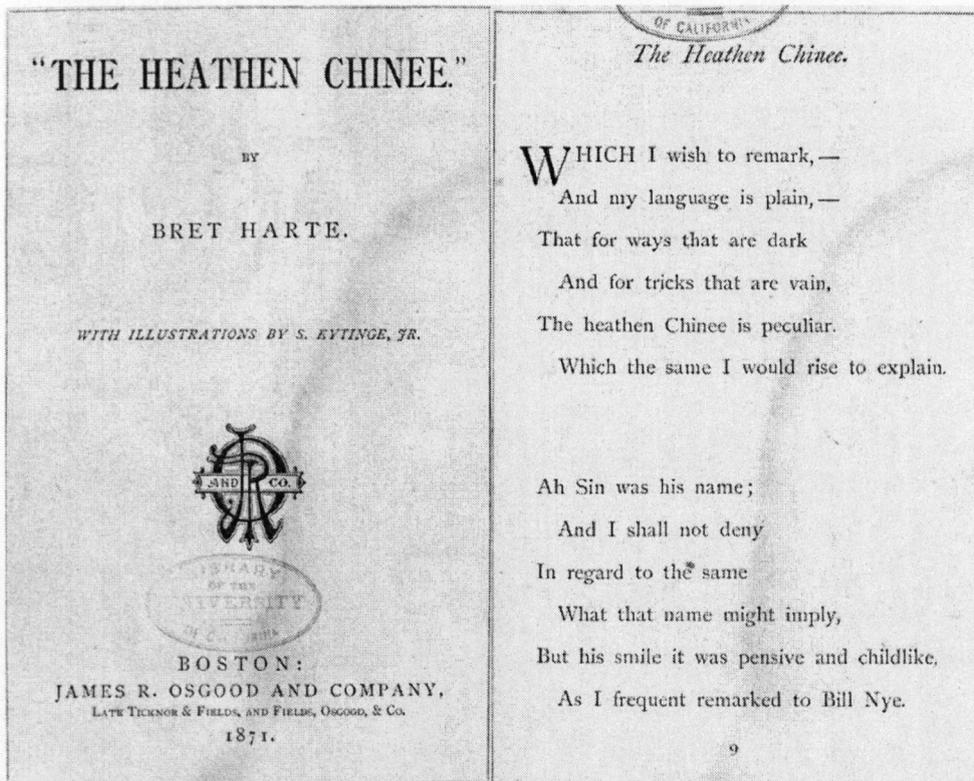


Figure 5.3: *The Heathen Chinee*, written by Bret Harte (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1871). Courtesy of the California Digital Library.

¹⁸ Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America: A Narrative History* (New York: Viking, 2003), 41.



WHICH WE HAD A SMALL GAME.



TILL AT LAST HE PUT DOWN A RIGHT BOWER.

The Heathen Chineec.

It was August the third ;
 And quite soft was the skies ;
 Which it might be inferred
 That Ah Sin was likewise ;
 Yet he played it that day upon William
 And me in a way I despise.

Which we had a small game,
 And Ah Sin took a hand :
 It was Euchre. The same
 He did not understand ;
 But he smiled as he sat by the table,
 With the smile that was childlike and bland.

11

The Heathen Chineec.

Yet the cards they were stocked
 In a way that I grieve,
 And my feelings were shocked
 At the state of Nye's sleeve :
 Which was stuffed full of aces and bowers,
 And the same with intent to deceive.

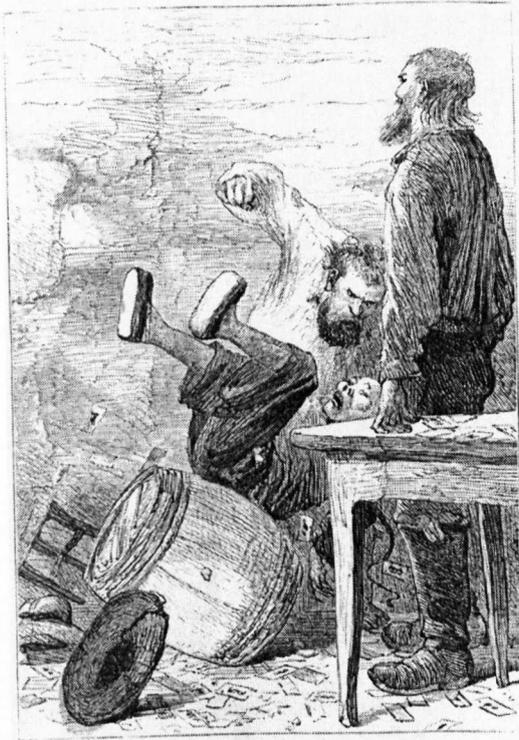
But the hands that were played
 By that heathen Chineec,
 And the points that he made,
 Were quite frightful to see, —
 Till at last he put down a right bower,
 Which the same Nye had dealt unto me.

13

Figure 5.3 continued...



AND HE WENT FOR THAT HEATHEN CHINEE.



THE SCENE THAT ENSUES.

The Heathen Chinee.

Then I looked up at Nye,
 And he gazed upon me ;
 And he rose with a sigh,
 And said, " Can this be ?
 We are ruined by Chinese cheap labor," —
 And he went for that heathen Chinee.

In the scene that ensued
 I did not take a hand,
 But the floor it was strewed
 Like the leaves on the strand
 With the cards that Ah Sin had been hiding,
 In the game " he did not understand."

15

The Heathen Chinee.

In his sleeves, which were long,
 He had twenty-four packs, —
 Which was coming it strong,
 Yet I state but the facts ;
 And we found on his nails, which were taper,
 What is frequent in tapers, — that 's wax.

Which is why I remark,
 And my language is plain,
 That for ways that are dark,
 And for tricks that are vain,
 The heathen Chinee is peculiar, —
 Which the same I am free to maintain.

17

Figure 5.3 continued...

Bret Harte insisted that he had written the poem 'with a satirical political purpose'.¹⁹ Margaret Duckett emphasises that placed in the context of Bret Harte's life and other writings, 'The Heathen Chinee' can have but one interpretation: 'It is a satiric attack on race prejudice'.²⁰ Indeed, the poem does seem to show the similarities between Irish and Chinese immigrants as they both cheat at cards. If the poem had an ideology, Jonathan Spence suggests that it was surely to attack the cupidity and greed of white miners, with their swiftness to take offence at other races who might emulate their own uncouth ways.²¹ More convincingly, perhaps the point was that Ah Sin, with his smile that was 'pensive, childlike, and bland' and who appeared not to understand the game was in fact much better at cheating than the Irish. Whatever Harte's motivation, however, it had no necessary relationship to the cultural work the poem actually performed. Many a xenophobic reader viewed 'The Heathen Chinee' as a satire not of the more 'familiar' Irish card sharks but of the 'foreign' and peculiar heathen Chinee.

So how did music serve to represent the subject matter of this poem?

Henry Tucker's version of the 'Heathen Chinee' (1871) was rather

¹⁹ Henry J. W. Dam, 'A Morning with Bret Harte', *McClure's*, 4 (December 1894), 43. See also Charles A. Murdock, *A Backward Glance at Eighty: Recollections and Comment* (San Francisco: Paul Elder, 1921), 86. Harte also featured Ah Sin in a subsequent satire of anti-Chinese prejudice, 'The Latest Chinese Outrage', first published in *Spirit of the Times*, 2 February 1878, 705; in Gary Scharnhorst, 'Ways That Are Dark': Appropriations of Bret Harte's 'Plain Language from Truthful James,' *Nineteenth Century Literature* 51/3 (1996): 379.

²⁰ Margaret Duckett, 'Plain Language from Bret Harte', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 11/4 (1957), 242.

²¹ Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 128.

simple, consisting of only three chords. It was written in a familiar western diatonic style that was popular and memorable, and could quite easily have been set to lyrics solely concerning the Irish immigrants instead (Ex. 5.1).

THE HEATHEN CHINEE.

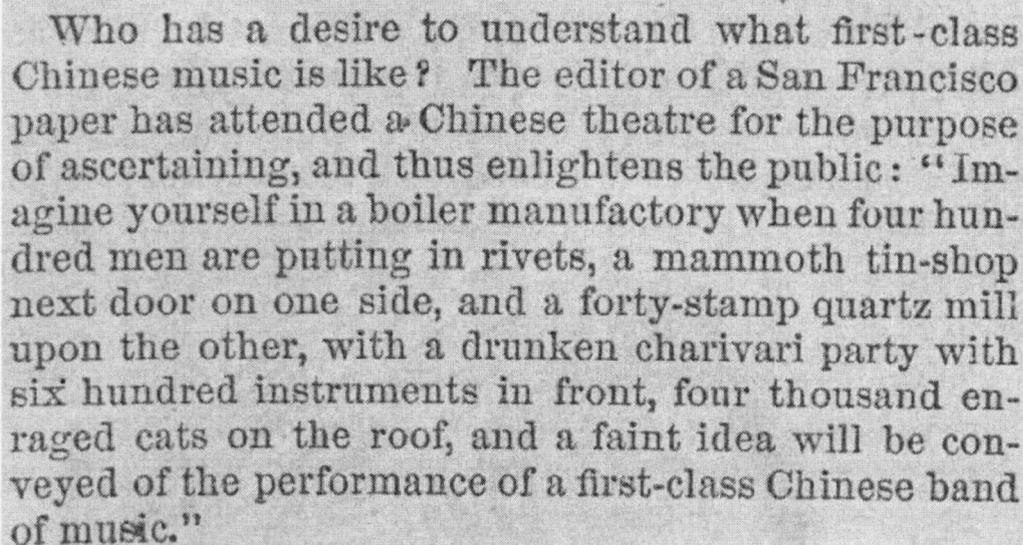
Words by **BRET HARTE.** Music by **HENRY TUCKER.**

The Heathen Chinee.—I.
Entered according to Act of Congress, A.D. 1871, by **ROBERT M. DEWITT**, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

Example 5.1: 'The Heathen Chinee', music written by Henry Tucker (New York: Robert M. DeWitt, 1871). Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. [fM1619.H4 1871].

F. Boote's and Charles Towner's versions, however, were exceptional in that they were among the first attempts to relate Chinese immigrants to well established 'Orientalist' signifiers prevalent in European art

music. Charles Towner's overture to his version of 'The Heathen Chinee' (1870) demarcates Chinese difference by creating an exotic percussive soundscape, as drone-like open fifths in the bass are indicated on the score to be representative of the gong. This distinctively rigid and repeated drone in 6/8 metre underlines a melody that opens with a bugle-like motif that immediately draws in the listener; on the score this is indicated to be represented by or to be played by the trumpet (Ex. 5.2). By adopting a minor key and an obvious percussive interpretation, Charles Towner produced a musical soundscape that was perceived to be noisy and slightly unusual. His portrayal of Chinese music as 'noise' reflects the views of many writers and journalists of the time, who dismissed Chinese music as being raucous, percussive, unbearable, and primitive (Fig. 5.4).



Who has a desire to understand what first-class Chinese music is like? The editor of a San Francisco paper has attended a Chinese theatre for the purpose of ascertaining, and thus enlightens the public: "Imagine yourself in a boiler manufactory when four hundred men are putting in rivets, a mammoth tin-shop next door on one side, and a forty-stamp quartz mill upon the other, with a drunken charivari party with six hundred instruments in front, four thousand enraged cats on the roof, and a faint idea will be conveyed of the performance of a first-class Chinese band of music."

Figure 5.4: 'Home and Foreign Gossip' from *Harper's Weekly*, Vol. 13 (1869). Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. [MTP/HW: Vol. 13:715].

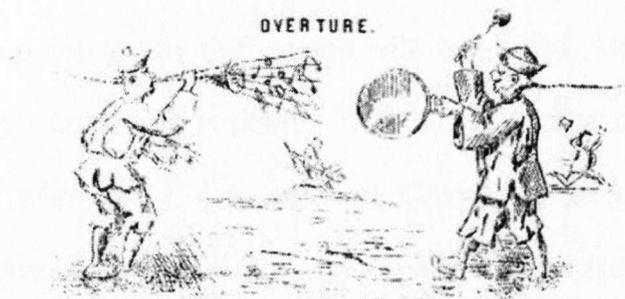
This description of Chinese music was most likely to be of Chinese opera, which provided entertainment for lonely Chinese bachelors, whilst also showcasing Chinese culture to curious white onlookers. In contrast to European opera, which commanded a silent and reverential attention from the audience, Chinese opera performers had to overcome a din of conversation and often resorted to the production of clamorous effects to gain the audience's attention.²² Crucial moments were emphasized with crashes of gongs and cymbals, alerting the audience to the action with thunderous noise.²³ Such 'thunderous noise' was perhaps the musical aesthetic Charles Towner was aiming for in his depiction of the peculiar 'Heathen Chinee'. The accompanying picture on the musical score where one Chinese man is blasting out sound on a brass instrument, and another is striking the gong, certainly depicts a 'noisy' scene, which appears to scare away the American passersby (Ex. 5.2).

²² Mina Yang, 'Orientalism and the Music of Asian Immigrant Communities in California, 1924-1945', *American Music* 19/4 (2001), 392. This article focuses on the history of Chinese opera in America.

²³ See Colin Mackerras, *The Chinese Theatre in Modern Times: From 1840 to the Present Day* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975) and Bell Yung, *Cantonese Opera: Performance as Creative Process* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

THE HEATHEN CHINEE.

OVERTURE.



Words by **BRET HARTE**

Music by **CHARLES TOWNER.**

P I A N O

Ill. 3. Charles Towner and Bret Harte's "The Heathen Chinee" (1870). Courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Special Collections, Johns Hopkins University.

Example 5.2: 'The Heathen Chinee', music written by Charles Towner (Cleveland: S. Brainard's Sons, 1870). Courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Special Collections, Johns Hopkins University.

F. Bootes's version of 'The Heathen Chinee' (1870) showcases an alternative approach to signify Chinese Otherness in music. Rather than creating a blatant percussive soundscape, Chinese otherness was denoted through the use of a little syncopation, chromaticism, and more adventurous melodic and rhythmic deviation from the norm.²⁴ The

²⁴ This was not an imitation of Chinese music, but rather a representation that used 'othering' musical devices which were well established in European art music and blackface minstrelsy music. Blackface minstrelsy had greatly influenced many of these songwriters, as they turned to this tradition and its denigration of African Americans and European immigrants for inspiration. Performers, influenced by blackface minstrelsy, were well aware of the lyrical and musical devices as well as those of gesture, costuming, and makeup that could be used to mark Chinese immigrants as inferior (eg, Yellowed-up actors). See Krystyn R. Moon, *Yellowface: Creating the*

mysterious nature of the poem, and the narrator's bewilderment at the peculiarity of Ah Sin is musically reflected in the tentative and disjointed melodic line in a minor key that opens with the lyrics, 'Which I wish to remark / And my language is plain / That for ways that are dark / And for tricks that are vain / The heathen Chinee is peculiar'. Another noticeable device used to depict the otherness of 'The Heathen Chinee' occurs in the piano interlude at bars 14-16 (Ex.5.3). Using Ralph Locke's comprehensive table of exotic devices, the following point can be applied to this fleeting piano interlude: 'quick ornaments that are used somewhat obtrusively or over-predictably as decorative encrustation – perhaps a jangling disturbance, rather than as organically integrated design'.²⁵ This brief interjection of 'decorative encrustation' made up of rapidly repeated semiquavers therefore serves to reinforce the foreign soundscape. Parallels can be drawn to the instrumental effects of 'percussive jangling' in the well established use of musical turquerie in Western art music, as discussed in previous chapters.

Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 31.

²⁵ Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 53.

THE HEATHEN CHINEE.

Words by BRET HARTE.

Allegretto.

VOICE

PIANO

mf

1. Which I
3. It was

wish to remark - And my language is plain - That for ways that are dark And for
Au - gust the third; And quite soft was the skies: Which it might be in - fer'd that Ah

tricks that are vain, The hea - then Chinee is pe - cu - li - ar, Which he
Sin was likewise: Yet he play'd it that day upon Will - i - am And

rall. *fa tempo* *rall.* *a tempo*

some I would rise to ex - plai - n.
me in a way I de - spi - se.

mf

2. Ah Sin was his name; And I
4. Which we had a small game, And Ah

Example 5.3: 'The Heathen Chinee', music written by F. Boote (Boston: Oliver Ditson & Co, 1870). Courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Special Collections, Johns Hopkins University.

F.Boote's and Henry Tucker's 'Heathen Chinee' was one of the earliest and most successful songs that re-configured the stereotype of the Chinese male in music. In departing from the tradition of at least a century of European art composers and their tendency towards musical representations of Chinese heroic emperors and imperial scholars, these songwriters were amongst the first to contribute to the early creation of an aural stereotype or caricature for the Chinese male immigrants in America. Contrary to Harte's intention to satirize anti-Chinese prejudice, 'The Heathen Chinee' was the catalyst that sparked numerous anti-Chinese songs in the following decade. For example, the 'Heathen Chinee' was also set to music by Luke Schoolcraft in 1873, Sam Devene in 1876, and John McVeigh in 1881. Other songs concerned with the impact of Chinese immigration began to appear with titles such as 'Nigger-vs-Chinese' (1870), 'The Chinese Coolie' (1871), and 'Twelve Hundred More' (1871). The circulation and popularity of such songs upon the general public was only to strengthen the stereotype. For better or worse, Harte 'more than any other writer at the time shaped the popular conception of the Chinese'.²⁶ Townsend and F. Boote's musical versions, consciously or otherwise, helped circulate these ideas about the Chinese as a peculiar and inferior race, and reveal how music provided a venue for addressing and negotiating strong anti-Chinese sentiments. These songs exhibit the beginnings of

²⁶ Jeffrey D Mason, *Melodrama and the Myth of America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 150.

part of a wider process of creating and defining national identity in American popular music.

Musical Tourism in Chinatown (1900-1920)

After the Gold Rush and completion of the railroad, Chinese immigrants began to congregate in urban communities, which became known as Chinatowns. In these small and often crowded quarters, the Chinese built temples and public halls, established stores and businesses, and opened restaurants and wash houses. They retained their native customs and formed a nation within a nation; a tendency characteristic of all native groups in America.²⁷ Life in Chinatown was bustling, noisy, and colourful. A typical street included signs advertising fortune tellers, barber shops, butcher shops, and doctor's clinics. Inside a typical Chinatown store were scrolls hanging on the walls with quotations from the classics and famous poets.²⁸ But there was a dark side to these Chinatowns, as the low economic prospects of Chinese immigrants gave rise to narrow streets and alleys with shabby apartments, dens for opium smoking, gambling joints, and brothels. Whilst Chinatown's lurid reputation may have scared some Americans away, it also proved to be

²⁷ Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *The Chinese Experience in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 34-35.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

alluring for many others, and over time the district transformed 'from vice district to tourist attraction'.²⁹

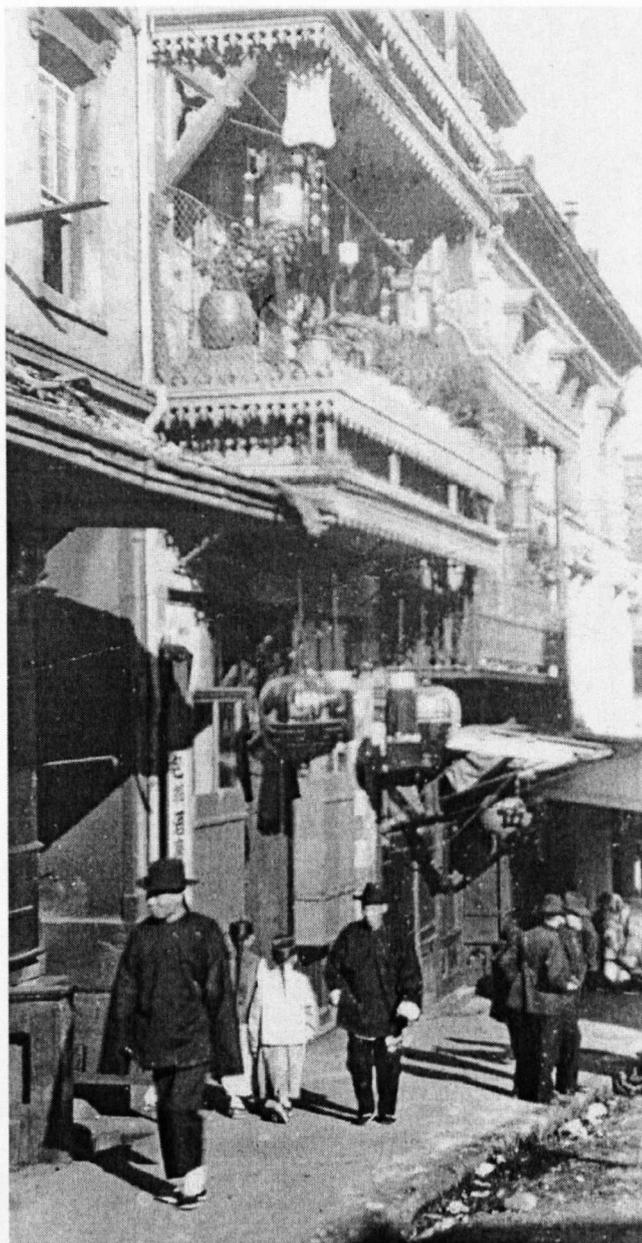


Figure 5.5: 'The Street of the Painted Balconies': From San Francisco Chinatown (1895-1906). Photo taken by Arnold Genthe. Courtesy of the California Historical Society, California [5: FN 2300].

²⁹ See Ivan Light, 'From Vice District to Tourist Attraction: The Moral Career of American Chinatowns, 1880-1940', *Pacific Historical Review* 43/3 (1974): 367-94.

The photographer, Arnold Genthe, was best known for his extensive photo collection of San Francisco's Chinatown. His 1913 book entitled *Old Chinatown: A Book of Pictures* provides a first-hand account of the tourism industry (Fig. 5.6).³⁰

POSTSCRIPT



DEAR WILL IRWIN: It was the evening before my departure from San Francisco, just about a year ago. I had strolled down to Chinatown for a last visit. In the glare of blazing shop fronts, in the noise of chugging automobiles carrying sightseers, I again, as so many times before, found myself trying to see the old mellowness of dimly-lit alleys, the mystery of shadowy figures shuffling along silently. I was interrupted by the officious voice of a guide: "Show you all the sights of Chineetown, Sir! Opium-dens, slave-girls, jewelry-shops, joss-houses, everything." The idea of seeing Chinatown for once as an average tourist appealed to me. I followed the guide.

Figure 5.6: Arnold Genthe, *Old Chinatown: A Book of Pictures* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1913), 205.

There is a sense in Genthe's description of an inherited, even nostalgic order of things. A tourist's expectations were to be flattered, tour guides therefore sought to profit by providing sightseers with what they wanted and expected to see – a Chinatown filled with scenes that affirmed a

³⁰ Arnold Genthe, *Old Chinatown: A Book of Pictures* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1913).

sense of cultural difference.³¹ At the turn of the century, a national rise in tourism accompanied the emergence of American Chinatowns as attractive destinations for middle to upper-class white Americans, who began to visit these districts in search of vicarious thrills where danger and forbidden pleasures abounded.³² According to Krystyn R. Moon, 'Chinatown became both a physical and an imaginative space for the many whites to try new things'.³³ White American tour guides and even Chinese residents,³⁴ eager to cash in on this lucrative business, pandered to this desire and 'spun tales of a secret, labyrinth world under Chinatown, filled with narcotics, gambling halls, and brothels, where beautiful slave girls, both Chinese and white, were kept in bondage'.³⁵

³¹ For more information, see Catherine Cocks, *Doing the Town: The Rise of Urban Tourism in the United States, 1850-1915* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

³² Charles Hiroshi-Garret, 'Chinatown, Whose Chinatown? Defining America's Borders with Musical Orientalism', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57/1 (2004), 128.

³³ Krystyn R. Moon, *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s-1920s* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 21.

³⁴ Chinese tour guides claimed to show a more 'authentic' China, and readily used established stereotypes to their own economic advantage. They ushered gaping tourists into fake opium dens and paid Chinese residents to stage elaborate street dramas; a popular show was a knife wielding scuffle between opium crazed Chinese in dispute over a slave girl. Arif Dirlik suggests that the Chinese were able to construct themselves, accurately or otherwise, in a manner intended to advance their own interests. They viewed self-description for an overseas audience as a beneficial way to increase exports, improve relations with other nations, or refute damaging stereotypes. Serving as tour guides and translators, executing paintings of Chinese life, acting as cultural interpreters, and even working as collecting agents by traversing their own country in search of artifacts – Dirlik claims that the Chinese exerted real control over their own representation in the United States and, in doing so, often provided a countervailing force that could hold anti-Chinese sentiment somewhat in check. See Arif Dirlik, 'Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism', *History and Theory* 35/4 (December 1996): 96-118.

³⁵ Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America: A Narrative History* (New York: Viking, 2003), 204.

Aware of the growing tourist interest in Chinatown, Tin Pan Alley songwriters began to use this location as a subject for musical representation. 'Chinatown, My Chinatown' (1910) was one of the first and most popular songs to focus on this place, and premiered in New York Casino's Theatre as part of Edgar Smith's musical comedy *Up and Down Broadway* (1910). 'Chinatown, My Chinatown' (by Jerome and Schwartz) can be likened to a kind of musical tour of Chinatown, as the lyricist positions the narrator in the third person – an outsider (tourist) who is a 'stranger taking in the sights'.

Verse 1

When the town is fast asleep
And it's midnight in the sky
That's the time the festive chink
Starts to wink his other eye
Starts to wink his dreamy eye
Lazily you'll hear him sight

Verse 2

Strangers taking in the sights
Pigtails flying here and there
See that broken Wall Street sport
Still thinks he's a millionaire
Still thinks he's a millionaire
Pipe dreams banish every care

Chorus

Chinatown, my Chinatown
Where the lights are low
Hearts that know no other land
Drifting to and fro

Dreamy dreamy Chinatown
Almond eyes of brown
Hearts seem light and life seems bright
In dreamy Chinatown

Jerome's lyrics convey a sentimentalized Chinatown that comes alive at night when 'it's midnight in the sky' and the 'lights are low'. Chinese difference is observed comically, as Chinese men with their traditional long *queues* are described with 'pigtailed flying here and there'. 'Almond eyes of brown' are mysterious and perhaps seductive in the context of a 'Dreamy dreamy Chinatown'. This 'dreamy' Chinatown is suggestive of the euphoric effect of opium which 'banishes every care' of not only the 'festive chink', but also the 'broken Wall street sport'. Chinatown is appropriated as both sight (of difference) and site (of dangerous desire).

Jerome and Schwartz constructed in their own minds a boundary between 'their' territory and 'our' territory. In his important discussion of 'imaginative geographies' such as Europe's 'Orient', Edward Said argued that this distinction is one that 'helps the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close and what is far away'.³⁶ In popular music, this process of dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close and what is far away is achieved through the blatant juxtaposition of foreign and familiar soundscapes.

³⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 55.

To initiate the exotic locale of Chinatown through music, well-established Chinese musical clichés were used right at the beginning. By 1910, these were widely circulated in silent films, stage musicals, and western art music. The introduction to 'Chinatown, My Chinatown' provides an example of one of the most frequently used and recognisable Chinese musical clichés; a well known Chinese musical signifier that has been used by popular music composers from around 1900 right up to the twenty-first century (Ex. 5.4).³⁷ The main components of this Chinese signifier are used by Schwartz and identified as rhythmic motif x, which consists of four semiquavers (usually played on the same note), followed by two quavers (Ex. 5.5).³⁸ Most likely derived from the percussive nature associated with musical chinoiserie, rhythmic motif x is decorative, jangling, and persistently occurs throughout the piece. Songwriters were fully aware of its associations with China and the Orient in general, and used such musical signifiers intentionally, as listeners, through culturally learned recognition, were instantly able to decode these sounds as exotic. Following the introduction, the verses continue to accentuate Chinese difference by employing a typical combination of devices associated

³⁷ The Chinese riff is a musical riff or phrase that has often been used as a trope or stereotype to represent the idea of the Orient, China, Japan, or a generic East Asian theme by Western culture. The riff has been widely used in popular music, television, and movies since the turn of the twentieth century and its origins are unknown.

³⁸ This rhythmic motif is also a prominent feature in the introduction of 'In Blinky Winky Chinky Chinatown' (1915), which was written to follow up the success of the original.

with China: parallel fourths and fifths, repeated semi-quavers, rhythmic motif x, and pentatonicism (Ex. 5.5).



Example 5.4: Chinese Riff

Rhythmic motif x

Chinatown, My Chinatown

Words by
WILLIAM JEROME

Music by
JEAN SCHWARTZ

Allegro Moderato

PIANO

VOICE

When the town is fast a - sleep, And it's
Strang - ers ta - king in the sights, Pig - tails

mid - night in the sky, That's the time the fes - tivo -
fly - ing here and there; See that brok - en Wall Street

Chink Starts to wink his oth - er eye,
sport Still thinks he's a mil - lion - aire,

Example 5.5: 'Chinatown, My Chinatown', music written by Jean Schwartz (New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co, 1910). Courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Special Collections, Johns Hopkins University.

The 'foreign' sounds of the introduction and verses demonstrate how Chinese representation in music inevitably resists familiarity to a certain degree. However, just as inevitably, the chorus reveals how the

Chinese subject cannot be totally 'foreign'. This 'foreign' soundscape is, in other words, never complete. Rather, the Chinese subject is ultimately (even if only provisionally) assimilated in the 'familiar' soundscape it begins by challenging (Ex. 5.6).

It can be considered that the chorus focuses on the euphoric effects of opium as the lyrics suggest a 'Dreamy dreamy Chinatown'. Opium smoking was commonplace in the underground world of Chinatown which was 'rumoured to be a vast labyrinth of opium dens, gambling halls, criminal hideouts, and slave quarters that extended four or more storey's below ground'.³⁹ To the thrill seekers and tourists, opium represented 'the habitual surrender of reason and clarity, the happy acceptance of physical and psychological escape without fear or guilt, the impassive, even pleasurable, way of confronting urban change and social disruption with a waking indolence'.⁴⁰ To the health experts and American Christian missionaries, opium was declared to be a vicarious and addictive evil. However, it was precisely this danger and allure of forbidden pleasures that attracted songwriters to use opium as a main focus. The euphoric, dreamlike state induced by opium was often used in the chorus of popular songs to create 'a fantasy world so that audiences could vicariously experience the sensations of feelings it

³⁹ Raymond W. Rast, 'The Cultural Politics of Tourism in San Francisco's Chinatown, 1882-1917', *Pacific Historical Review* 76/1 (2007), 46.

⁴⁰ Anthony W. Lee, 'In the Opium Den', *Modern Language Association* 125/1 (2010), 175.

produced'.⁴¹ These euphoric sensations were musically expressed as pleasurable and sensuous.

To express the pleasurable and euphoric effects of opium, the chorus completely abandons the Chinese musical signifiers used in the introduction and verses, and is replaced with a familiar Western diatonic harmonization (Ex. 5.6). The general soundscape becomes much more flowing and conjunct, especially with the omission of the jangling and percussive sound of rhythmic motif x. At this point in the narrative, the chorus portrays an idealistic state of euphoric bliss where 'hearts that know no other state' are 'drifting to and fro' in 'Dreamy Chinatown'. Why then, is all musical chinoiserie stripped? On the one hand, the choice to bypass stereotypically Chinese-sounding music reflects the need to provide the Western listener and performer with a preliminary set of aural references to define 'who they were and were not'.⁴² The opium induced dream-laden chorus serves as a point of reference (familiarity) that highlights the peculiarity of the 'Chinese' music surrounding it. Retreating to a 'conservative appeal to the predictable and universally understood',⁴³ provides a point of cultural self-reference, that also allows audiences to 'engage with the heart' at idealistic

⁴¹ Krystyn R. Moon, *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s-1920s* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 121-122.

⁴² John Kuo-Wei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), xvi.

⁴³ Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Milton Keynes, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1990), 37.

moments in the narrative. On the other hand, this shift to a western diatonic idiom may also reflect Schwartz's strategy of conveying the song's touristic narrative – the singer is essentially a tourist – an outsider 'looking in', and this retreat to a safe, familiar and ultimately knowable soundscape reassures listeners that this is just a 'visit' to Chinatown.

CHORUS.

Chi - na - town, my Chi - na - town, Where the

lights are low, Hearts that know no

oth - er land, Drift - ing to and fro,

Dream - y, dream - y Chi - na - town, Al - mond eyes of

Example 5.6: The chorus of 'Chinatown, My Chinatown', music written by Jean Schwartz (New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co, 1910). Courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Special Collections, Johns Hopkins University.

Another musical representation of tourism in Chinatown is George Gershwin's popular song 'Limehouse Nights' (1919). In this song, Gershwin and his lyricists embraced a more dangerous, depraved, and

intoxicating vision of Chinatown by locating the song overseas in London's closest thing to a Chinatown – the Limehouse district. By doing so, Gershwin was at liberty to convey the sinful pleasures of opium, forbidden romance, and shocking realism, whilst also blunting the sense that he was perhaps commenting on his own society. The conception of this hugely successful song can be traced back to British author Thomas Burke's short story 'The Chink and the Child' from his 1917 collection *Limehouse Nights*.⁴⁴ The film director D. W. Griffith paid one thousand pounds for the film rights to Burke's story, and it is largely due to Hollywood that London's Limehouse district made so profound an impression on the twentieth-century imagination. London's fog-bound dockside streets, the lurid opium dens and gambling parlours, home to Thomas Burke's displaced Chinamen and Cockney waifs, are vividly realised in Griffith's silent film 'The Chink and the Child', which he sentimentally re-named *Broken Blossoms* (1919).

The dark chinoiserie of Thomas Burke's 'Limehouse Nights' and the subsequent Hollywood film version, was partly influenced by the British novelist Sax Rohmer and his popular *Fu Manchu* novels. In these stories, London's Chinatown was home to the secret headquarters of Dr. Fu Manchu, 'the stereotypical mysterious, threatening and

⁴⁴ Thomas Burke (1886 – 1945) was a British author, and was born in Eltham, London. *Limehouse Nights* (1916) was his first successful publication which consisted of a collection of stories focused around life in the poverty-stricken Limehouse district of London. The Chinese character Quong Lee is often featured as the narrator in these stories. 'The Lamplit Hour', an incidental poem from *Limehouse Nights*, was set to music by the American songwriter Arthur Penn in 1919. That same year, American film director D. W. Griffith used another tale from the collection, 'The Chink and the Child' as the basis of his screenplay for the movie *Broken Blossoms*.

unknowable Oriental master-villain' plotting world domination.⁴⁵ Many of Sax Rohmer's books published between 1915 and 1920 also dealt with drug smuggling and the dangerous oriental presence in the London docks.⁴⁶ However, whilst Sax Rohmer reinforced the ideology of separating 'us' from 'them' with his construction of the unremittingly evil Chinaman Fu Manchu, Thomas Burke's *Limehouse Nights* was formative in establishing the romantic allure and 'queer spell' that the very mention of Limehouse came to exert on the public imagination during the inter-war years. A much admired and popular author in his day, Burke seems remarkable now for the complex and contradictory ways in which he upset social orthodoxies. Rohmer's writing was a straightforward exploitation of contemporary anxieties, Burke, however, wrote tales of love between Chinese men and British girls.

Limehouse Nights is based on the idealistic Chinese protagonist, Cheung Huan, who travels to London in the hope of spreading Buddha's message of peace and love to the war-torn west. However, he ends up in London only to find intense loneliness, spending his days smoking opium in London's squalid Limehouse district. His neighbour, a white girl named Lucy comes to his attention, as he can see and hear

⁴⁵ Jenny Clegg, *Fu Manchu and the Yellow Peril: The Making of a Racist Myth* (Staffordshire: Trentham Books Limited, 1994). See also Urmila Seshagiri, 'Modernity's (Yellow) Perils: Dr. Fu-Manchu and English Race Paranoia', *Cultural Critique* 62 (2006): 162-94.

⁴⁶ Many other writers were inspired by the Chinese character Fu Manchu. For example, Edgar Wallace's novel *The Yellow Snake* (1926) involved Fu Manchu and an evil underground Chinese network based in London. Agatha Christie's *The Big Four* (1927) involved Hercule Poirot battling with Fu Manchu; at one point his assistant, Hastings, was imprisoned in a Limehouse opium den. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the threat of Fu Manchu and his numerous oriental clones was recycled in comic books, magazine stories, radio shows, and several Hollywood film adaptations and imitations.

her suffering horrific abuse at the hands of her alcoholic father. In danger of death, Cheung Huan gives her shelter, warmth and food. He also clothes her in Chinese dress and surrounds her with luxurious Chinese commodities. A strange and beautiful love blossoms between them, but it is too fragile to survive the notoriously violent and depraved Limehouse district. When Lucy's father discovers that she has taken refuge with a 'chink', he breaks his way into Cheung's room and beats her to death. In his despair, Cheung shoots Lucy's father, and then after reverently laying out Lucy's dead body, stabs himself to death.

One of *Limehouse Nights*' most direct challenges to convention was the positive outcome of a mixed race love affair which, according to the moral code of the time and as its narrator acknowledges, 'ought to have ended in disaster for both of them'.⁴⁷ According to Anne Witchard, Thomas Burke caused outrage by his misappropriation of the underworld of establishment concerns:

In *Limehouse Nights*, the most English of institutions are undermined. Young Cockney girls eat Chow Mein with chopsticks in the local caffs, blithely gamble their house-keeping money at Fan Tan and Puck-a-Pu, burn joss sticks in their bedrooms and painstakingly prepare opium pipes in the corner pub. The book's blend of shocking realism with lyrical romance flew in the face of consensual thought and social taboo and it played a significant part in the national hysteria which peaked in

⁴⁷ Thomas Burke, *Limehouse Nights* (London: Daily Express Fiction Library edition, 1916), 45.

the late 1920s with press appeals to the Home Office to 'do something' about 'unhappy white girls fascinated by the yellow man'.⁴⁸

It was the startling lack of moral censure in *Limehouse Nights* regarding doping and worse, miscegenation, that caused outrage. The book was banned by the circulating libraries, which contributed towards its notoriety both in Britain and in the United States, leading to increased sales. In Britain, 'you were utterly behind the times if you were not intimately acquainted with Burke's stories of Limehouse'.⁴⁹ According to Witchard 'after *Limehouse Nights*, an omnibus ticket from Ludgate Circus to "Limey-housey Causey-way" was symbolic to the suggestible of all manner of disreputable pleasures'.⁵⁰

These disreputable pleasures are explored in Gershwin's musical version of 'Limehouse Nights', and are quite different from the previous examples set in America. The lyrics emphasise a Chinatown that offered a 'rich shabbiness', for the gritty London slums offered the promise of a 'captivating rendezvous'. The verses sentimentalize a downtrodden Limehouse district, which despite being a place where opium makes 'women quickly fade', was 'wonderful the whole world through'.

⁴⁸ Anne Witchard, 'Aspects of Literary Limehouse: Thomas Burke and the "Glamorous Shame" of Chinatown', *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London* 2/2 (2004), 8.

⁴⁹ Karl Brown, *Adventures with D.W. Griffith* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), 224.

⁵⁰ Anne Witchard, 'A Threepenny Omnibus Ticket to Limeyhousey Causeyway: Fictional Sojourns in Chinatown', *Comparative Critical Studies* (October 2007): 228.

Verse 1

London town is full of wonderful sights
Charming days and dark mysterious nights
But in the London slums,
Just as the twilight comes –
There is a captivating rendezvous

Verse 2

It is known as Limehouse everywhere
Dreamers go to seek forgetfulness there
Its women quickly fade –
Its worthless men have made –
Limehouse nights,
Wonderful the whole world through.

To introduce the ominous atmosphere of London's Limehouse district, Gershwin simply makes use of the popular Chinese cliché (identified as rhythmic motif x) which instigates a march-like D minor ostinato on an open fifth (Ex. 5.7). The verses are saturated in Chinese musical gestures; the most prominent is the piano accompaniment, which doubles the vocal melody with an added parallel fourth that runs until the second part of the verse. Rhythmic motif x and the open-fifth ostinato continue to be prominent features that reinforce the delicate and percussive Chinese soundscape. Gershwin also amplifies the foreignness of London's Chinatown with standard Tin Pan Alley techniques: on the word 'rendezvous', a chromatically inflected arabesque motif is sounded in the bass which draws attention to the

dangerous and forbidden allure of a 'captivating rendezvous' (Ex. 5.8).

Rhythmic motif x

Limehouse Nights 3

Words by
JOHN HENRY MEARS
and BUD DE SYLVA

Music by
GEO. GERSHWIN

Piano

Allegretto
mf

Example 5.7: 'Limehouse Nights', music written by George Gershwin (New York: T.B. Harms & Francis, 1920). Courtesy of the DeVincent Sheet Music Collection (Lilly Library), Indiana University Sheet Music Collections.

Lon - don town is full of won - der - ful eight -
 Charm - ing days and dark mys -
 - ter - i - ous nights — But in the
 Lon - don slums, — Just as the twi - light comes —
 There is a cap - ti - va - ting ren - dez - vous —

Example 5.8: First verse of 'Limehouse Nights', music written by George Gershwin (New York: T.B. Harms & Francis, 1920). Courtesy of the DeVincenzi Sheet Music Collection (Lilly Library), Indiana University Sheet Music Collections.

In a similar way to Schwartz's 'Chinatown, My Chinatown', the chorus of 'Limehouse Nights' adopts a safe, familiar, and ultimately knowable western diatonic soundscape. This shift to a more Western diatonic soundscape (and gearing towards the emotional climax of the song) is prepared for in the second half of the verse from the words 'But in the London slums...'. By the start of the chorus the melodic line becomes more fluid and lyrical, and the parallel fourths and pounding fifth ostinato bass (in the first half of the verse) is replaced by more conventional chordal harmonization (Ex. 5.9). Although a dash of jangly percussive motifs are thrown in to remind us of the exotic locale at the end of the phrase 'where hoppers glide to and fro', the general soundscape is markedly conventional compared to the verse. The placing and context of this shift to a western diatonic idiom, reveals not only the centrality of Western cultural perception, but also discloses the very essence of an instinctive moment of cultural reference. According to Gershwin, 'Making music is actually little else than a matter of invention aided and abetted by emotion. In composing we combine what we know of music with what we feel'.⁵¹ Gershwin's instinctive feeling to bypass clichéd Chinese musical signifiers is prompted by a narrative that moves from being merely descriptive of Chinatown, to being suggestive, alluring, and full of desire. Soft lights and 'the mystic spell' allow those from the world of care to be free – indicative of the effects of the dangerous and intoxicating drug opium. According to

⁵¹ See the introduction by George Gershwin; in Isaac Goldberg, *Tin Pan Alley: A Chronicle of American Popular Music* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., Inc., 1930), viii.

Witchard, 'opium was fast becoming a poetic cipher for Chineseness that encompassed the allure of the illicit, the mysterious and demonic East of De Quincey and the erotic languor of the *chinoiserie* dream of Cathay'.⁵²

⁵² Anne Witchard, 'Aspects of Literary Limehouse: Thomas Burke and the "Glamorous Shame" of Chinatown', *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London* 2/2 (2004), 133.

Refrain

p-f

Lime house Nights

p-f *R.H.*

where the hop-pies glide to and

fro, Lime house

R.H.

Nights 'neath the lan-tern lights soft-ly

glow - - ing, Ma - ny peo - ple dwell with - in its

Example 5.9: Chorus of 'Limehouse Nights', music written by George Gershwin (New York: T.B. Harms & Francis, 1920). Courtesy of the DeVincent Sheet Music Collection (Lilly Library), Indiana University Sheet Music Collections.

Composers of these popular songs were in effect tourists themselves, or 'outsiders looking in'. From their vantage point, Chinatown signified all those features that seemed to set the Chinese irrevocably apart, from their appearance and strange eating habits, to their penchant for opium smoking and gambling. As has been shown, Schwartz and Gershwin instinctively articulated these most basic differences by contrasting the 'foreign' musical chinoserie of the introduction and verses with a chorus that was conventional and 'familiar'. Philip Bohlman and Ronald Radano explain this in more detail:

The longstanding metaphysical properties associated with music enhance the imagination of racial difference: race contributes fundamentally to the issues of belonging and ownership that music articulates. At individual, group, and broader social levels alike, few deny that one type of music can be possessed and claimed as one's own, while there are other musics that belong to someone else. The music of this variously constructed Self is different from the music of the Other, therefore making it possible to articulate and even conceptualize the most basic differences through our musical choices.⁵³

By dramatizing the distance and difference between 'foreign' and 'familiar' sounds, these composers were also drawing a distinction between Chinatown and home soil, and between East and West. Their portrayal of Chinatown as a bounded quarter that contained the culture of the authentic 'other' and the allure of forbidden pleasures enabled

⁵³ Philip Bohlman and Ronald Radano, eds, *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 5.

white Americans to reimagine a sense of distance and affirm their own identity and privilege.

Kay Anderson suggests that Chinatown was a shared characterization – one constructed and distributed by and for white Americans, who, in selectively romanticizing desirable elements to be found in Chinatown, were also revealing their needs and desires.⁵⁴ One such need was a 'space' in which to imagine in sentimental and nostalgic terms in order to escape from the humdrum of daily life. Chinatown provided this space to escape, as it was a place located outside of a rapidly industrializing and cosmopolitan America. As Raymond Rast suggests, Chinatown represented a 'vital preserve of authentic, premodern culture, conveniently if curiously located amidst the swirl of modernity'.⁵⁵ Another need was a desire to be rebellious and anti-conformist; before tourism in Chinatown became heavily commodified, the first tourists were American bohemians who thrived on being worldly, liberated, open-minded, stylish, and artistic. This desire to completely indulge in sinful pleasures that would have shocked mainstream nineteenth-century American morals was immensely appealing as it promised excitement for the adventurous white American looking for new experiences. In a similar way, Schwartz and Gershwin also selectively focused on such romanticized sinful pleasures; the euphoric effects of

⁵⁴ Kay J. Anderson, 'The Idea of Chinatown: The Power of Place and Institutional Practice in the Making of a Racial Category', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77/4 (1987), 594.

⁵⁵ Raymond W Rast, 'The Cultural Politics of Tourism in San Francisco's Chinatown, 1882-1917', *Pacific Historical Review* 76/1 (2007), 39.

opium, the allure of forbidden romance, and the opportunity to be free from care, were positive sentiments reserved for the chorus and given emotional impact by being sounded in a familiar western diatonic idiom. Their choice to do this was perhaps human and instinctive, rather than deliberate. It was therefore not only an instinctive moment of cultural reference, but also tied into the human desire to emotionally relate to or convey to listeners such idealistic experiences – which one could only successfully identify with through a musical idiom that was ‘safe, familiar, and ultimately knowable’.

Chinoiserie and the Purchased Feminine

In popular music, the Chinese female archetype was often associated with illicit desires and the allure of opium found in Chinatown. As has been shown throughout this thesis, Chinese women have been represented in music and on stage since Gluck’s three aristocratic Chinese ladies in *Le Cinesi* through to De Falla’s archaic Chinese character in ‘Chinoserie’, and Puccini’s Chinese slave girl Liu in *Turandot*. The portrayal of Chinese women in American Tin Pan Alley music was in many ways similar to their depiction in Western art music; seductive, dangerous, fascinating, and alluring. However, popular music served to emphasize the objectification of Chinese women and played to gender extremes which put them on par with play things. This resulted in the development of the caricature or stereotype of the Chinese female as China dolls, Sing-song girls, or Chinese maids. More

significantly, the Chinese female moved from being a distant, mystical and archaic body, to being an animated picturesque character living in America's Chinatowns.

An alluring Chinese female was often displayed on the front cover of popular sheet music scores to represent a romanticized, sensual, and feminized China. The decision to use a female to stand in for China or the microcosmic Chinatown can be regarded as purely commercial, for very few Chinese women lived in America at the time. The gender ratio for the entire Chinese population in America in 1860 stood at 1:186, or 1,784 females compared with 33,149 males. Between 1860 and 1900 the imbalanced ratio did not improve; women never exceeded 7 percent of the total Chinese population during the entire period.⁵⁶ The Chinese women who did immigrate to America came as wives of the laundrymen, restaurateurs, grocers, farmers, cooks and labourers. They were mostly confined to their quarters within Chinatown boundaries, and were home-makers under the authority of their husbands. Other Chinese women, eager to escape severe poverty in China in search of a better life, were sold or tricked into slavery and prostitution by the gangsters of 'underground Chinatown'.⁵⁷ Effectively sealed off from the curious gaze of foreigners, Chinese wives who stayed within the

⁵⁶ Huping Li, *Surviving on the Gold Mountain: A History of Chinese American Women and Their Lives* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 21, and Benson Tong, *The Chinese in America* (Colorado: University of Colorado, 2003), 25.

⁵⁷ For more information on Chinese women in America, see Huping Li, *Surviving on the Gold Mountain: A History of Chinese American Women and Their Lives* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998) and Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

confines of Chinatown, and the less fortunate women controlled by the parlours and brothels of 'underground Chinatown', contributed to the well-established notion of Chinese females as remote and mysterious.

Many composers chose to embrace the remote and mysterious aspect of the Chinese female to evoke fantastical and dreamy romantic creations. A popular stereotype used in many Tin Pan Alley songs was the 'China doll' – a picturesque character with porcelain, childlike, and feminine attributes that 'many American men found appealing and non-threatening'.⁵⁸ Van Alstyne's 'China Dreams' (1917) and 'My Dreamy China Lady' (1916) draw on the fantasy of a fascinating China doll, an image made mystical and alluring through a haze of incense and opium induced dreams. Some popular songs even took the China doll stereotype literally and told stories about porcelain characters: Irving Berlin's 'Porcelain Maid' (1922), was centred on a porcelain boy who serenades his porcelain maid, singing 'I'm calling to you from my teakwood stand / Porcelain maid I'm feeling so blue / Please let me hold your hand'. Another popular practice which paralleled Chinese inspired music in western art music, was to locate the Chinese female in nostalgic and pastoral landscapes, with titles such as Paul Biese's and Clark Tyler's 'Rose of China' (1920), or Ray Hibberler's 'My Chinese Cherry Blossom' (1921). In these instances, it was common for the Chinese female to be referred to as a 'pretty little Chinese maiden' who

⁵⁸ Krystyn R. Moon, *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s-1920s* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 124.

lives 'far east where the lotus flower grows, and a gentle ocean breeze
blows'.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Opening line from Paul Biese's and Clark Tyler's popular song 'Rose of China' (1920).

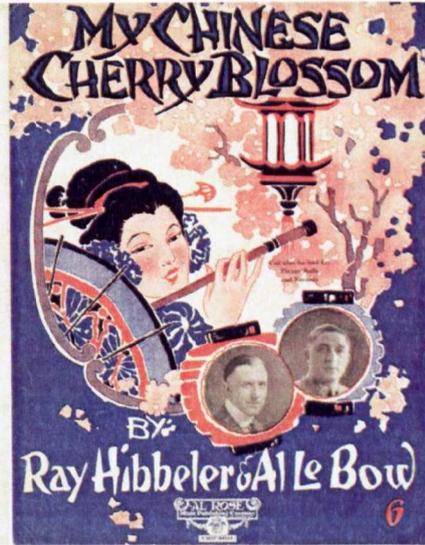
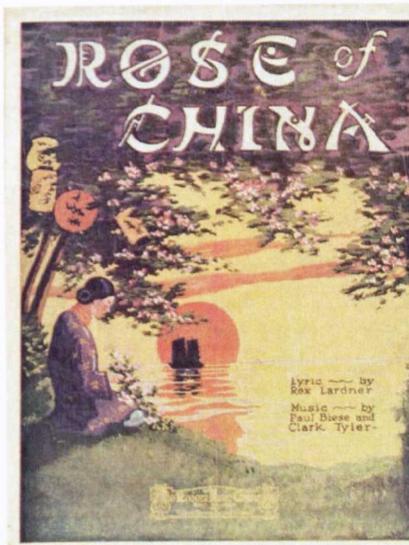
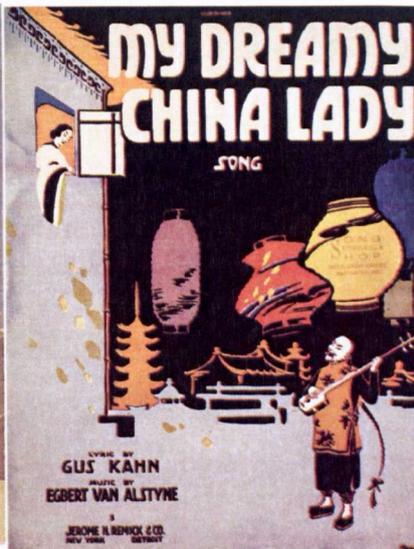
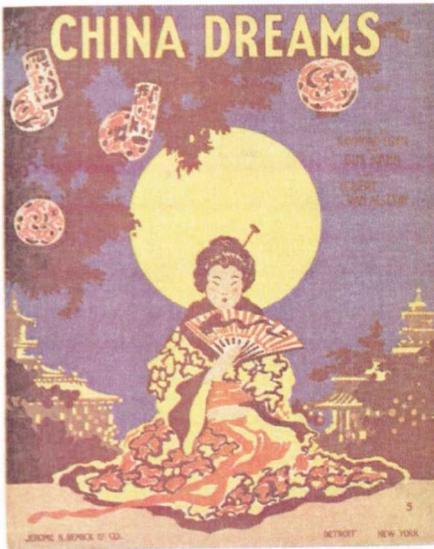


Figure 5.7: (top left) 'China Dreams', music written by Egbert Van Alstyne (New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1917). Courtesy of the DeVincet Sheet Music Collection (Lilly Library), Indiana University Sheet Music Collections.

Figure 5.8: (top right) 'My Dreamy China Lady', music written by Egbert Van Alstyne (New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1916). Courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Special Collections, Johns Hopkins University.

Figure 5.9: (bottom left) 'Rose of China', music written by Paul Biese and Clark Tyler (Chicago: Riviera Music Co., 1920). Courtesy of the DeVincet Sheet Music Collection (Lilly Library), Indiana University Sheet Music Collections.

Figure 5.10: (bottom right) 'My Chinese Cherry Blossom', music written by Al Le Bow (Chicago: Al Le Bow Co., 1921). Courtesy of the DeVincet Sheet Music Collection (Lilly Library), Indiana University Sheet Music Collections.

Whilst many composers embraced the China doll to evoke fantastical and dreamy romantic creations, other composers rooted their creations in social reality. By 1930, James F Hanley's 'Sing-song girl' embraced the mystery of the China doll, whose originally purely exhibitionist image had now infused with one of mystical allure and sexual availability. Whilst the Sing-song girl was romanticized in musical interpretations, the reality of Chinese immigrants who actually worked as Sing-song girls was degrading and associated with the seedy underworld of America's Chinatowns. The livelihood of Sing-song girls depended on their ability to sing, converse, drink, and flirt with clientele. Judy Yung's 1995 book *Unbound Feet* provides more detail:

According to one newspaper account, Chinese clients paid for the company of these women at the theatre, followed by an elaborate dinner with friends. Another newspaper account stated that no Chinese banquet was complete without their presence: 'They sing, they play, they light and hold the pipes, and after the banquet is finished they join in the games. For a few hours of such work they get from \$3 to \$5 each'. Savings from this money, as well as the jewelry and rich gifts the women often received from their clients, were sometimes enough for them to buy back their freedom or to send money home to support their families. Those redeemed by wealthy clients were considered fortunate. The majority 'were there to be fondled or misused, one

day loaded with jewels, then next day to be stripped and sold to the highest bidder, if it were the desire of her master'.⁶⁰

Hired for their feminine attributes which entertained and titillated their clients, Sing-song girls were essentially Chinese immigrants drawn to America's Chinatowns in order to improve their economic prospects. They serviced the disproportionate number of Chinese bachelor men, as well as the curious White American male tourists. Sing-song girls were often placed in luxurious rooms on the upper floors of Chinatown establishments that were exotically furnished with 'teakwood, bamboo, Chinese paintings, and silk cushions'.⁶¹ The visual spectacle was no doubt an important factor in providing a seductive and alluring atmosphere.

The cover art on the sheet music of James F. Hanley's 'Sing-song girl' (1930) is designed to attract and allure customers to buy into the notion of a desirable and mysterious China, which is portrayed as seductive and feminine. Designed by the artist Van Doorn Morgan, the front cover depicts an alluring young Chinese woman holding a phallic musical instrument, in an idyllic landscape with exotic birds by her side. Chinese difference is emphasized with slanted eyes, dark pulled-back hair, and an outfit resembling traditional Chinese dress. Her portrait includes a tree painted in quasi-Chinese style and two exotic birds – also shown

⁶⁰ Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 28-29.

⁶¹ Ibid.

with slanted eyes. The goal of representing Chinese difference also informed Morgan's choice of fonts – in the style of jagged Chinese calligraphy strokes. Set against a striking reddish / orange background, the black silhouette of the tree and the text projects a seductive colour scheme – bringing the central white Chinese figure and birds sharply into focus. By placing the Sing-song girl in an idyllic setting, Morgan manufactures a fantasy of China, an imaginary and alluring place where people look, dress, and act in non-American ways (Fig. 5.11).



Figure 5.11: 'Sing-song-girl', music written by James F. Hanley, cover art by Van Doorn Morgan (New York: Red Star Music Co. Inc., 1930). Purchased in 2010, in a second-hand book shop in Worthing.

The musical instrument depicted on the cover widens the racial divide. Respectable young American women of this era were expected to take piano lessons, enabling them to provide household entertainment using

the latest sheet music, but Morgan's figure plucks a stringed instrument of the sort that well-behaved girls seldom played. Drawn with little attention to detail, the instrument resembles the three-stringed sanxian, a fretless Chinese lute. By adding this Chinese instrument, Morgan alludes to the subject of the song – the 'Sing-song girl' portrayed as 'entertainer'. Furthermore, the *sound* of the Sing-song girl is represented in the piece, as Hanley incorporates ukulele tabs into the score.⁶²

As was typical for these popular songs, the eight bar introduction launches us into the exotic world of China through gong-like fifths, tri-tones, and once again, the popular use of rhythmic motif x which is used with parallel fifths and octaves in bars 5-7 (Ex. 5.10).

⁶² Ukulele tabs were frequently added to sheet music scores during this time. Daniel Goldmark confirms that 'one of the biggest changes wrought on sheet music [during this time] came from the ukulele craze, which compelled all the major publishers to include chord symbols for the latest – and cheapest – accompanying instrument to come along'. See Daniel Goldmark, 'Creating Desire on Tin Pan Alley', *The Musical Quarterly* 90(2008), 213.

2

Words by
JOSEPH MCCARTHY

SING SONG GIRL (LITTLE YELLA CINDERELLA)

Tune Ukulele
G C E A

Music by
JAMES F. HANLEY

Rhythmic motif x

Moderato

VOICE

In a lit-tle Chi-nee joss-house

rall.

p

Example 5.10: 'Sing-song-girl', music written by James F. Hanley (New York: Red Star Music Co. Inc., 1930).

Naming the female subject of the song 'Little Yella Cinderella' seems crude and inappropriate in our modern day. But in the context of early twentieth-century America, it firmly placed her as the exotic and desired protagonist in the Chinese fairytale (see lyrics below).

Verse

In a little Chinese joss-house way down town,
Where pig-tails reach the ground,
There lives a sing-song gal, Ev'ry-body's pal
On tiptoes ev'ry Sunday afternoon,
To croon of honeymoon, Sam Lee comes down.

He brings rice and nuts and ya cha-mein Go for five or ten,
Hang the price! He throws his dough away,
He's got one big yen,
In a little Chinese joss-house, on his knees, He sings in high Chinese
His song of love.

Chorus

My Sing Song Girl, My little yella Cinderella
Tell me there could be a China-man's chance for me.
Oh Sing Song Girl, although I know you'd fool a fella
Could you do a thing like that to Yung Sam Lee?

Some night Sing Song Lady, Puff a little smoke and sleep,
I come catch-um up may-be, To my shop we'll creep.
There you'll be mine I'll betcha all the tea in China,
Sing a little love song Sing Song Girl for me.

Hanley's Sing-song girl lives in a 'Chinese joss-house way down town' and is somewhat unobtainable as the imaginary scenario describes the efforts of the Chinaman Sam Lee to woo her. Her promiscuous characteristics are exemplified in the lyrics as she is described as 'Ev'ry body's pal' and has the ability to 'fool a fella'. It is only when she puffs a little smoke and sleeps (a reference to opium) that the rather sinister Sam Lee seizes his opportunity to woo her: 'Some night Sing Song Lady, Puff a little smoke and sleep / I come catch-um up may-be, To my shop we'll creep / There you'll be mine, I'll betcha all the tea in China'.

The chorus of 'Sing-song girl' moves to a first-person narrative mode as the singer (the Chinaman Sam Lee) croons 'My Sing-song girl / My little

yella Cinderella / Tell me there could be a Chinaman's chance for me'. In previous musical examples, idealistic notions of China put forward in the chorus are accompanied by a purely western diatonic idiom in order to allow the audience to 'engage with' the situation, or simply as a marker to aurally distinguish between 'us' and 'them'. However, the chorus of Hanley's 'Sing-song girl' adopts a slightly different method; a method which functions to convey the specific characteristic of the Chinaman Sam Lee. In this song, the chorus frequently traverses between the 'foreign' (overt musical chinoiserie) and the 'familiar' (a more Western inspired diatonic idiom). Although this contrast can be clearly heard in the piano version, it is particularly evident in the Victor Hollywood Orchestra's version (it was a common practice for these popular songs to be recorded, performed, and re-written for well-known orchestras at the time).⁶³ Lines 1 and 3 are in a familiar Western diatonic soundscape – the melody becomes more fluid, and musical chinoiserie is abandoned as the orchestra swells with warm strings and the music begins to swing (it is dance band music after all!). In contrast, lines 2 and 4 incorporate a jerky, staccato and percussive musical chinoiserie in the vocal part, which is doubled by the orchestra and accentuated by the glockenspiel, which also enhances the jangly and percussive nature of rhythmic motif x. These fleeting and abrupt shifts between a sumptuous western diatonic idiom and a comparatively

⁶³ James F. Hanley, *Sing-song-girl*; in 'That's What I Call Sweet Music: American Dance Orchestras of the 1920s', The Victor Hollywood Orchestra conducted by Leroy Shield. CD. (EMI Songbook Series, 1999) [ASIN B00000J64M]

awkward percussive Chinese style are used to convey a sense of parody and humour, and serve to reinforce the caricature of Sam Lee. Represented as comical, effeminate, and hopeless in love, Sam Lee 'sings in high Chinese his song of love' (see Ex.5.11). Frequently traversing 'foreign' and 'familiar' soundscapes creates a departure from normative types of continuity, and serves to comically emphasize the otherness of the effeminate Chinaman Sam Lee, and his object of affection – the Sing-song girl.

4 CHORUS

My Sing Song Girl, My lit - tle yel - la Cin - der - el - la

Tell me could there be a Chi - na - man's chance for me. Oh

Sing Song Girl, Al - tho I know you'd fool a fel - la

Could you do a thing like that to Yung Sam Lee?

Example 5.11: Chorus of 'Sing-song-girl', music written by James F. Hanley (New York: Red Star Music Co. Inc., 1930).

When considering these popular songs, the question, then, is not 'Is there difference?' or 'What's the differences?' but, rather, 'How did social life and culture construct the differences that humans understood and enacted in daily life?' For musicologists, as for other scholars of cultural phenomena, this particular line of reasoning may be of great importance: if identities are a matter of social role, we may be able to study the mechanisms – including musical ones – by which these roles were delineated, communicated, learned, and perhaps challenged.⁶⁴ 'Chinese Lullaby' from the play *East is West* (1919) demonstrates how representation is not always a one-way street. Not only can we not assume a particular reality pre-existing its representation, but we cannot even assume a simple or direct transmission of ideology. Rather, we face a delicately complex situation in which works of art also challenged, mocked, or subverted reigning values.⁶⁵ In this particular example, interpretation becomes an ambiguous and tricky, but richly meaningful, activity.

Ming Toy, the female heroine from Samuel Shipman and John B. Hymer's play *East is West* (1919) can be related to the stereotype of the flirtatious and seductive Sing-song girl. Loosely based on the reality of Chinese girls being sold into slavery, Ming Toy is rescued from her dismal fate by an American man called Billy Benson who feels sorry for her. However, Benson refuses to purchase her, and persuades his

⁶⁴ Ruth A. Solie, ed., *Musicology and Difference* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 10.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

friend Lo Sang Kee, a Chinese American merchant, to buy her and take her back to San Francisco. On returning to the United States, the local missionary board notices Ming Toy winking and shimmying in the window of Lo Sang Kee's home and makes a complaint. As a result, Lo sells her to a wealthy restaurant owner in Chinatown. Billy Benson soon finds out and quickly rescues her, falls in love with her, and brings her back to his family abode. His parents disapprove of this mixed race love affair; however, a twist at the end of the story provides a happy conclusion as Ming Toy is revealed to actually be of American and Spanish descent. In the context of this plot, Robert Hood Bowers' popular hit 'Chinese Lullaby' was sung by the character Ming Toy.

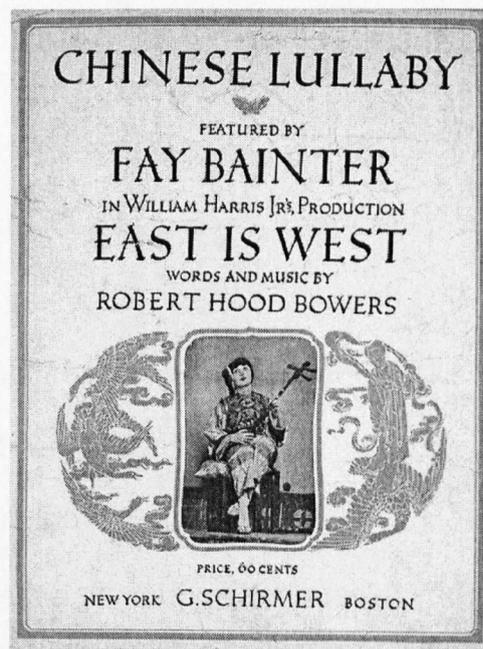


Figure 5.12: Front cover of 'Chinese Lullaby', music written by Robert Hood Bowers (New York: G. Schirmer, 1919). Courtesy of the DeVincent Sheet Music Collection (Lilly Library), Indiana University Sheet Music Collections.

The front cover of Bower's 'Chinese Lullaby' presents a photo of the white American actress Fay Bainter dressed in Chinese costume,

holding a Chinese sanxian (similar to the front cover of James F. Hanley's 'Sing-song girl') (Figure 5.12). On 26 December 1918, the *New York Times* wrote:

The heroine is just another version of the pretty, coquettish, adorably slangy, and swearing little heathen in trousers which has been familiar to our musical comedy stage for a quarter of a century...But it may well prove that this Ming Toy is the more popular heroine. With a face of pristine innocence, she bats her eyelids at any chance male like a painted harridan...⁶⁶

Bower's 'Chinese Lullaby' musically caricatures Ming Toy as a coquettish Sing-song girl, whilst simultaneously asserting her occidental identity. The first section of 'Chinese Lullaby' (bars 1-25) clearly utilizes many of the common musical devices associated with chinoiserie, such as the incessantly repeated fourths and fifths, parallel octaves, parallel harmonies, and jangling ornaments that create a stylised percussive effect. In line with this, the lyrics are about the Chinese character, 'Ming Toy' and accordingly sung in broken English. As the character, 'Ming Toy', learns 'good' English later in the play (bars 26-45), the music is stripped of all Chinese musical devices and becomes thoroughly localised and familiar as she becomes assimilated by the West and 'de-orientalized'. The metre shifts from a mechanical and march-like duple time to a leisurely triple time as the lyrics become more emotional and involve thoughts about 'life's mystic stream' and 'troubled waters'.

⁶⁶ John Corbin, 'East Is West'. *The New York Times* (26 December, 1918). <<http://query.nytimes.com>> (accessed 28/09/10).

Significantly, the broken English is abandoned and replaced by an almost poetic fluidity (Ex. 5.12).

2

Chinese Lullaby

From "East Is West"
As sung by Ming Toy

Words and Music by
Robert Hood Bowers

Moderato con moto

a)

mf *dim.* *p*

Piainatively

mf *p*

Sing song, sing song, so Hop Toy Al-lee same like Chi-na boy, But he sel-lee girl with joy:-
Pit-y poor Ming Toy! Sing song, sing song, so Hop Toy Al-lee same like Chi-na boy,
But he sel-lee girl with joy:- Pit-y poor Ming Toy!

p *pp* *ppp*

NOTE: Song (a) is in Ming Toy's "Pigeon English"; Song (b) is in the good English she learns later in the play. — It is first sung in pure Chinese.

18768 Copyright, 1919, by G. Schirmer

Example 5.12: 'Chinese Lullaby', music written by Robert Hood Bowers (New York: G. Schirmer, 1919). Courtesy of the DeVincent Sheet Music Collection (Lilly Library), Indiana University Sheet Music Collections.

b) Moderato *mp poco rubato* 3

A rip - ple I seem On life's mys - tic
 stream, Tossed at the wa - ters' will; So I
 dare dream I'll be, Like the poor rip - ple, free;— When the
 trou - bled wa - ters grow still. A still.

p (Harp) *ben sostenuto* *rit.* *slow* *rit.* *dim.* *pp*

28789

Example 5.12 continued...

At face value, Bower's 'Chinese Lullaby' appears to be yet another story about the white man's desire for the exotic Chinese female. However, it equally reveals the desire for white American women to embrace a

Chinese femininity that was seen to be liberating. Fay Bainter's acting role as the Chinese heroine Ming Toy, and her identity as a professional performer would have appealed especially to the Western female audience of the time. By dressing in Chinese costume and embracing a Chinese femininity, Fay Bainter's portrayal was seen to provide 'an effective tool for white women's empowerment and pleasure as New Women'.⁶⁷ As Mari Yoshihara writes,

These Orientalist performances by white women took place at the same time that many white women were becoming New Women of the twentieth century, who challenged Victorian gender norms and the ideology of the separate spheres by participating in the woman's suffrage movement, demanding birth control, engaging in socialism, expressing themselves in arts and letters, seeking 'free love', cutting their hair and smoking cigarettes. The construction of such new gender identity was closely linked to, and was articulated through, enacting roles and identities other than their own.⁶⁸

Many sheet music covers promoted this alternative femininity by displaying images of Western women dressed in Chinese costume (Figs. 5.13 and 5.14). By dressing the Western women in Chinese clothes, it transported them to an exciting Chinese world that offered illicit romance, danger, and opium, and offered the chance to exercise a fertile imagination. Such popular songs were part of a material culture

⁶⁷ Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (New York: Oxford University Press), 78.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

that packaged the mixed interests Americans had about China. For the American woman, wearing Chinese clothes allowed her to indulge in a seductive, slightly risqué, and alluring persona. Musical chinoserie in popular song was therefore not always a straightforward representation or critique of the 'other'; it also provided the opportunity for the Western woman to fully embrace desired notions of China by imaginatively 'becoming' Chinese.



Figure 5.13: 'Limehouse Blues', music written by Philip Braham (New York: Harms, Inc., 1922). Courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Special Collections, Johns Hopkins University.

Figure 5.14: 'My Little China Doll', music written by Gus Van (New York: Chas. K. Harris, 1917). Courtesy of the DeVincent Sheet Music Collection (Lilly Library), Indiana University Sheet Music Collections.

CONCLUSION

These popular songs were composed within the multilayered context of: the political reality of U.S.-Chinese relations; the producers' (author, playwright, composer, performer / singer, among others) constructions of Chineseness; the American audience's anxieties, assumptions, and

curiosity about Chinese culture; and the performer's identity as a white American. 'The Heathen Chinee', 'Chinatown, My Chinatown', 'Limehouse Nights', 'Sing Song Girl', and 'Chinese Lullaby' exhibit the diversity of needs and desires that motivated Westerners to turn their collective gaze toward China at the turn of the twentieth century. These musical works provided a virtual and aural experience that allowed audiences to mentally respond to America's Chinese settlements – one constructed and distributed by and for white Americans and Europeans.

Songwriters affirmed a sense of cultural difference through 'musical tourism'. In all these popular songs, they positioned themselves as 'outsiders looking in', who were curiously experiencing or dabbling in Chinese culture. Aurally, this was evident in the introduction of a typical Chinese soundscape, which was almost always set against a return to a safe, familiar, and ultimately knowable western diatonic soundscape. Using well-established circulating visual and textual archetypes, songwriters created 'musical postcards' of China. The analogy of a 'musical postcard' enables us to understand these musical works as a souvenir, precious to the beholder, tied to the country's culture, history and landscape, a product of the tourism industry, and driven by market forces. These 'musical postcards' of China were an easy way to send short messages, sounds, and images across national borders and indeed to a mass European and American audience. It also served as a public forum within which various sentiments about Chinese immigration could be asserted, adopted, contested, and negotiated.

By indulging in a curious mix of stereotype, myth, reality, and self-fulfillment, these composers applied a profit-centered calculus to all decisions regarding the exhibition of China in music. Using the multiple images of China adrift in the sea of Western culture, these musical fantasies popularised in Broadway and the London West End, were reproduced as affordable sheet music items which enabled the ordinary family to construct their own Oriental wonderlands in the confines of their own home. Musical representations of China existed in a state of tension caused by the presence of two contrary impulses: the imagination's need to create fictional lands and the rational mind's inexorable quest to demystify the real world. As we have seen, some songwriters focused on a fantastical China where romance and opium went hand in hand, others rooted their subject in the grim reality of London's Limehouse district, whilst others delved into a satirical portrayal of bizarre Chinese customs. Evidently, some of these works projected something of an imperialist attitude. However, the majority of these popular songs harboured a desire that stands at the polar opposite of the chauvinistic and narcissistic impulse: escapism or the desire to temporarily flee one's own life and society.

Epilogue

This thesis has demonstrated how musical chinoiserie integrates specific aesthetics, principles, and decorative aural devices inspired by Chinese traditions, and how these components are variously incorporated at different levels. At one level musical chinoiserie is superficial; Chinese sounds are copied and imitated in music without too much thought, resulting in a highly stylized, formulaic and stereotypical musical depiction of China. This is demonstrated in chapters two and five; the former concerned with Western art music, and the latter with popular music. Chapter two focuses on the late seventeenth-century to mid eighteenth-century operas of Purcell and Gluck at a time when knowledge about Chinese music was limited. Using well established and familiar auditory signs from musical turquerie to suggest the non-European was the most logical way to convey other exotic (including Chinese) soundscapes. In addition to this, dances such as the Polish polonaise and Spanish chaconne were copied and transplanted in order to musically support the significantly more advanced visual and textual portrayals of China on stage. Although far removed in time and musical genre, the early twentieth-century American popular songs discussed in chapter five also reveal a similar surface level rendering of musical chinoiserie. By early 1900 more specific Chinese musical motifs had become established and were being circulated in silent films and examples of western art music; these were

knowingly copied and used in Tin Pan Alley songs, in order to signify efficiently and quickly the Chinese subject.

The intervening chapters reveal more individual aesthetic aims, as well as highly creative responses and artistic applications of Chinese gestures. In these chapters there is clear evidence of a significant intensity and depth of thought on a metaphysical, poetic, psychological, ethnographical, or personal level. Chapter three shows how the music of Debussy, De Falla, and Roussel in one sense marked a return to earlier idealized images of China as an idyllic *jardin anglo-chinois*, through nationalist French historicism post-1870 which idealized the age of Louis XIV, and through the *l'art pour l'art* movement. In particular, Debussy made use of chinoiserie for a variety of expressive and decorative purposes, merging its features with his own brand of musical impressionism. He is documented as dismissing the type of exoticism that was superficial and dilettantish saying 'it's pretty, and makes nice conversation; unfortunately it's not worth two cents in practice and can even be dangerous'.¹ Clearly, Debussy was striving for something that went beyond surface musical chinoiserie; he was searching for the nostalgic, meditative stillness of China promulgated in poetry, travel documents, and literature of the time. To different degrees, his contemporaries were also influenced by these ideologies, aesthetics, and notions of a nostalgic Chinese landscape in their musical

¹ Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, trans. Richard Langham Smith (London: Secker and Warburg, 1977), 106.

compositions. In chapter four, the music of Mahler, Puccini, and Stravinsky explores alternative *fin de siècle* approaches to chinoiserie. Common themes include an increased interest in authenticity; overt and subsumed Chinese elements; and the integration of chinoiserie into existing programmes. Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* reveals how Chinese sounding elements could mingle with Austrian Ländler and Wagnerian gestures to underscore a message of mythical, common humanity. Puccini's *Turandot* displays how musical chinoiserie could highlight aspects of character, e.g. wise Chinese scholars, the fragile Chinese slave girl – but all this without departing from a traditional Italian musical setting. Stravinsky's *Nightingale* shows how chinoiserie could be integrated with his distinctive modernism, bitonality, detachment, and penchant for the bizarre to produce an imaginatively numinous Chinese-inspired opera.

Musical chinoiserie is most often appreciated and recognized within archetypal landscapes, which composers easily constructed through well-established miniature versions of China such as the *jardin anglo-chinois*, legendary Chinese kingdoms, and modern Chinatowns. Adopting miniature versions of China enabled composers to comprehend the sheer size of China by capturing it in small and accessible formats, rather like a souvenir or postcard; something representative of China that is also treasured and enjoyed. For Purcell, the *jardin anglo-chinois* provided an archetypal landscape that was magical, exotic, and bizarre for the setting of *The Fairy*

Queen. For Debussy and De Falla, a more sensual and utopian *jardin anglo-chinois* was used as the backdrop for their romantic art songs which focused on a Chinese female subject. Legendary Chinese kingdoms and Imperial palaces captured the ancient, grand, mythical, and ritualistic atmosphere sought after in Puccini's *Turandot* and Stravinsky's *Nightingale*. The fantasy world of these miniature versions of China was consistently used as a setting for narrative frameworks in art songs, orchestral music, and operas; part of the strong appeal lay in its distance both in space and time. Contrastingly, the archetypal landscape of Chinatowns was exclusive to the popular music genre and allowed such fantasy visions of China to merge with the reality of Chinese immigration to the West. These musical depictions of London and American Chinatowns provided a space with which to explore Western fears, anxieties, and curiosity about Chinese immigration.

Recurring themes explored within these narrative frameworks are the notion of nostalgia, and a particular Chinese femininity and utopian pastoral. These interrelating themes express a very human desire for tranquility, beauty, and eternal bliss. This search for or longing for an ideal world is a predominant aspect of musical chinoiserie and is constructed differently according to different critical and historical contexts. In the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries the Chinese utopian pastoral and divine monarchic system was associated with the culture of the court and

represented a desired world of stability and authenticity. Over two-hundred years later, Debussy, De Falla and Roussel revealed a longing for precisely those eighteenth-century ideals about China. However, interpretations of miniature Chinas like the *jardin anglo-chinois* were now idealized and re-invigorated with a sensual and erotic tinge. Despite a drive in serious anthropological and ethnomusicological studies, themes of nostalgia and utopian landscapes were ever-more appealing to artists, and were promulgated by writers as diverse as Pierre Loti, Victor Segalen, Gustav Flaubert, Judith Gautier, and Pearl. S. Buck in their romanticized reports, poems, and fictions about China. Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* is based on translations of ancient Chinese poetry by Li Tai Po; movements 3 and 4 in particular look joyfully and wistfully back to a carefree and highly romanticized landscape with pavilions, rivers, and Chinese people. Puccini's *Turandot* and Stravinsky's *Nightingale* are both set in a fairy tale world, an archaic and traditional Chinese kingdom which explores the fantastic, the ritualistic, and the supernatural. The popular Tin Pan Alley songs reveal how this desire for a Chinese nostalgia can even be 'heard' in abrupt shifts in musical style – from a blatantly Chinese sound to a purely western diatonic idiom.

Tied into this notion of nostalgia is the prominence of a particular Chinese femininity and utopian pastoral. In the works of Purcell and Gluck this was mostly conveyed through the visual with spectacular stage settings such as

the Chinese garden scene and display of porcelain vases in *The Fairy Queen*, and the extravagant glittering setting of the Chinese ladies' tea room in *Le Cinesi*. By the early twentieth century, the utopian pastoral was often captured through the vessel of the Chinese female body. As Linda Phyllis Austern writes,

The strong connection between the physically unfamiliar, the sensually arousing, and the raw primacy of unconquered nature that we see in poets like John Donne and others of his contemporaries is also as old as the West, and ultimately unites femininity, music, and the distant places of the earth into one of the most deeply entrenched of several widespread metaphors connecting women with the primeval.²

This connection between women and the primeval is evident in Debussy's art song 'Rondel Chinois', De Falla's 'Chinoiserie', and Roussels *Deux Poemes Chinoise* which all centre on the romantic desire for a Chinese female character who is situated in a Chinese landscape. Similarly, the character of Liu from Puccini's *Turandot* can be said to project some sort of earthy 'authenticity' and closeness to uncorrupted nature as her music, which is sparse and pentatonic contrasts with the high artifice of more regular classical forms of the other protagonists. Stravinsky's nightingale bird is an offstage female soprano; musically and psychologically the very *sound* of the voice conveys a spiritual and supernatural ambience which

² Linda Phyllis Austern, 'Forreine Conceites and Wandring Devises: The Exotic, the Erotic, and the Feminine' in Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 31.

ties into the strong connection between the 'physically unfamiliar, the sensually arousing, and the raw primacy of unconquered nature'. The popular songs of Tin Pan Alley, however, reveal how the Chinese female becomes more of a tangible character as she resides in local American and London Chinatowns. Although she is still rooted in nostalgic imaginings of a Chinese landscape, she is now also cast as seductive and dangerously alluring.

Musical Chinoiserie Today

Many of the Chinese inspired works explored in this thesis remain alive and often controversial in our own day. In 1997, a highly publicized *Turandot* took place at the Forbidden City in Beijing, directed by Zhang Yimou. One of the aims of this production was to make it more authentically Chinese by incorporating wushu acrobatics, long-sleeved dancing ladies, and a fabulous display of embroidered Chinese silk throughout.³ Producing *Turandot* in the Forbidden City certainly puts a twist on the orientalist paradigm as this Western representation of a Chinese story is now physically performed in China. In 2005, a Cantonese version

³ Since 1995 there have been numerous adaptations of Puccini's *Turandot* in China. In 1995, the complete opera took place in Beijing by the China Central Opera House. This production was significant in that it marked the very first time *Turandot* was sung in Italian in China. It was also the first time since 1949 that any non-Chinese opera was sung in its entirety in its original language; under the people's republic, foreign opera had traditionally been translated into Chinese so 'the people' could understand it. For more information see Sheila Melvin, 'Turandot: Beijing reappropriates a Puccini opera'. *The New York Times*, 25/03/08. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/25/arts/25iht-melvin.html>> (accessed 24/08/11). See also 'Puccini's *Turandot* in the Forbidden City', <http://www.turandotonsite.com/frame_tur.html> (accessed 22/08/11).

of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* was premiered by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. All the original German texts were replaced with a reconstruction of the original Chinese poems which were combined with a new Chinese translation of Mahler's own four closing lines of text. According to Teng-Leong Chew, 'It is unimaginable how Mahler's music can be well-served when the audience is distracted not only by two interspersed languages, but also the inclusion of additional poems that the composer himself had not chosen for his work....Mr Ng's textual alteration is not only disrespectful to one of the most important and visionary works in Western music, but also an insult to the Chinese literature'.⁴ Such strong words from Chew suggest that this cultural experiment is to the detriment of artistic integrity, however, perhaps the underlying aim was to put an authentic Chinese stamp onto Mahler's setting, and to lay bare its Chinese roots.

Many of the ideological notions and archetypes of China presented in this thesis are still prevalent today. Western pop songs, musicals, and film scores evoking China readily invite commercial success and still use narrative frameworks that explore China's nostalgic landscapes and ancient kingdoms. The connotations and musical techniques used to signify China have not faded away; they are still evidently used as a short-

⁴ Teng-Leong Chew, 'When Das Lied Von Der Erde Is Not Good Enough...', *Naturlaut* 4/1 (2005): 15.

hand device to denote China. However, what is interesting and what requires further research is how these common devices and well established influences have been further diffused by the emergence of new genres of cross-cultural fusion. Michael Tenzer comments on the stylistic pluralism of cross-cultural exchange in the last quarter of the twentieth century as follows: 'anything can be found, from the borrowing of a scale or sonority to the wholesale appropriation of instruments or compositional genres.'⁵ David Bowie's pop song *China Girl* (1977) uses a distinctive Chinese riff and raises interesting questions about the appropriation of the Chinese female; in the music video she is represented as being dressed in an archaic Beijing opera costume and by the end is transformed into a modern and Westernized Chinese female. The Chinese riff was also made use of in Carl Douglas' one-hit wonder *Kungfu Fighting* (1974), which tapped into the fascination with Bruce Lee and Chinese martial arts popularized on TV and film of the time. Erasure's synth-pop ballad *Always* (1994) displays a kind of camp utopianism with the music video set in a magical and archaic Chinese garden to the words, 'always I wanna be with you / and make believe with you / and live in harmony...'. Incubus' song *Aqueous Transmission* (2001) is a good example of the psychedelic exotic in musical chinoiserie; this work represents a cyclical stillness and meditative quality which matches the utopian landscape and liberation that the lyrics depict: 'I'm floating down a river / Oars freed from their homes

⁵ Michael Tenzer, 'Western Music in the Context of World Music' in Robert P. Morgan, ed., *Modern Times: From World War I to the Present* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1994), 391.

long ago / Lying face up on the floor of my vessel / I marvel at the stars'. Western instruments are also nuanced to sound like Chinese stringed instruments.

In this day and age, China is not only known for its archaism, tradition, and mystique – but also its twenty-first century modernity. In 1999 Christian Chaudet produced a film version of Stravinsky's opera *The Nightingale* which mixes computer animation with live action to create a unique aural-visual experience. The film depicts an archaic China which is skillfully integrated with images of mobile phones, webcams, and computer screens. Relevant instruments of the orchestra are also frequently dropped into view as part of the digital landscape. A modern China is juxtaposed with an old colonial China in Gorillaz's pop song *Hong Kong* (written in 2007 - ten years after the handover to China in 1997) where the lyrics describe 'junk boats and English boys.....here on the nineteenth floor / The neon lights make me numb'. This song incorporates the actual use of a Chinese instrument called the guzheng which is smoothly blended with a guitar and piano ostinato. In 2007, Daman Albarn and Jamie Hewlett collaborated with Chinese director Chen Shi-Zheng to produce the pop-opera *Monkey King: Journey to the West*. This pop-opera combines acrobats, martial arts, dancers, contortionists, and mandarin singers with 3-D film projections, which are all accompanied by the distinctive electronic pop music of Albarn. This was an experimental pop-opera; Albarn's music

can be described as an eclectic mix of Chinese and Western instruments, Chinese opera singers and Western pop beats, and sampled sounds of Chinese city life integrated with electronic samplings of the Chinese language.

In conclusion, musical chinoiserie is first of all a matter of aesthetics and perception. Incorporating Chinese musical gestures or imitating Chinese musical cultures constitute only one strategy among several; these chapters therefore do not depend exclusively on a reading of the 'Chinese sounds' to critique musical chinoiserie. Rather, the diverse aspects covered in this thesis reveal how musical chinoiserie can be not only superficial (or passive), or a 'Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient',⁶ but can be politically or psychologically elaborate and challenging. A thorough investigation of what musical chinoiserie means therefore extends beyond notation and stereotypes. This thesis enriches possible readings of musical chinoiserie by exploring its relationship to the intense fashion for Chinese commodities, its correlation with particular social and political climates, and its connection to the eternal themes of the feminine and utopian pastoral.

⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 3.

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