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New Strings Gather at the Pear Garden to Evoke the Sound of Unmatched Beauty: The National Sound-Dramatic Rhetorics of Jia Daqun's *Liyuan*

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Abstract. Professor Jia Daqun's large-scale national instrumental concerto *Impressions of Liyuan* is a magnificent work for which the composer consciously selected a musical vocabulary rich in Chinese national characteristics, which refer to appropriate and innovative forms of national symphonic music and rhetorical construction to present a unique spiritual charm. *Liyuan* has become an outstanding example of national exploration in contemporary Chinese musical creativity with its unique musical rhetoric and profound cultural connotation. The work uses specific instrumental timbres to create regional rhetoric, while dramatic rhetoric is constructed through the humanisation of sound and the logic of opera structure. Through the analysis of *Liyuan*, this article explores the innovation and practice of this work in the rhetoric of national sound drama from four aspects: the regional rhetoric of specific instrumental timbres, the dramatic rhetoric of sound humanization and the logic of opera structure, the genre rhetoric of sound subject arrangement and the thinking of genre naming, and the spirit of *Liyuan* rooted in the ecology of Chinese opera. Genre rhetoric is explored through the relationship between sonic subjects and genre form naming. The *Liyuan* (梨园) of the title, which literally translates as "pear garden," serves as a cultural symbol to refer to the Chinese nation's dramatic attitude towards life.

Keywords: *Liyuan*, musical rhetoric, national character, regional rhetoric, dramatic rhetoric, genre rhetoric, sound humanisation, dramatic structural logic, spirit of Liyuan

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Introduction

In Chinese musical theory, musical rhetoric (音乐修辞, *yīnyuè xiūcí*) describes the artistic behaviour of composers using formal musical vocabulary to construct a discourse and effectively express it. In this context, "rhetoric" (修辞, xiūcí) refers to the process of rhetorically constructing a work of art. Etymologically, 修 (*xiū*) refers to the act of construction, while 辞 (*cí*)" references speech, i.e., the common medium for expressing oneself to the outside world in an appropriate way. If spoken language consists of "speech" and literary language is made up of "literary speech," then artistic language is made up of "artistic speech," referring to the medium in which creative ideas are transformed into a language-like form for artistic expression. Thus the line of "rhetoric" extends across the entire process of the composer's creation — that is, using "musical" language to realise the act of "speech." Musical-rhetorical behaviour, which unfolds naturally as part of the creative process, already occurs with the appearance of an initial musical idea in the composer's mind. In order to achieve the ultimate goal of musical expression, the materials are selected, the schema planned, and musical language is used in a specific context to construct works with emotional and semantic expressions in which the musical symbols of the score are transformed into interpretive expressions. The entire rhetorical act, which comprises an externalisation of the composer's artistic thinking and embodies the loftiness of his mind, is completed as part of a continuous process. (For a discussion of this topic, see: [1; 2].)

Professor Jia Daqun's large-scale instrumental concerto *Impressions of Liyuan* (hereafter *Liyuan*) is a magnificent work for which the composer consciously selected a musical vocabulary rich in national characteristics, referring to appropriate and innovative forms of national symphonic music and rhetoric construction to present a unique Chinese spiritual charm. The work premiered at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music Opera House on 14 December 2019 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

"National character" refers to the creative use and development by writers and artists of their own nation's unique artistic thinking mode, artistic forms, and creative techniques to reflect real life, express their own nation's unique thoughts and feelings, and endow their literary and artistic works with a national style and ethnic character. It is one of the hallmarks of a nation's mature literature and art.[1] Here, it is important to note that the "nation" in "national character" does not refer to a single narrow ethnic group, but rather to the concept of the "Chinese nation" that brings together multiple ethnic groups into a unified national space. The ethnic groups spread across different provinces, each having distinct geographical environments, historical development, social status, economic situations, and cultural characteristics, form a stable national macrocosm in which they share a common human destiny and spiritual home. Therefore, the "national" characteristics of music are rooted in folk customs related to people's lives and deeply hidden in the regularities of their listening habits. In the expression of a series of musical vocabulary elements such as melody and tone, tonal modulation, rhythm and beat, harmonic texture, structural genre, and orchestration colour, a tendency

[1] From the *大辞海* (Dà Cí Hǎi) — Great Chinese Encyclopaedia (https://openlibrary.org/books/OL53588732M/大辞海), online database published by Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House.

of aesthetic standards and tastes having a distinct identity has been formed. "National character," which describes the basic quality and style that original Chinese musical works should have, occupies an important position in the historical and aesthetic value judgment system of the works.

Liyuan uses specific instrumental timbres and tone progressions to create regional rhetoric, while dramatic rhetoric is constructed through the humanisation of character in sound and dramatic structural logic. Genre rhetoric is explored through audio-subjective relations and references to generic form. The Pear Garden (梨园, *Líyuán*) in the title is used as a cultural symbol to refer to the Chinese nation's attitude towards theatrical life. [3; 4]

Regional Rhetoric of Specific Instrumental Timbres

Regionality is a special term in geography that mainly refers to the characteristics of a specific geographical area formed by factors such as natural environment, climatic conditions, topography and landforms. The wide variety of topography and landforms making up China's vast territory has created diverse climatic conditions and natural environments. In turn, the diversity of natural environments has formed the history, traditions and customs of different regions, which are reflected in all aspects of daily life such as dialects, diet, costumes, festivals, beliefs, etc., as well as in the talents, temperament, character and emotions of the people living in the area.

For his regional synthesis, Jia Daqun selected four historical provinces occupying different geographical areas of China: Southwest China (川峡巴蜀, *chuān xiá bāshǔ*), East China (苏昆江南, *sū kūn jiāngnán*), North China (津蓟燕京, *jīn jì yànjīng*), and Northwest China (陕甘秦陇, *shǎn gān qín lǒng*). Distinct regional characteristics and differences in emotional expression, which are deeply rooted in the characteristics in the region and in the hearts of the people, such as the boldness and straightforwardness of the northern region or the delicate tenderness of the southern region, are reflected in the timbres of particular musical instruments and their various combinations. The regional characteristics of music are portrayed with sound rhetoric, depicting a vivid scene of musical life that is closely related to and points to instrumental timbre.

Overture — Liyuan Drum Music (序曲—梨园鼓韵, *xùqū — líyuán gǔ yùn*) is built up by the sustained beating of Sichuan Opera gongs and drums. The Sichuan Opera percussion group comprising the core of the sound structure of this movement includes instruments such as bangu, tanggu, gong, Sichuan bowl, horse gong / small gong, and jiaozi (finger cymbals). The articulation and playing methods of each percussion instrument are different. The bangu has a clear, melodious and loud sound and suitable for performing rolls; the tanggu has a vigorous and powerful sound and is struck with sonorous force; the gong has a resonant and dignified sound with an intense sustain and slow decay; the chuanbo has a resounding and majestic sound; the horse gong is dainty and delicate, having a playful tone; the versatile small gong has both civil and military functions; the jiaozi is light and unique, and controls the rhythm. A Sichuan percussion ensemble is typically formed by a drum master who works together in coordination with four assistants. With its vivid and bright rhythmic dynamics, dense sound texture, and epic dynamics, it serves as the dominant element of the Sichuan Opera stage to captivate the audience with a powerful emotional impact. Not only does it create and enhance the stage atmosphere and control the stage rhythm, but it also plays an important role in guiding the vocal melodies, supporting the performance, and strengthening communication. It also carries certain functions of assigning character roles and offering an

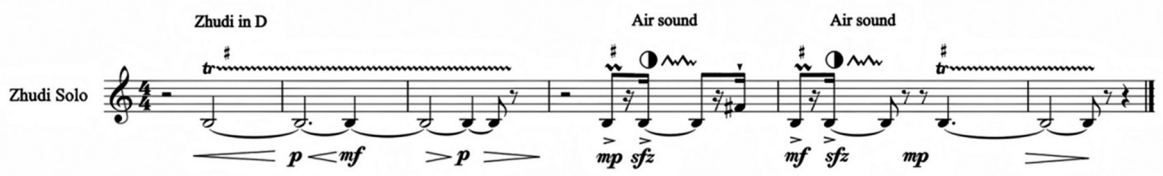
observational commentary, as expressed in the saying, "half of the stage for percussion instruments, half for theater," and "seventy percent percussion, thirty percent singing." The sound characteristics of Sichuan Opera percussion are closely related to the simple and honest local customs and folk traditions. Sichuan drumming, representing an indispensable artistic activity in the cultural life of the Sichuan people, is extensively featured in activities such as temple ceremonies, ritual offerings, funerals, and New Year celebrations. Based on the Sichuan dialect's Baikou unaccompanied singing (白口, *báikǒu*, lit. "with a dry white mouth") and Gaoqiang high-pitched singing (高腔, *gāoqiāng*) vocal styles, it complements and integrates with the lively and vibrant rhythms of the gongs and drums. Veteran Sichuan Opera artistes refer to it as "using gongs and drums to set the tune." Sichuan Opera percussion has a very high status in Sichuan folklore and can be said to be a representative symbol of its folk music. The composer Jia Daqun was born and raised in Sichuan. [5] Thus, having been immersed in it for half a lifetime, the sound quality of Sichuan Opera gongs and drums has long been engraved in his heart. He uses the distinctive sounds of Sichuan Opera gongs and drums to present the musical style of the southwest region of China and express the voice of his hometown that he loves so much. (For more information, see: [6].)

Capriccio — Liyuan Bamboo Melody (随想曲—梨园竹调, *suíxiǎng — qū líyuán zhúdiào*) is a concerto for solo bamboo flute and orchestra. At the beginning of the movement, the *D major* qudi (曲笛, *qūdí*), a type of bamboo flute, makes its debut with a sustained, flowing long trill and breathy sound, followed by an exquisite imitation of the Kunqu Opera's recitative style, immediately transporting the sonic space into the atmosphere of a Kunqu Opera scene (Example No. 1).

As an accompaniment instrument for chanting and singing, the bamboo flute became popular during the Song and Yuan Dynasties. This is related to the flourishing of Song Dynasty poetry and Yuan Dynasty songs. The qudi is a type of bamboo flute popular in the Jiangnan region. The flute, which possesses a thick and long body and is mostly in the key of *C* or *D*, has a mellow and full-bodied tone. Performance emphasises breath control, including the techniques of pressing, striking, vibrating, calling, leaning, gifting, and combining these with breath vibrato. Following the reign of the Ming Dynasty Jiajing Emperor, it became the main instrument for accompaniment of Kunqu opera. [7] The qudi (曲笛) got its name from the fact that it accompanies Kunqu (昆曲) opera. It was certainly the choice of Wei Liangfu in the Ming Dynasty, but it is also closely related to the timbre characteristics of the qudi. Based on the Wu dialect's four tones — level (平, *píng*), rising (上 *shàng*), departing (去, *qù*), and entering (入, *rù*) tones — as the primary tonal features of ancient pronunciation, it provides a fundamental basis for the pronunciation

Example No. 1

Jia Daqun. *Capriccio — Liyuan Bamboo Tune.* Full score, mm. 1–6



of Kunqu lyrics. The silky-smooth "watermill melody" (水磨调, *shuǐmó diào*) technique in singing, the slow and prolonged "pat-the-cold-board" (拍捱冷板, *pāi ái lěng bǎn*) rhythm, as well as the delicate, lingering and continuous use of breath, etc., align seamlessly with the tonal and performance strengths of the qudi according to the melody generation and organisation method of "following the words" (依字行腔, *yī zì xíng qiāng*) based on the four-tone pronunciation. When combined with the mutual assistance and compatibility of human voice and instrumental music, the Kunqu Opera singing techniques of "carrying the melody" (带腔, *dài qiāng*) and "embellishing the melody" (润腔, *rùn qiāng*) are mirrored by the qudi's corresponding techniques of "reliance on melody" (依腔, *yī qiāng*) and "adhering to the key" (贴调, *tiē diào*), further highlight the complementary combination of lyrics and music, tune and voice. Thus, since becoming the main instrument for Kunqu opera accompaniment, the ancient zhudi bamboo flute (竹笛, *zhúdí*) has further enhanced its cultural character. Indeed, it can be seen that the "Mother of All Operas" has made a considerable contribution to the modern development of the zhudi, whose soft feminine tone is evocative of the lingering and elegant Kunqu opera singing style.

In *Impromptu — Liyuan String Poem* (即兴曲—梨园弦诗, *jíxìngqū — líyuán xián shī*), in addition to the solitary and exquisite soliloquy of the erhu (Chinese 2-string fiddle) solo, the unique timbre of the "three major instruments of Beijing Opera" (京剧三大件, *jīngjù sāndàjiàn*) stands out prominently above the solo and the orchestra to create a distinctively rich Beijing opera flavour. The three major instruments of Beijing opera originally consisted of the jinghu (京胡, *jīnghú*), yueqin (月琴, *yuèqín*), and sanxian (三弦, *sānxián*). However, in modern times, the fixed combination has become the jinghu, yueqin and jing erhu (京二胡, *jīng èrhú*). The jinghu, which has a bright, loud and full tone, is the leading instrument in the accompaniment. In Beijing Opera performances, its highly variegated accompaniment follows and supports the vocal lines. Particularly suited for playing lyrical and soft melodies, the jinghu can also produce sonorous and exciting strong sounds that play a key role in the performance of scenes and characters. It is complemented by the lower pitch range and mellow, full-bodied tone of the jīng èrhú (Beijing two-stringed fiddle), whose use was notably advocated by the world-famous Beijing Opera performer Mei Lanfang. The main function of the jing erhu is to assist the tone colour expression of the leading jinghu, ensuring that while it dominates the high frequencies, it does not become overly thin or abrupt, thus softening and harmonising the tone colour. The full-moon-like shape of the yueqin, which symbolises reunion, has a beautiful connotation in Chinese culture. Making up one of the three major instruments of Beijing Opera, it is a plucked instrument that complements the main and secondary families of traditional Chinese string instruments. Possessing a clear and bright timbre, its rich complement of playing techniques are capable of producing a strong rhythm. It specialises in expressing lively and dynamic images, like "big and small pearls falling on a jade plate." Its playing techniques and timbre performance complement the main and secondary huqin. The three major instruments of Beijing Opera are the instrumental soul of Beijing Opera performance. Not only do they support, sustain, complement, and enhance the vocal performance of the lead actor, but also present relatively independent melodic patterns, effectively shaping and guiding the theatrical atmosphere and transitions within the scene. Their vibrant, dynamic, and strikingly bright tonal qualities can soar high above the instrumental ensemble. Neither the intense percussion of martial arts scenes nor the full force of a symphony orchestra

can obscure their penetrating timbre, resulting in a profoundly moving artistic impact. [8]

Rhapsody — The Soul of Liyuan Opera (狂想曲—梨园腔魂, *kuángxiǎngqǔ — líyuán qiāng hún*) evokes the fiery feelings of North-Western Qin Opera artists with a wild solo played on the suona (唢呐, *suǒnà*), a traditional double-reeded instrument resembling the European shawm. The Qin Opera (Qinqiang) form, which originated in the Shaanxi and Gansu provinces, was originally a folk song and dance music genre popular among the Qin and Long people. From the Zhou Dynasty onwards, the Ganlong and Guanzhong regions of Shaanxi formed the seat of the ancient Qin state, from which Qin Opera derived its name. It is also called bangzi or "clapper" opera (梆子腔, *bāngzi qiāng*) because of the prominent use of a date-wood clapper (枣木梆子, *zǎo mù bāngzi*) as a percussion instrument. As the precursor of Bangzi Opera, Qin Opera establishes the foundation for musical dramatics through its banqiang (板腔, *bǎnqiāng*) structure and distinctive vocal melodies. The banqiang structure involves the use of symmetrical upper and lower phrases as the basic unit of its melody. Following certain principles, a series of different musical phrases or sections (板式, *bǎnshì*) is formed through variations in beat, rhythm, tempo, and melody. The vocal style, which is based on the Shaanxi Guanzhong dialect, incorporates linguistic elements of poetry, lyrics, and songs from the Han and Tang dynasties. Following its development and maturity in the middle of the Ming Dynasty, it spread throughout the rest of the country, gradually evolving into a variety of Bangzi Opera genres in different places. There are two main types of vocal style in Qinqiang: the huanyinqiang (欢音腔, *huānyīnqiāng*) and the kuyinqiang (苦音腔, *kǔyīnqiāng*). The vigorous and powerful huanyinqiang ("joyful vocal style") is suited to expressing emotions of joy, happiness, brightness, and boldness, while the kuyinqiang ("sorrowful vocal style"), mimics a mournful or grieving tone through its use of specific tonal features, making it suitable for expressing emotions of passion, heroism, sadness, and desolation. The kuyinqiang is the most prominent feature of Qinqiang music. Qin Opera originally features wide-ranging tones and robust vocal strength, with a straightforward and unrestrained singing style that aligns with the vast and rugged geographical environment of Northwest China. Its majestic sound combines a heroic and tragic atmosphere with a light-hearted, yet delicate and often humorous style to represent the simple and unadorned folk spirit of the Northwest region. Jia Daqun uses the suona solo to express the style of Qin Opera not only because of its unique tonal qualities — high-pitched, desolate, bright, and full-bodied — which align with the tragic and solemn colour of Qinqiang music, but also due to its widespread application in various genres of opera, dance and instrumental music, as well as in folk rituals such as weddings, funerals, ceremonies, and festivals, confirming its deep roots in everyday life and culture. Thus, the composer's use of the suona solo refers to something deeply rooted in people's hearts and closely connected with their daily lives.

The four movements and their respective instruments (or combinations) with highly distinctive timbres vividly portray the four operatic styles — Sichuan, Kunqu, Beijing, and Qinqiang — through unique soundscapes. As outstanding representatives of the dramatic arts spread across China's 9.6 million square kilometres, from the southwest to the northeast, these opera styles unfold like a painted scroll. The composer uses them to vividly showcase their origins, transformations, accumulation, and regeneration, encapsulating thousands of years of the traditional Chinese dramatic music legacy.

Dramatic Rhetoric of Musical Characterisation and Structural Logic in Traditional Opera

The four movements of *Liyuan* are built upon distinct and unique instrumental timbres, forming multidimensional scenic constructs of close-up, mid-range, and distant perspectives through the collaboration of solo and orchestral performances that embody rich dramatic connotations. The construction of pure instrumental musical drama benefits from the presence of dramatic elements and the manifestation of dramatic qualities.

In a defined physical space, such as a concert hall, the composer, the sound body (performers or instruments) and the audience constitute the three essential elements of an immediate, live music drama presentation. The composer acts as the main architect of the music drama's progression, the sound body carries out the presentation, and the audience experiences and perceives the music's progression. These three elements form a cyclical effect through the continuous process of rhetorical construction, performance presentation and emotional reception. In terms of performance presentation, ordinary drama relies on the actors' language (monologues and dialogues) and physicality (actions and expressions) to achieve performance. In contrast, the performing subject of musical drama is the soundscape — the performing entity that produces sounds in a theatrical stage or other theatrical space, which may include human voices, instruments, or even virtual sounds.

Drama is characterised by its inherent "dramatic quality" or "theatricality, without which quality there is no drama, and a performance is unlikely to captivate the audience." Since the cognition and thinking of "dramatic quality" is always in the process of exploration and discussion, the proposals of "conflict theory," "radical change theory," and "dialogue theory" are actually based on different perspectives. However, from the perspective of the overall system of drama creation, "dramatic quality" is a comprehensive embodiment of all the attributes of dramatic art. It connects with various elements of drama and is particularly closely related to the relationship between the subject and the object of the drama. From the rhetorical perspective of the subject of dramatic creation (i.e., creators and performers), elements such as atmosphere rendering, suspense setting, and conflict construction are all actions aimed at "awakening" and "stimulating" the audience's emotions. On the audience's (the object's) reception level, this involves fully perceiving the efforts of the subject, where emotions are "awakened" and "stimulated," and the audience's psychology rises and falls with the development of the drama. This is the "effect" achieved by drama. "Theatricality" or "dramatic quality" is thus not only reflected in the rhetorical expectations constructed by the subject, but also in the implementation of effects as perceived by the object. The dramatic characteristics of musical theatre, especially in purely instrumental music, differ significantly from regular theatre or stage musical theatre. The core difference lies in the non-explicit character settings and relationships comprising the essence of "dramatic quality," which are challenging to manifest clearly. In purely instrumental music, the "sound body" (音响体, *yīnxiǎng tǐ*) becomes the primary medium for expressing musical theatre's drama. This effect is achieved by means of several functions, including the characterisation of roles via specific timbres, the interplay between different sections of the sound body, the creation of musical spatiality, and the progression of the musical narrative.

Let us consider the second movement *Liyuan Bamboo Melody* as an example, which encapsulates a miniature musical drama.

The highlight of this movement consists in the musical characterisation of the solo instrument's timbre, which forms the core of its dramatic qualities.

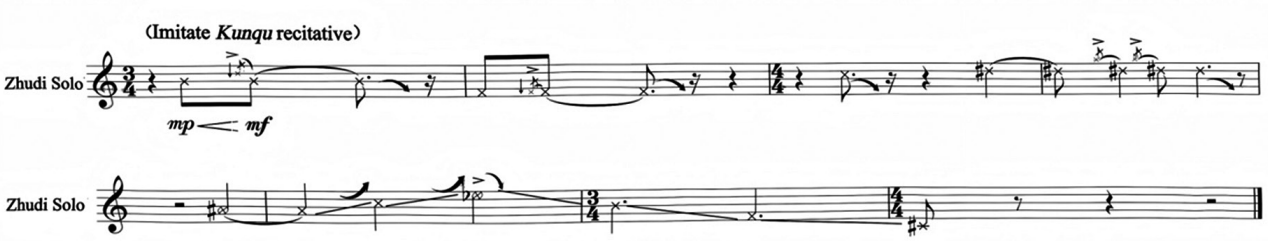
The orchestration of *Liyuan Bamboo Melody* consists of a solo zhudi and a large national orchestral ensemble. The zhudi holds an extremely prominent and crucial role throughout the entire movement. It interweaves and interacts with wind instruments, plucked instruments, bowed string instruments, and percussion to create a dynamic musical dialogue. The selection of *G*-tuned and *D*-tuned zhudi, along with *G*-tuned and *C*-tuned bangdi (梆笛,*bāngdí*) flutes, highlights the pursuit of varied tonal expressions and colour. If, in ordinary drama, it is the performers that are at the core of the drama's existence,[2] then in musical drama, the core element must be the sound body. The sound body is what transforms the virtual record of "notes" that were originally just symbolic on the score into a real, living, audible and perceptible "sound characteristic" state, effectively connecting the composer's musical rhetoric with the audience's psychological perception.

The solo zhudi in *Liyuan Bamboo Melody* representing the centre of the sound system of this movement is equivalent to the "monodrama" in drama. The composer employs an appropriately nuanced timbre to present the zhudi, endowing it with a characterised role and imitative quality (Example No. 2). At the beginning of the movement, the *D*-key bamboo flute introduces a micro tremolo and air-vibrated tone on the *B* note, accompanied by the crisp wooden sounds of the wooden fish. This immediately immerses the listener in the elegantly distant atmosphere of Kunqu Opera, exuding a strong sense of literary refinement. The subtle imitation of the tonal inflections of the Kunqu spoken lines flows gently, with continuous descending and ascending tones, serving as a sonic mimicry of the Kunqu singing technique of "shaping the melody according to the word tones" (依字声行腔, *yī zì shēng xíng qiāng*).

The flowing, lyrical, and rhythmically nuanced sustained melodies that follow resemble an eloquent and precise "monologue," shaping the dignified and graceful image of the Zheng Dan (正旦, *zhèng dàn*) or "straight role," typically portraying married, dignified and

Example No. 2

Jia Daqun. *Capriccio — Liyuan Bamboo Tune.* Full score, mm. 9–16



[2] There are two theories about the elements that make up a drama: the "three elements" theory and the "four elements" theory. The "three elements" interpretation focus on the three relationships between the drama, namely the playwright, the actors and the audience, while the "four elements" approach adds the place where the drama takes place — the theater — thus placing an accent on immediacy. Whether the "three elements" or the "four elements" approach is taken, in any case the most important element of drama is the artistes. A relevant discussion can be found in the book *戏剧概论* [Drama Introduction] authored by 河竹登志夫 [Kawatake Toshio], specifically in Chapter 2 titled *本质要素* [Essential Elements]. It was published by Sichuan People's Publishing House in October 2018.

elegant women (Example No. 3). The zhudi's vocalised tonal quality closely approximates the human voice; its long-standing use in Kunqu to perform supporting vocalisation (托腔, *tuō qiāng*) accompaniment harmonises well with Kunqu aesthetics.

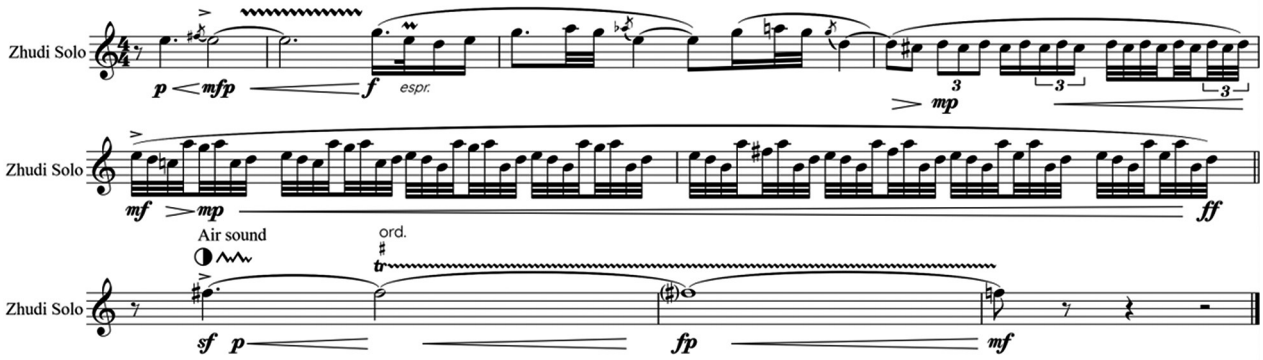
"Role" is an indispensable subject in theatrical performance. In traditional theatre, actors play characters (roles), shaping their images and driving the drama forward through specific language, expressions, and actions. In instrumental music, however, "roles" are presented in an assumed, virtual manner. They are created through the multidimensional simulation of various instrumental tones, forming a series of rhetorical expressions. These convey intuitive perceptions to the listener, who, by combining their understanding of roles with these sound impressions, forms symbolic and personal interpretations at a psychological level, thereby shaping the "human" form. The bamboo flute solo in *Liyuan Bamboo Melody* demonstrates intricate and refined rhetorical techniques in the progressive characterisation of roles through "mimicry of sound," "expression of emotion," and "shaping of form" (塑形):

– mimicry of Sound (拟声, *nǐ shēng*)[3] — the warm and gentle recitative of the bamboo flute in the mid-range registers emulates the melodic cadence of a Jiangnan woman's speech, creating an intimate sonic impression;

– expression of Emotion (表情, *biǎoqíng*)[4] — through the deliberate tempo, rhythm with varied pacing, and sinuously expressive phrasing, the bamboo flute vividly portrays the woman's lively and expressive features;

Example No. 3

Jia Daqun. *Capriccio — Liyuan Bamboo Tune.*
Full score, mm. 29–37



[3] "Mimicry of sound," also known in English as "onomatopoeia," is defined in the seventh edition of the Modern Chinese Dictionary ((现代汉语词典, *xiàndài hànyǔ cídiǎn*) as the simulation of various sound effects from nature and social life in film production and opera performances, such as the sounds of thunder, hoofbeats, etc. Generally, "mimicry of sound" (拟声) refers to the simulation of natural sounds, while "onomatopoeia" (拟声词, *nǐ shēng cí*; also known as 象声词, *xiàng shēng cí*) is a word that simulates the sounds of things, which is closely related to the pronunciation of language. As part of the main art form presented in the auditory domain, "mimicry of sound" is the most common and original rhetorical device in music.

[4] "Expression of emotion" (表情, *biǎoqíng*), a commonly used Chinese term, refers to the act of expressing inner thoughts and feelings through changes in facial expressions or posture, or the external manifestation of inner emotions and ideas. In a narrow sense, "expression of emotion" refers only to facial expressions, while in a broader sense, it includes postural expressions and other bodily expressions.n

– shaping of Form (塑形, *sùxíng*)[5] — by employing subtle variations in tone, pitch, and inflection, the flute anthropomorphically conveys the woman's gestures, figure, and even psychological disposition. Her elegant posture, swaying skirt, and hesitant steps evoke the vivid imagery of a young maiden like Du Liniang (protagonist of the play *The Peony Pavilion* written by dramatist Tang Xianzu in 1598), wistfully sighing "Slender threads of sunny silk drift across the quiet courtyard, spring sways like fine lines..." The girl's youthful beauty, coupled with her coy and dreamy longing, is delicately brought to life.

The musical structure of *Liyuan Bamboo Melody* not only exhibits the characteristics of a three-part dramatic structure but also reflects the structural logic of Chinese opera. From the perspective of the three-part dramatic structure, the opening, middle section, and ending represent distinct stages of the narrative, each fulfilling essential dramatic functions. The "opening" introduces the background and main characters, the "middle section" develops the events, and the "ending" steers the narrative toward its resolution. The opening of *Liyuan Bamboo Melody* spans from the beginning of the piece to section reh. 5, with the solo *D*-key flute serving as the core element of the passage. The sustained tremolo on the *B* note and the breathing sound, accompanied by the timbres of wind instruments (笙, *shēng*), plucked instruments including yangqin (扬琴, *yángqín*), liuqin (柳琴, *liǔqín*), pipa (琵琶, *pípá*), ruan (阮, *ruǎn*), guzheng (古筝, *gǔzhēng*), bowed instruments including gaohu (高胡, *gāohú*), erhu and various low-pitched string instruments, and percussion instruments (wooden fish, sand chime, timpani, glockenspiel, vibraphone, tone tree), evoke the theatrical atmosphere of Kunqu opera. The bamboo flute imitates the distinct cadences of Kunqu recitation with fluid, lyrical vocal-like phrasing, serving as a personification of the Kunqu dan character through its timbre. This use of the bamboo flute symbolises the entrance of a dramatic character. The middle section is relatively long, extending from reh. 6 to reh. 22. In the 200-plus measures, while the wind instruments, plucked instruments, percussion instruments, and bowed string instruments each present contrasting transformations of their respective dominant motifs, the bamboo flute solo consistently assumes the role of a "protagonist," standing out prominently above the sound lines with elegance and mastery. This is achieved through a progression from sparse to dense textures, a gradual increase in speed, and seamless integration with other instrumental groups, vividly portraying the character's emotions and actions, while propelling the musical drama forward to a sonic climax. The conclusion enters at the peak of the climax, with the qudi solo returning to the "monologue" of Kunqu vocal recitative and fluid lyrical passages, shifting the tonal atmosphere from intensity back to subtle elegance, eventually leading to silence and reflection.

If the three-part structure is considered a more universal framework for dramatic structures, the "suite of linked musical forms" (曲牌联套体, *qǔpái lián tào tǐ*) is a structure unique to Chinese opera. It combines multiple distinctive "tunes" (曲牌, *qǔpái*) according to specific principles, seeking unity within

[5] Shaping of form (塑形, *sùxíng*) refers to creating an image or form, often using malleable materials like clay or earthenware to craft tangible shapes. In the fields of literature and art, it typically involves using specific artistic materials or expressive methods — such as language and text, colours and lines, sounds and rhythms, or physical movements — to shape and present an image or character.

variation and achieving coherence amidst diversity. The composer explicitly declares the structural intention of *Liyuan Bamboo Melody* on the title page of the score: "Drawing creative inspiration from the operatic art that embodies the soul of traditional Chinese culture, while structuring the composition through the stylised methods of the ancient Kunqu Opera's qupai system."[6] The musical composition includes several distinct sonic elements, each characterised by its own dominant melodic motif. These motifs are combined and overlaid in different forms during the progression of the piece, adhering to the structural logic of "scattered–slow–medium–fast–scattered" (散－慢－中－快－散, *sàn–màn–zhōng–kuài–sàn*). This structural principle reflects the traditional framework used in Chinese opera. The composition explicitly draws inspiration from the phrasing techniques of ancient Kunqu opera to organise its movements and melodies. The four sections of the piece correspond to slow, slow-moderate, fast, medium, and slow tempos, respectively, faithfully reflecting the operatic approach to structure and pacing.

The first section marked "Scattered" (散, *sàn*), covering measures 1–47, concludes at reh. 5, with a tempo marking of ♩ = 54. Although written with 4/4 and 3/4 time signatures, the music is not strictly constrained by metre. The solo *D*-tuned qudi employs sustained tremolos, breathy tones, upward and downward slides mimicking spoken Kunqu Opera recitation, and flowing lyrical phrasing, effectively portraying the image of a young female character (妙龄五旦, *miàolíng wǔ dàn*) in Kunqu Opera. The musical characteristics are: slow speed, without a uniform and regular rhythm cycle; the main method of the zhudi solo in shaping the female role is to simulate the recitation of human voice such that its tone and rhythm are naturally formed according to the human breathing rhythm, leaving more empty space; wind instruments, plucked instruments, percussion instruments and string instruments are carefully used for accompaniment; the sound of the orchestra is elegant, highlighting the unique status of the qudi.

The second part "Slow"–"Medium" (慢－中, *màn–zhōng*), measures 48–96, reh. 6 – reh. 10, has a slower tempo, between ♩ = 48 and ♩ = 54, and gradually transitions to medium speed. In the ensemble, all instrumental timbres participate to form a full orchestral texture. A prominent melodic theme having a poignant and desolate quality is initially played by the string instruments. This is followed by the wind instruments resonating in the higher register, and finally, the qudi takes the spotlight with its tremolos, Kunqu-inspired vocal-like phrasing, and flowing melodic lines, fully showcasing its solo expressive role in the "slow" section. Then the main body is played by the flowing solo, and the speed of the music is increased to medium tempo. The musical characteristics of this passage are as follows: the orchestra's first full ensemble performance employs diverse and distinct playing techniques and timbres across the instrumental families of wind (吹, *chuī*), string (拉, *lā*), plucked (弹, *dàn*), and percussion (打, *dǎ*) to create an enthusiastic atmosphere. The solo qudi reprises its leading role but significantly expands the flowing lyrical phrasing (流水行腔, *liúshuǐ xíng qiāng*). Among all the instrumental presentations, the primary melodic motif derived from the bamboo flute's flowing lyrical phrasing undergoes transformation and radiates to the percussion, plucked, wind, and solo qudi parts, becoming the central motivic element guiding this section.

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[6] Jia Daqun. *Capriccio — Liyuan Zhuyun* (Full Score). Preface. Shanghai Music Publishing House, 2019.

The third section, "Fast" (快, *kuài*) (97–256 measures, reh. 11 – reh. 22), progresses at a relatively quick tempo, beginning with ♩ = 108. It serves as the core of the musical drama, portraying its entire development process. It begins with an extension of the solo qudi's improvisational melody through rapid, dense note patterns in succession, transitioning into triplets and large interval leaps that alternate with ensemble performances from the wind, string, plucked, and percussion sections. Then, it progresses into a concerto-like segment between the solo part and the orchestra, where both interact in a "question and answer" format, effectively expanding on thematic motifs originating from the plucked instrument group. After reh. 16, the solo instrument switches to the bāngdí in *G* tuning, which is characterised by a bright and high-pitched timbre, to intensify the dramatic emotions to a climax. Then, it transitions to the softer and smoother tone of the bāngdí in *C* tuning, where it coordinates with the orchestra through vertical pitch and rhythm counterpoint, while the *G*-tuned bass dadi (低音大笛, *dīyīn dàdí*) showcases an elaborate passage enriched with techniques such as long finger tremolos, trills, grace notes, and continuous flutter tonguing. The musical characteristics of this passage are as follows: It has a large-scale structure and demonstrates a "gradual" progression to advance the musical drama. The passage begins at a fast tempo and gradually slows down, while the texture transitions inversely, from sparse to dense. Initially, the solo bamboo flute is lightly accompanied, but this develops into a rich orchestral climax as various instrumental groups gradually join in. The melodic shape of the bamboo flute transforms from continuous, ornate statements to large intervallic leaps with alternating legato and staccato phrases, eventually breaking into motive-like short fragments. These fragments interact and merge with the orchestra's sound, becoming an integrated whole. The cadenza-like passage serves as a natural peak of the musical drama, with the bass bamboo flute performing the "main character" role, bringing the music to its penultimate stage.

The fourth part "Scattered" (散, *sàn*), covering measures 257–308, reh. 23 – reh. 28, returns to a dispersed rhythm section (散板段落, *sàn bǎn duànluò*) with the solo qudi as the protagonist. The musical characteristics of the "scattered ending" (散出, *sànchū*) section may be described as follows. Although the materials used are the same as in the "scattered introduction" (散起, *sàn qǐ*) section, their focus differs. The "scattered introduction" emphasises mimicry of the personalised vocal intonations of Kunqu opera to shape the image of the Wudan (五旦, *wǔ dàn*) [one of the four main female roles in Chinese opera] character. In contrast, the "scattered ending" expands the flowing, lyrical phrasing and integrates variations of the thematic motifs from the plucked and bowed string instruments. It concludes with the breathy sounds and sustained tremolo of the qudi, which is accompanied by the extended tones of the plucked and bowed string instruments, achieving a complementary relationship between the introduction and ending sections.

The music structure of *Liyuan Bamboo Melody* is presented in the Table 1.

Genre Rhetoric of Sound Subject Layout and Logic of Genre Naming

The musical form of *Liyuan* is an innovative type of national instrumental concerto suite, which not only highlights the original sonic essence of the concerto but also actively explores new possibilities in formal expression.

In late 16th-century Italy, the Venetian School composers Andrea Gabrieli and his nephew Giovanni Gabrieli, inspired by the unique architectural structure of St. Mark's Basilica, divided the church orchestra and choir into several smaller groups. These groups

Table 1. Music Structure of *Liyuan Bamboo Melody*

Four-part structure	**Scattered**	**Slow-Medium**		**Fast**			**Scattered**
Passage (full score rehearsal number)	Start rehs. 1; 2; 3; 4; 5	Rehs. 6; 7; 8; 9; 10		Rehs. 11; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16; 17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22			Rehs. 23; 24; 25; 26; 27; 28
Tempo	♩ = 54	♩ = 48	♩ = 54	♩ = 108	♩ = 96	♩ = 42	♩ = 48
Section start and end	1–47	48–96		97–185		186–256	257–308
Three-part structure	**Opening**	**Middle section**					**Ending**

were placed in different locations within the basilica to perform alternately and responsively, creating contrasting and antiphonal effects in sound. This approach is considered the origin of the concerto. The original meaning of the Latin word "concerto" (in Chinese, "竞赛，竞争" refers to "race" or "competition") corresponding to the musical term refers the relationship of competitive interplay and mutual brilliance between the two main sound bodies that form the music. In this case, the main body can be the entire orchestra or some instruments in the orchestra (inner group), another group of instruments outside the orchestra (outer group), or even a solo instrument. The relationship between the two sound subjects determines the genre characteristics of the music.

The concerto sonic relationships in *Liyuan* fall into three categories: solo instrument-orchestra, large instrumental group-orchestra, and small instrumental group-orchestra. The second and fourth movements of *Liyuan* follow the solo instrument-orchestra relationship. The second movement features the bamboo flute as the solo instrument, while the fourth movement highlights the suona, both presenting forms characteristic of a solo concerto. The third movement involves a small ensemble of four string instruments (erhu, jinghu, jing erhu, and yueqin) interacting with the orchestra. Within this ensemble, the erhu acts as a solo instrument, while the Three Major Instruments of the Beijing Opera (jinghu, jing erhu, and yueqin) form a fixed grouping, functioning together as a second solo entity. The erhu's soft, delicate timbre starkly contrasts with the bold, resonant quality of the Beijing Opera trio, creating multiple layers of contrasting and complementary relationships: between the erhu and the Beijing Opera trio, the erhu and orchestra, the Beijing Opera trio and orchestra, and all three elements together — resulting in a multidimensional, three-level concerto framework. In the first movement, a large group of over 30 percussion instruments contrasts with the orchestra. This ensemble includes 25 solo percussion instruments (various gongs, tanggu, paigu, bass drums, wooden fish, clappers, cymbals, and cowbells) as well as six Sichuan Opera percussion instruments (bangu, zhong tanggu, luo, chuanbo, maluo, and jiaozi), which contribute a distinct local Sichuan flavour.

Although each musical subject (主体, *zhǔtǐ*) is defined by its unique characteristics, whether as an instrument or ensemble, the relationships between these musical subjects extend beyond simple "contrast" or "competition." Contrast typically refers to the comparison between two

different entities. In music, contrasts can vary significantly, with "complete contrast" and "derivative contrast" being distinctive forms. Complete contrast is achieved by employing entirely different elements such as melody, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, tonality, texture, and instrumentation to create distinct musical forms. On the other hand, derivative contrast refers to cases where, although the final state of the sound bodies is different, there remain subtle connections in aspects such as structural mechanics, melodic direction, rhythmic patterns, and texture characteristics, indicating that the new sound body is "derived" from a pre-existing one. Under the guiding principles of Chinese traditional aesthetics, which emphasise "overall coordination" and the concept of "precious harmony," the coexistence of two subjects is more commonly expressed through "contrast" (对照, *duìzhào*), where the two subjects refer to and correspond with each other, and "juxtaposition" (映衬, *yìngchèn*), where the two subjects highlight one another through distinct differences. The first and third movements, both featuring external instrumental groups emerging above the orchestra, exhibit distinct ways of coexistence among sound subjects. In the first movement, the Sichuan Opera percussion ensemble, rich in regional flavour, contrasts with the regular solo percussion instruments. There are commonalities in striking techniques and rhythmic expressions, as well as unique features rooted in the regional environment, which serve as a "contrast" for the main sound bodies. In the third movement's triple concerto, the elegant and refined timbre of the erhu from the Jiangnan region alternates and complements the bold and sharp Beijing opera acoustic characteristics of the north. Simultaneously, both share and transform a melodic pattern with the orchestra, achieving harmony and unity among the three sound subjects through this method.

The second highlight of the *Liyuan* genre is the taoqu or divertimento (套曲, *tàoqū*). The taoqu comprises several movements, each having a relatively independent scope and method of expression. However, a close connection between the movements is maintained by a common logic that organically combines the movements into a unified whole. The four movements of *Liyuan* resemble the structure of the four-movement sonata form in terms of tempo arrangement: fast-slow-fast-very fast. Each movement's tempo is closely related to the solo instrument used and the characteristics it portrays. The first movement, *Liyuan Drum Charm*, uses Sichuan Opera gongs and drums as the rhythmic material throughout the whole piece to create a bright and lively atmosphere. The second movement, *Liyuan Bamboo Melody*, uses the melodious timbre of the bamboo flute solo to highlight the graceful characteristics of the Kunqu Opera, which creates a slow and soft atmosphere; the third movement, *Liyuan String Poem*, which combines hardness with pliancy, uses the three major instruments of the Beijing Opera having a strong Beijing flavour to echo the solo erhu; the fourth movement, *Liyuan Soul of the Melody*, condenses the customs and feelings of the Northwest with the high-pitched and desolate timbre of the solo suona. The use of instruments highlights distinctive melodic timbres, evokes diverse regional atmospheres, and conveys symbolic significance.

The generic naming of the work is unique. Here "naming" refers to the solemn act of providing a title. Composers often carefully consider the naming of the musical form of their original works, thus demonstrating their musical intellectual thinking. The aptly named titles of the four movements of which Liyuan is comprised are as follows: Overture, Capriccio, Impromptu, and Rhapsody. The entire piece begins with the concise and refined *Liyuan Drum Charm*, followed by the three movements *Liyuan Bamboo Melody*, *Liyuan String Poem*, and *Liyuan Soul of the Melody*. This structure resembles an

"introduction" followed by a "main body." The latter three movements of *Liyuan* exhibit a highly unified design, not only reflected in the slow–fast–slow symmetrical tempo structure but also in the symmetrical arrangement of solo concerto-small ensemble concerto-solo concerto. What holds even greater significance is the concurrent use of the Capriccio, Impromptu, and Rhapsody, which demonstrates an overarching conceptual coherence. Although these three musical forms have differing origins and historical developments, their lexical meanings reveal strikingly similar characteristics: an implicit expression of "freedom and lack of constraint, unrestricted by rules." The Capriccio has a relatively long history, evolving from the strict imitation of contrapuntal writing in the 16th century to a freer, more fanciful form in the 18th century. The Impromptu and Rhapsody, on the other hand, originated as characteristic musical pieces in the 19th century. The former is founded on the longstanding tradition of improvisation, while the latter became a vivid expression of musical nationalism, favoured by composers of the European national music schools. The composer successfully integrates these three genres by perceptively recognising their close commonalities as part of a seemingly effortless and spontaneous creative approach that is free from the constraints of rigid rules. The compositions lack fixed structures, seldom adhering to common structural principles such as contrast, variation, or recapitulation. Rather, they exhibit a fluid yet unified framework. The overarching character reflects a strongly Romantic spirit: either contemplative and dreamy or passionate and uninhibited. The inclusion of folk music elements further amplifies the expression of national characteristics. The naming of these musical forms aligns with the refined cultural essence of Chinese scholars throughout history, who have consistently pursued freedom and boundless creativity in spirit and thought, uninhibited by the constraints of worldly rules. However, this seemingly arbitrary mental state embodies a deliberately "engaged" approach to life, maintaining personal independence amidst a chaotic and tumultuous world. It reflects a supreme pursuit of an ideal state of life, imbued with profound philosophical meaning.

The *Liyuan* Spirit Rooted in the Ecology of Chinese Opera

The title of the work, *Liyuan*, encapsulates the widespread understanding of Chinese opera as an art form centred around music within the Chinese cultural context. Liyuan is another name for "opera troupe" in Chinese. Usually, opera troupes or theater groups are called "Liyuan," actors are called "Liyuan children," while families whose generations have been engaged in opera are called "Liyuan family." Its origin can be traced back to the rule of the Tang Dynasty Emperor Xuanzong, during which the "Liyuan" was established as a venue for performing and teaching music and dance.

The Tang Huiyao, Volume 34, On Music (唐会要 • 卷三十四 • 论乐, *Táng huì yào juǎn sānshísì lùn lè*) records that: "In the second year of the Kaiyuan reign (714 AD), the Emperor [Xuanzong], with no pressing matters of state, during his leisure time after attending to governmental affairs, personally taught court melodies (法曲, *fǎqū*) in the Liyuan (Pear Garden), achieving excellence in this endeavour, and named the participants the 'Emperor's Disciples of the Pear Garden'." [9, p. 734] In the Old Book of Tang Treatise on Music Volume 8 (旧唐书音乐志 卷八, *Jiù táng shū yīnyuè zhì juǎn bā*) it is recorded that: "Emperor Xuanzong, during his leisure time after attending to state affairs, personally taught 300 young musicians from the Imperial Ministry of Ceremonies (太常, *tàicháng*) to play instrumental compositions (丝竹之戏, *sīzhú zhī xì*, lit. 'silk and bamboo opera'). When all the instruments sounded together, if there was

any mistake in a single note, Emperor Xuanzong would immediately discern it and correct it." [10, p. 709] These performers were referred to as "disciples of the Emperor" and also known as "disciples of the Pear Garden," since the performance institute was established near the imperial orchard called the Pear Garden. In the New Book of Tang, Records of Rites and Music, Scroll 12 (新唐书 • 礼乐志 • 卷十二, *Xīn táng shū lǐ yuè zhì juǎn shí'èr*), it is stated that: "Emperor Xuanzong, being well-versed in musical theory and deeply passionate about court music, selected 300 children of imperial musicians from the music bureau to be trained in the Pear Garden. If there was any mistake in the music, the emperor would immediately notice and correct it himself. These trainees were called the Emperor's Pear Garden Disciples (皇帝梨园弟子, *huángdì líyuán dìzi*). Hundreds of palace maidens who resided in the northern quarters of Yichun also became disciples of the Liyuan. Liyuan's musical department additionally established a smaller unit consisting of over 30 musicians specialising in specific tones and sounds." [11, p. 315]

According to the records of the aforementioned historical texts, in the second year of the Kaiyuan era (714 CE), Emperor Xuanzong selected approximately 300 individuals from the "sitting performance troupe" of the Taichang Temple. In the imperial garden known as the Liyuan, he personally taught them Faqu court music (法曲, *fǎqū*). Those selected as musicians were called "Emperor's Liyuan disciples" due to their dedication to serving the emperor. From the second year of the Kaiyuan era (714 AD), when the Liyuan was established, to its dissolution in the 14th year of the Dali era (779 AD), the institution of the Liyuan existed for over half a century. It spanned the entirety of the flourishing Tang Dynasty and served as a microcosm of the development of musical art during that time. Although it declined during the An Lushan Rebellion and by the mid-to-late Tang Dynasty had already been incorporated into the Jiaofang (Imperial Music Bureau), the name "Liyuan" was preserved.

The Liyuan, which initially served as a venue exclusively for the recreation of royal family members, evolved into an institution where the emperor personally instructed performers in Faqu court music, signifying a fundamental change in its function. Later, the establishment of subdivisions such as the Liyuan Bejiao Institute, Liyuan New Institute, Zuo Department, Li Department, Female Department, and Small Department marked the further professionalisation and systematisation of the Liyuan institution. It combined performance rehearsals with teaching functions, resembling modern musical theatre troupes, as it focused on both the preparation of performances and the cultivation of specialised talent. During the Tang Dynasty, the primary role of the Liyuan institution was to study and practise the Faqu form of court music. Faqu integrated poetic lyrics and music, as well as accompanying songs by dance. Additional elements of representational performance were subtly present, making Liyuan a seminal influence on the later development of musical theatre. [12]

The form of Chinese-style musical theatre known as Xiqu (戏曲, *xìqǔ*) or simply "Chinese opera" has a long history and significant impact. It integrates singing, speaking, acting, and martial arts into a cohesive whole. Through highly stylised performances, actors create vivid theatrical scenarios and lifelike characters, establishing Xiqu as a central element in both Chinese social life and aesthetic culture. Especially after the Ming and Qing dynasties, nearly all cultural activities in Chinese folk life — from worshipping gods, celebrating festivals, holding weddings and funerals, to daily interactions and leisure — were inseparably tied to opera. The vast and rich content of opera depicted everything from the political struggles

of kings and generals, the love stories of scholars and beauties, business activities of craftsmen and merchants, to perilous adventures and the life experiences of monks and Taoists. It also covered various scenes, such as urban towns, rural landscapes, wild mountains, ancient ridges, rivers, and water alleys. The ideas promoted in opera, such as loyalty, filial piety, integrity, helping the weak, praising the virtuous, and condemning the corrupt, reflected traditional Chinese moral and ethical values. Chinese opera is the richest integrated musical art form in Chinese artistic traditions, merging poetry, vocal styles, instrumental music, physical expression, martial arts, stage aesthetics, scenery, costumes, and facial makeup. It interconnects with other art forms and advances them collectively, following the ancient Chinese development path of integrating poetry, lyrics, and songs. Before the Tang Dynasty, opera achieved the blending of different ethnic cultures. In the flourishing Tang period, it absorbed cultural elements from the Western Regions and Indian Buddhism. By the Northern Song period, it already incorporated influences from Roman, Jewish, and Islamic cultures, forming a synthesised musical theatre art that united both Chinese and foreign traditions.

Thus, opera is closely connected with the life of Chinese people. Folk culture and the lives of ordinary people form the fertile ground from which traditional opera was born. The cultural genes embedded within this foundation are refined, distilled, and disseminated through the processes of creation and performance, becoming integral components of opera and shaping its form and appearance. On the other hand, opera, through its mirrored simulation and artistic abstraction, reflects the living conditions and ideological concepts of people from different eras. It expands the narrow confines of everyday life, poetizes the mundane aspects of existence, and provides philosophical insights into life. Chinese opera also serves as an effective medium for emotional communication. By presenting stories within specific scenes or contexts, it stirs the emotions of its audience and resonates with their feelings. Similar or relatable plots, tones, and sentiments often trigger memories and emotional empathy, causing listeners to shed tears or laugh heartily. Through this emotional release, pain is eased, and wounds are healed. Additionally, opera distinctly highlights regional characteristics. Its dialect-infused singing styles, the unique timbres of local musical instruments, and elements such as costumes, makeup, posture, and physical movements all come together to create over 300 opera forms across China, showcasing a diverse array of artistic expressions.

Thus, it would not be an exaggeration to state that opera is the spiritual home of the Chinese nation. Throughout China's centuries-long history, Chinese opera has developed alongside the nation's evolution, embodying the essence of traditional Chinese aesthetics, serving as a deeply rooted cultural heritage, and continually adapting to contemporary trends. It acts as a mirror, reflecting the lives and emotional experiences of ordinary people, including national sentiments, karmic connections, joys, and sorrows. Closely tied to daily life, Chinese opera captures, reflects, and critiques existence, profoundly resonating with society. Distinct regional musical styles form irreplaceable symbols in opera, as seen in Liyuan. For example, the bold and straightforward tones of the "three principal instruments" of Beijing opera highlight the Jingqiang singing style, whereas the soft and delicate bamboo flute accentuates the elegance of the Kunqiang style, exemplifying the contrasting characteristics of the northern and southern traditions. Additionally, the spirited Qinqiang of the northwest and the dramatic Gaoqiang of the Sichuan Opera in the southwest each hold unique charm. These regional styles

often evoke nostalgic memories of "hometowns" to form an enduring cultural imprint intimately familiar and dear to the people.

In the context of globalisation, *Liyuan*, representing Chinese opera and the artistic life philosophy of "life as theatre, theatre as life," is deeply reflected across all regions of China. It exists as a cultural symbol that embodies the historical memory and cultural genes of the Chinese nation, serving as a vital bridge connecting the past with the present and preserving the continuity of national culture.

Conclusion

Jia Daqun's *Liyuan* uses a unique musical rhetoric strategy to construct a magnificent picture of Chinese opera culture within the framework of national instrumental concerto. This work is not only a contemporary translation of traditional opera music, but also a creative voice deeply rooted in the national cultural genes. Through the regional rhetoric of specific instrumental timbre, the dramatic rhetoric of sound humanization and opera structure, and the genre rhetoric of sound subject layout and naming — the interweaving construction of three rhetorical dimensions, it achieves a deep unity of musical form and cultural spirit.

From the perspective of the regional rhetoric of specific instrumental timbre, the composer uses four highly recognizable timbre of Sichuan opera gongs and drums, Kunqu opera flute, Beijing opera three major instruments and Qinqiang suona as brushes to outline the cultural outlines of the four major geographical regions of Southwest China, Jiangnan, North China and Northwest China in the sound space. The fiery and vigorous percussion of Sichuan opera, the graceful and gentle flute, the sonorous and bright string music of Beijing opera, and the desolate and high-pitched suona are not only the sound and image symbols of regional music characteristics, but also carry the folk customs and spiritual temperament of a place. This kind of regional writing with timbre as the carrier integrates the timbre of musical instruments and geographical humanities into an organic cultural expression system, allowing the audience to complete the cognition and identification of the national music map in the sound experience.

The humanized role of sound and the dramatic rhetoric of opera structure show the composer's profound grasp of the essence of Chinese opera art. Through the humanized role shaping of the instrument's timbre, the work successfully endows the instrument with a personalized performance, allowing the audience to form an intuitive perception of the character at the psychological level, creating a dramatic scene of virtuality and reality in pure instrumental music, so that the "silent music" has "sound emotion," and realizing a new expression of musical drama; at the same time, the musical structure of the work follows the "scattered–slow–medium–fast–scattered" logic of the Chinese opera tune link set, cleverly combining the three-stage structure of the drama with the opera structure, so that the music runs through the integrity in diversity, showing the construction thinking of traditional Chinese opera.

The exploration of musical genre rhetoric reflects the composer's intellectual thinking on musical form. The "competitive performance" relationship in the concerto tradition is expanded into a multi-dimensional dialogue between solo instruments, instrument groups and orchestras, and the free temperament of genres such as overture, capriccio, impromptu and rhapsody is integrated into the suite structure. It not only follows the classic characteristics of the concerto, but also breaks the shackles of the inherent program. It not only conveys the composer's careful design of the musical form, but also highlights his creative use of national music materials, making the work

contain a strong national spirit and romantic temperament.

The deep cultural value of "Liyuan" lies in the contemporary interpretation of the "Liyuan spirit." The composer uses "Liyuan" as a cultural symbol, pointing to the historical origins of Chinese opera art, and also metaphorically represents the Chinese nation's life attitude and aesthetic philosophy of "opera is like life." The regional collage of the four movements in the work is actually a musical symbol of the coexistence and prosperity of multi-ethnic cultures; the use of the logic of opera structure implies respect and transformation of traditional art rules; the naming of musical genres integrates the original techniques of improvisation, imagination, and dispersion of artistic creation, and the coexistence of contrast and reflection between the sound subjects, into an innovative presentation of Chinese and Western music formal thinking. In the context of globalization and modernization, the significance of Jia Daqun's large-scale national instrumental concerto *Liyuan* transcends the scope of individual works, and embodies the important position of opera in Chinese social life in a highly condensed way, further strengthening the cultural significance of opera as the spiritual home of the Chinese nation, and also provides a paradigm for national music creation that can be used for reference — how to find roots in tradition, open up in innovation, and let the ancient opera genes be reborn in contemporary music.

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