

PROF WANG Ci Zhao:

Dr Ho, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, I'm very happy to be here today to participate in this forum in Hong Kong. I've come across a lot of old friends, like Prof Julia and Dr Chan, Mr Yan, those are old friends and I have also sought out the Vice Chancellor of City University. I'm very glad to be able to meet them here and today I will be talking about the modern development of traditional Chinese music and I would like to briefly talk about the course of its development and then look at the relations between the traditional Chinese music development and also its new trends.

Traditional Chinese music is actually a very broad concept. It's very difficult to explain it in a few words, but perhaps I will summarise as follows.

Traditional Chinese music can be categorised into three types. First is old music, music of the past. Second is old musical performances that have been preserved until today. Third is the very rich repertoire of modern music still existing now days.

First, let's look at the old music or the music that was in the past. In Henan, we have unearthed some old musical instruments dating back about 7,000 years.

It's made of the bones of birds. Like a flute, it's very short and there are holes at both ends.

The next is the clay xun. It's also dated 7,000 years ago. It was unearthed from the archaeological activities. Just now we heard the xun performance. We can see that the old ones that have been unearthed date from the Shang Dynasty, more than 7,000 years ago. They actually take a similar format of what we are seeing as the xun today.

Next is the stone qing. It's dated about 3,000 years ago. It's unearthed in Shaanxi.

This is a chime or a carillon. Next we also have these bells, also dated 2,000 years. It's the kind of musical instruments from the Shang Dynasty.

Here we can see the bells unearthed in Xian. It has about 2,000 years of history. Next is this Zenghouyi chime.

Next I would like to let you listen to a short piece of music performed by the Nanjing Musical School. Prof Wang put xun and stone qing together. Why do I want to show you this piece? Because this is special. The musical instrument itself dates back 2,600 years and in other words it's in the new stone age. So the musical instrument itself, it's a cultural relic. So another instrument dates back about 2,800 years ago, so we can take a look at the performance. They use the old or traditional musical instrument to perform. Please enjoy. Because of the time constraint, we will stop there.

That is one of the oldest musical instruments we have found. It has about 2,000 years of history. They have the composition from Song Dynasty and we still have about a few hundred of those compositions.

Next we will perhaps like to listen to about half a minute of that performance.

In addition to that, we still have a lot of different kinds of musical performances, like the Xiaodiao tunes and the drums, et cetera. We also have the Chinese opera, the musical plays, the Cantonese play, Sichuan and Peking opera. And just now Mr Yan has given us a very detailed introduction of the different kinds of musical instruments that are found in the communities throughout Chinese history. We have erhu and also flute and string, et cetera, but because of limitation of time, I think we will skip that.

Next let's look at the modern development of the traditional music of China.

First, the Chinese traditional music has been affected by the western type of tradition and the way of thinking in composing music. Because of the influence of western music, the development of Chinese music has been affected. For instance, like before the 1980s, a lot of musical pieces were created, like the kind of western music. For instance, Liu Wen Jin, he has composed a piece in relation to the Great Wall of China, Tan Dun also, so these are affected by the western type of music and western type of approach in musical composition. A lot of western elements are included, but then the tunes, tempo and the skills are basically Chinese. Let's

listen to a bit of those. The Hong Kong friends may be more familiar with this piece. There are two versions of this piece. Some westerners ask, "Is this Chinese music or western music?" They say, "This is western music." Well, I think they are not wrong because It is based on the western approach in composing music, but then the musical instruments and the content are Chinese. So it's a kind of a fusion.

Next is also a very representative piece from Tan Dun. We will skip that, because of the time constraint.

Next let's look at the Chinese music which was affected under the western kind of musical approach. The younger composers very often belong to this type. China has been closed off for many years, after the opening up and reform, it then started to receive a lot of western music and that's why the younger generation were affected by this and in their creation, we can see this kind of manifestation.

I will cite two examples, one is from our professor, Xu Chang Jun, he used a new type of composition to present the traditional content.

Next it's our second year student, it's a piece of Guangdong music. It's very new. It's based on Beihuai and then new elements have been added into it.

Next is a combination of the Chinese cultural concept with the western modern musical approach. It's a combination of two types of ideologies or concepts. First, Qin Wen Chen and his piece is Qin Wensheng. He adopts traditional Chinese concept and he puts in new elements. Let's listen to that. He has gone further in terms of form compared to the previous two.

Just a little bit, because of the time constraint. The next one is by Taiwanese composer, Pan Huang Long. The title is Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. These are the essence of Chinese culture. If you want to boil Chinese culture down to one sentence, then it's an embodiment for fusion of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. His piece is a sextet and all the six instruments that you hear are traditional Chinese musical instruments.

So we stop there, when we have heard all the six instruments.

The third is the fusion between traditional cultural thinking of China and western musical thinking representative work is by Zhao Xiaosheng, musical interpretation of Taiji. He made an attempt in this work to combine the primitive dialectics in the Book of Change with the musical techniques of modern music composition. He dissected the inner pattern of music using the Ying Yang philosophy of the Book of Change and he compared the musical techniques with the four quadrant and eight trigram concepts in I Ching, The Book of Change. I have not brought with me the audio clip, so the last part of my presentation is a summary, i.e. how we should approach the dynamics between tradition and modernity, from a perspective of development of traditional Chinese music in modern times. Cultural heritage or tradition is multilayered structure. It can be manifested in a development of modernity in various formats. It's a historical concept. It's being imparted with modern consciousness in the process of history. When we look back on cultural tradition, it has to contain some elements of modernity.

Thirdly, cultural tradition is an open structure. It can only remain viable forever by constantly assimilating new cultural nutrients. By marrying western culture, we have a new Chinese culture which is under constant criticism. However, it's something that the Chinese culture has to do.

Traditional form, traditional mindset and traditional concept make up the cultural tradition. I'll give you two examples. One example, one quote is from a Korean artist. When he commented on western music, he said to make up music you can't rely on one note in the West, but in Asia, you can compose music with one note. However, this note is not immutable. It only provides a centre that creates a linear pattern and this linear pattern keeps moving forward which generates a new force to propel it onwards.

That is the Ying Yang dialectics and it's a philosophical approach it to. It's not a morphological approach to it. He being an oriental philosopher come musician, musicologist, he uses this traditional mindset to approach this issue. Chen Yi, composer, who used to be professor at the Central Conservatory, he's now living in the States, he used to saying, "We rarely use the ready-made off the peg stuff from Chinese music. Instead I try to explore what is unique, what is special about the Chinese music and

to recreate my work." For example, the totemic aesthetics, the cursive calligraphy, the aloofness and esoteric ambience of Laozi and the commitment of Confucianism and the vivid representation of Bangu, et cetera, et cetera, all these are nutrients which are distilled into highly abstract forms and I see that as beauty.

He took the aesthetic approach to the fusion of traditional music with modernity.

We can approach it this way. Within this multilayered structure of culture and tradition, inheriting the promoted tradition is a very complex process. We cannot just stay with the traditional forms. We should also explore the impact of the traditional mindset and traditional philosophy. This is a mistake we used to make because we are only looking at the forms.

The creator can choose to inherit his own cultural heritage while drawing nutrients from other forms. If you can inherit the mindset, it's also one type of inheritance. In commerce, the traditional spirit enshrined in the traditional form and secondly, cultural tradition is a historical concept from the outset, from the dim and distant, it has had to keep developing, keep adapting to the changing world, changing circumstances, otherwise it would have been eliminated by history.

Thirdly, cultural tradition is an open culture, as I said earlier, you can only remain permanently viable by constantly drawing, assimilating new cultural nutrients.

Last but not least, I'd like to wrap up. I think from the day I was born, cultural heritage flowed into the bloodstream of the times. Along the way, it kept absorbing new blood into the bloodstream. Tradition is alive and this life keeps imparting life force to modernity. Please read my lips because normally we say we need to reliven or revitalise tradition with modernity, but I say the reverse of it and that ends my presentation. Thank you.