

MR YAN Hui Chang:

Ladies and gentlemen, today I'll be speaking on the comparison between the traditional Chinese orchestra with the modern orchestra. Tradition is a kind of river which is non-stop, ongoing and non-stop, so it is not segmented. It is a continuous flow, as Prof Chow Jen Jong, a famous Chinese artist and professor mentioned, he separated the musical performance before 1900 as traditional Chinese music and those after it's called modern music. For those traditional Chinese music, it is divided into different types.

Including court orchestra, the drum and gong, wind instrument, jiangsu string instrument and also operas and quasi opera forms, religious music bands, et cetera. And then it further divided the post-1900 orchestra form into some other ramifications. Because of the demise of the feudal dynasties with the disappearance of the first category which is the court orchestra, the other nine categories continued to survive in different forms. They were categorised according to the archaeological findings in various sites and the modern orchestra is made up mainly of four types of instruments, including wind, percussion, plucked string instruments and bowed string instruments.

Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra is a philharmonic Chinese orchestra based in this metropolis of Hong Kong. The famous musicologist, Prof Li Min Xiong, believes that Chinese folk orchestra has the following four characteristics. One is that it's practical. In the past, majority of the events were related to imperial court rituals, religious ceremonies and the customs among the people and secondly, the Chinese ethnic or folk orchestras tend to have regional and local indigenous characteristics.

For example, the sizhu, the string instrument of Jiangnan or southern Jiangsu province and Zhejiang province is very different from the string instruments in northern China. Also they are integrated. It has a rich variety of instruments, in particular, the hybrid tone is the most favoured feature. The fourth characteristic is that there is a dominant instrument in the orchestra and that is the characteristic of many orchestras in China.

The tone set by the dominant instrument becomes the dominant hope for the whole orchestra, for example, the flute in the Hebei style, suona, which is a small wind instrument in the south western Shandong province, the

drum and flute in Xi'an drum music, the drum in Sunan drum music, et cetera. The 20th century saw the most profound transformation of Chinese music in terms of inheritance, variation and innovation. There are several reasons.

The first reason is that Chinese society was migrating from an agricultural civilisation towards an industrial civilisation. The second reason was that the importation of western music enabled Chinese musical heritage to transform towards an open system. The third reason was that as the Chinese society went through a transition from an agricultural civilisation to an industrial civilisation the traditional music also changed in form from folk music to professional music. And the other reasons I'm not going to elaborate now because they are listed in your handout.

Recently, in Beijing, there was a high level forum of music where Prof Li Xian divided the new Chinese music tradition into two stages. The first stage was the period from the beginning of the 20th century up to the 1980s. The second stage was the period since the 1980s. That was represented by the establishment of Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra. Then he divided these two periods into three levels.

From this table, you can see that in the first stage, the works were mainly played by composers and rather complete traditional melodies were in those works.

The first level was part of the first stage, the second level covered the first stage and the second stage. The music was composed and conducted and played by professionally trained people. The music during that period was made up of various basic components, for example, the tone, the scale, the tune, rhythm, tempo, speed, intensity, et cetera. There were not components of the traditional music.

The third level which is called the deep level, covers the second stage i.e. since the 1980s. So the modern works were composed, conducted and played by professionally trained people either in China or outside China and then went further in inheriting and promoting the tradition of cultural, philosophical and aesthetic levels.

What about the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra? I'm going to discuss this in three parts. One is that Hong Kong's orchestra is the philharmonic, large-scale Chinese orchestra. Secondly, the orchestra boasts 85 professional musicians, one art director and the chief conductor and two assistant conductors. Thirdly, in 2003, musical instrument research and reform group and education and promotion group were set up and this table is a detailed breakdown of all the instruments played in our orchestra. This is for your reference, which is in your handout.

Regarding the research, renovation and innovation of instrumental equipment, the Chinese proverb that goes:

"If a craftsman wishes to perfect his works, he must first sharpen his tools."

The same is true of an orchestra. A basic principle is to develop traditional and modern Chinese music in all dimensions by way of improving our instruments.

We have the setup in our orchestra Mr Ruan Shichun. He restored the Tang Dynasty Pipa Ruanxian and the Tang series of Ruan, which is a plucked string instrument using wood material rather than skin.

Now I have a video clip for you to see.

(Video played)

All the changes, the overall tonal features should be much better nowadays, since by that time I believe that we would be able to achieve the initial success. Just now what we saw was his invention, the double resonance of wooden material and skin, but what we saw in the video clip was only the wooden part.

The second reformer in our orchestra was Guo Yazhi. He invented moveable cylinder suona. When I was very young, I played various brass instruments, so I was quite familiar with the movable parts in the western brass instruments. They inspired me, so I put this extra mouthpiece on this traditional instrument, which can be extended. It's telescopic. It can move by half a note. It's adjustable. So it's a traditional scale plus a movable mouth piece to change the tune very easily.

(Video played)

Those were the wind instruments and some of my other colleagues also invented other instruments.

Regarding the sound effects and arrangement, our orchestra provides a rich variety of sound effects. We have now produced over 1,600 pieces of music in 2002. Our performers at the modern music festival was very well received by international composers and conductors. We kept exploring the best acoustic and visual beauty.

Regarding the content and form of our performance, the form is dominated by Chinese traditional and modern music, while exploring new ways of making musical expressions that are cross-cultural and international. We have set up a folk music team, chamber music band and HKCO Pops and every year in the music season, we put up at least 25 large, medium and small-scale concerts.

I'm going to give you a few examples. One is a snippet from the flute concert.

(Video played)

In ancient China, there were three different types of such instrument. One is placed flat. The one that is played vertically is imported from the West. It's similar to the harp in the West. Another type is imported from India, with a head shaped like the head of bird.

So that was played with a harp-like instrument developed by the Xian Music Conservatory. Such a concert is more like a dialogue between us and the audience, supported by Chinese calligraphy and paintings and even a tea ceremony. It's a very intimate ambience. It's like a chat room.

The next clip is of folk music using Guangdong Xiaodiao for a sizeable concert.

(Video played)

That concert was a concert of Guangdong Xiaodiao. The next one is from northern China. You will see some very special instruments. The

instruments are actually adapted from farm implements and instruments or tools used in daily life.

(Video played)

Those instruments were adapted from primitive implements. We also had a lot of interface and fusion with traditional Xiqu opera forms. We have a famous opera star, Gai Minghui, in Hong Kong and that's a partnership with HKCO.

(Video played)

That was a marriage with the local opera form and as Joseph said earlier, the 21st century is the century of globalisation and cross-cultural marriages.

In 1999 and 2002, we launched a number of projects which were cultural and international. The next one is an example of that. It tells the story of how Pipa, the lute was introduced into China, so the concert was a concert of southern Pipa, regular Pipa, lute and Japanese Pipa.

(Video played)

Apart from that, we also had a concert married with pop music and this is one example.

(Video played)

You can see that there were synthesisers in the concert. We also developed some natural sound. Do Ming Lam composed The World of Insects. This snippet was the live performance in Vienna in 2002. So using traditional instruments to play The World of Insects.

Now let's come to Hong Kong flavour. As an example of Hong Kong flavour.

(Video played)

There are also some large instrument music festivals where we would try to go closer to the public. Yesterday in the stadium there were upwards of 10,000 people working with our orchestra. They used the water bottles

as percussion instruments to play with us. Over the past few years, we've held the Hong Kong Drum Music Festival, Huqin Festival and Zither Festival.

To conclude, tradition is a river, a mighty river that runs forever. Recombination, restructuring, preceding from the tradition, we cannot only create a rich traditional connotation, but also build a new orchestra that can extend the horizons, maybe today's metamorphosis is pregnant with tomorrow's new tradition. Thank you.