

Abstract of DLA Dissertation

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CHINESE CHORUS

CONTRIBUTIONS

TO THE CHINESE CHOIR HISTORY

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I. The antecedents of the research

Many contemporary Chinese musicians believe that Chinese chorus developed from Mass Singing, but some consider multi-part folksongs as its origin while others vote for hymns. However, due to the long-term political struggle, the voice of the latest is weak. How Christian music became the origin of Chinese chorus, the latest has not been given enough discussion. At present, China's reform and opening policy has been carried out and political interference of academic research has been eliminated. Benefiting from this, this dissertation, in the spirit of academically seeking truth from facts, starts with the influence of Christianity on the origin of Chinese chorus, then gives an objective study and analysis on the history of Chinese chorus since 1840, and finally makes an authentic discussion on the present backwardness and plight faced by Chinese chorus.

II. Sources

Although there is no *Who's who* in Chinese musical world, and nor usable music dictionary from which these data were retrievable, but there are a lot of articles, innumerable reminiscences and biographies in China about the musicians mentioned in my dissertation. I read lots of them what I could gather and summarized by my own that could service for my dissertation. About the incoming sources of the short biographies, most of them were noted in the bibliography, for example, Li Shutong's biography was summarized from *The Great Master Hongyi* written by Xu Xingping noted as No. 66 in English Bibliography, etc. However, if we intended to read up the oldest Chinese chorus materials, little useful music literature was recorded in the historical documents, even if some choruses written in staves within the last few decades were still difficult to be found, I think that it is necessary to compile an anthology of Chinese historical choruses.

III. Method

Generally, research on the origin and development of Chinese chorus, though discussed from time to time, still seems unsystematic in China and Chinese scholars have not come to a final consensus. Based on analyses of historical facts, the objective of this dissertation is to sort out the

main thread of this issue from various views by means of supplementing, correcting and specifying the existing ideas, so as to reveal the developing track of Chinese chorus in history. During my work, it was important for me that the existing ideas couldn't be allowed to affect the historical facts, I tried my best to stated my own viewpoints independently.

IV. Results

While researching the history of Chinese chorus, I was rather surprised at the revealed facts: before the entry of Christian music into China, Chinese people did not know what chorus was like. Although Christianity made several inroads into China before the Opium War in 1840¹, it had a very small sphere of influence. Because of the changes in Chinese imperial powers, hymns had no substantial influence on Chinese mainstream music until start of the War. The influence of Christian music was confined only to churches and their followers up until the rise of the School Songs in the early 20th century.

In 1894, China was defeated in the first Sino-Japanese War². Affected by this, and with the support of Emperor Guangxu(1871-1908), some enlightened Chinese started the “Hundred Days Reform Movement”. Although this political movement faced enormous resistance which ended in fiasco, it forced the late Qing government to passively launch some reforms. For example, one such reform involved abolishing the traditional Chinese Bagu³ education and setting up new schools which resulted in the birth of the School Songs. In 1913, under the influence of the School Songs, Li Shutong⁴ composed the first secular chorus *Chun You(Spring Outing)* in China, this marked the transition of Chinese chorus from church music to secular music.

Before the September 18 Incident in 1931⁵, Chinese chorus had been walking along the road of artistic chorus. This period witnessed the emergence of a group of outstanding composers and a number of far-reaching choral works. It was also in this period that the first Conservatory of music,

¹ The Opium War, there were two Opium Wars between China and the United Kingdom in China's modern history: the First one was from June 1840 to August 1842, the Second one was from October 1856 to October 1860. The two Opium Wars gradually made China become a semifeudal and semicolonial society from a feudal society.

² . The First Sino-Japanese War happened from July, 1894 to April, 1895 between China and Japan, the war made the Chinese nation into the abyss of disaster. The Second Sino-Japan War was from 1937 to 1945.

³ Bagu was a kind of dogmatic and backward as well as stereotyped imperial examination system in Ming and Qing Dynasty of China.

⁴ Li Shutong (1880 - 1942), a famous musician in the modern musical history of China. See pp. 20 - 22.

⁵ The September 18 Incident refers to the event that the Japanese Army stationed in the Northeast China suddenly occupied Shenyang city by force on September 18, 1931.

the National Conservatory of Music, was established in Shanghai, China. After the September 18 Incident, Chinese chorus changed gradually from artistic chorus to anti-enemy chorus and was gradually differentiated into two schools: the Academic School and the Salvation School. The former was mainly comprised of musicians from areas that were controlled by the Chinese Nationalist Party, the latter, under the leader of the Communist Party, consisted of amateurs and disciples of the Academic School. The first anti-Japanese chorus was created by a representative of the Academic School. However, the Academic School received no attention and, to some extent, was suppressed by the Chinese Nationalist Party. Therefore, after the July 7 Incident in 1937, also called the “Lugou Bridge Incident” when Japan launched an all-out offensive attack on China, the leadership of Chinese chorus shifted to the Salvation School. From that time on, it evolved into Mass Singing which became a tool for a purely political struggle not only against the Japanese but also against the Academic School. When the Communist Party assumed power on the mainland in 1949, the struggle further evolved into an internal struggle of the chorus world which lasted until the beginning of the 1980s. All the choral works composed during this long period were full of a strong fighting spirit but were not high in artistic value.

V. My published papers that are related to my dissertation

1. “Analyses on the official Music System of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom”, *Jiao Xiang-Journal of Xi'an Conservatory of Music*, 3 (2009, Quarterly)
2. “Researches on the Church Music of the Taiping Revolution”, *Music Research*, 4 (2009, Bimonthly).
3. “Explorations on the Significance of Organ in the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom”, *Jiao Xiang-Journal of Xi'an Conservatory of music*, 1 (2010, Quarterly).
4. “Researches on the Functions of the Department of Repairing Music-boxes in the Taiping Revolution”, *Music and Performance-Journal of Nanjing Arts Institute*, 2 (2010, Quarterly).
5. “Analyses on the instruments for accompaniment in the sacred music of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom”, *Journal of Xinghai Conservatory of Music*, 3 (2010, Quarterly).
6. “Analyses on the Church Music terms of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom”, *Jiao Xiang-Journal of Xi'an Conservatory of Music*, 3 (2010, Quarterly).
7. “Researches on the Doxology of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom”, *Journal of Xinghai Conservatory of Music*, 1 (2011, Quarterly).