

THE CROSS-CULTURAL INFLUENCE OF THE FORMATION AND EVOLUTION OF
PIANO PEDAGOGY AT THE SHANGHAI CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Boris Zakharoff and Yusheng Yang.

Abstract

THE CROSS-CULTURAL INFLUENCE OF THE FORMATION AND EVOLUTION OF PIANO PEDAGOGY AT THE SHANGHAI CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

By Yun Sun

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This study evaluates the cross-cultural influences on the formation and the evolution of piano pedagogy at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music (SCM). It examines the principles of the teaching approaches of the four major professors of the first generation and the cross-cultural influences that informed their pedagogy. In addition, the discussion includes a review of pianist Fou Ts'ong and his contribution to the SCM. The narrative concludes with a brief look at the present faculty of the SCM; a summary discussion of the ideas, approaches, and educational system present there; and, above all, the cross-cultural influence of Western music on the field of piano teaching and study at the SCM.

Preface

Chinese music, with its own theoretical framework, instruments, and repertoire, exists as an ancient art form that has a history of more than two thousand years. In traditional Chinese society, it is considered one of the four fundamental means for the creation of social unity; morals, law, and politics complete the societal quartet. Music was specially selected by emperors to promote social harmony. It was not until the seventeenth century that Chinese music began to fall under pervasive foreign influence.¹

In 1601 an Italian priest, Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), arrived in China with the goal of establishing a Catholic mission in the Imperial Court of the Ming Dynasty. Among the gifts he gave to the Emperor was a clavichord;² however, the Chinese looked upon it as little more than an exotic instrument.

In the nineteenth century interactions between an evolving Chinese society and Western music became apparent in the Chinese educational system. By 1871 programs with a goal of sending Chinese students to the United States to acquire Western skills and knowledge had already been initiated. This practice was expanded with the sending of students to Europe in 1875.³ After being defeated in the Sino-Japanese War of 1895, China adopted the Japanese style of education. The first Chinese students were sent to Japan in 1896, and between 1898 and 1911 at least 25,000 Chinese students were sent there.⁴

1. Ho, Wai-Chung. 2003. Westernization and social transformations in Chinese music education, 1895–1940, *History of Education* 3: 289–301.

2. Trigault, Nicola S. J. 1953. *China in the sixteenth Century: The journals of Matthew Ricci: 1583-1610*. trans. Louis J. S. Gallagher. New York: Random House, 123.

3. Ho, Chia Shui. 1946. Paci gives highlights of life in last interview. *The China Press*, October 20.

4. Ho, Wai-Chung. Westernization and social transformations in Chinese music education, 1895–1940.

The formation and evolution of Western music education in China were closely associated with foreign musicians. Tens of thousands of Russians fled to China after the Bolshevik Revolution. Shanghai's Russian community included many prominent musicians who had been trained at Russian conservatories, which provided a professional teaching staff for the SCM. In its early years, the SCM benefited significantly from the contributions of the Russian pedagogues, among whom the most prominent were pianists.⁵

The four major pianists who made up the first generation of piano pedagogues at the SCM laid the foundation of piano pedagogy there. In this dissertation, their teaching approaches are examined. Three of them, Cui-Zhen Li, Le-Yi Wu, and Jia-Lu Li, were among those who went on to Europe or the United States for further studies. The fourth was Ji-Sen Fan, who studied in China with Zakharoff.⁶ This dissertation explores, through interviews and published writings, the primary musical influences on this first generation that were derived from the Russian, English, and French schools.

A chapter on pianist Fou Ts'ong and his special contribution to SCM is also included. Fou's concepts about music-making have influenced thousands of musicians in China, and, more importantly, his idealistic spirit and his art are looked upon as lights of truth and beauty that shone at the end of the dark tunnel of the Cultural Revolution.⁷ Having conducted master classes for seven years now at the SCM, Fou has complained that, despite the strong technical skills the students have, they are unable to read between the notes and to express the essence of the music.

5. Ding, Shan-De. 1987. Shang Hai Yin Yue Xue Yuan He Zhong Guo Xian Dai Yin Yue De Fa Zhan [The development of the Shanghai Conservatory and Chinese contemporary music]. *Yin Yue Yi Shu, Shang Hai Yin Yue Xue Yuan Xue Bao*, 2: 1-6.

6. Feng, Xiao-Gang. 2007. *Ershi Shiji Shang Ban Ye Zhong Guo Gang Qin Yin Yue Wen Hua* [Chinese piano music culture in first half of 20th century]. Nanjing: Nanjing Institute of Arts.

7. The Cultural Revolution was a political movement that affected the lives of thousands of intellectuals in China from 1966 to 1976.

Through master classes, Fou tried to stir his students' imagination and transform them to another state of awareness of music. This chapter analyzes his teaching style and the influences that have shaped his concepts. This chapter concludes with a summary of his interpretation of Chopin's twenty-four preludes. Chapter 5 investigates the teaching methods of five current piano faculty members at the SCM, as they are representative of the present generation of piano teachers there, and discusses the cross-cultural influence on the first-generation and present generation.

Review of the Literature

Piano pedagogy had a late start in China. From 1900 to 1950, there were only a few books written about piano playing. The first, *Basic Method of Piano Playing*, was written by Shu-Hua Li in 1941; it mainly consists of translations of European literature on piano methods. From the 1940s through the 1950s, articles written about the piano are mostly reviews of concerts. The translation of *The Art of Piano Playing* (1963) by Heinrich Neuhaus (1888 - 1964) became the "Bible" for every pianist in China.⁸ It wasn't until the 1980s that books on piano pedagogy written by piano teachers began to appear with titles such as *The Piano Teaching Method*,⁹ *The Ways of Piano Performance*,¹⁰ and *The Art of Piano Performance*.¹¹ The above

8. Neuhaus, Heinrich. 1963. *The art of piano playing*. Trans. Qi-Zhang Wang and Pei-Hua Wu. Beijing: Music Publishing House.

9. Ge, De-Yue. 1989. *The piano teaching method*. Beijing: Music Publishing House.

10. Zhao, Xiao-Sheng. 1991. *Gang Qin Yan Zou Zhi Dao* [*The ways of piano performance*]. Hunan: Hunan Educational Publishing House.

11. Li, Jia-Lu. 1993. *Gang Qin Biao Yan Yi Shu* [*The art of piano performance*]. Beijing: Ren Min Yin Yue Chu Ban She.

books all deal with piano pedagogy and offer innovative concepts regarding techniques and approaches to music. In the *The Ways of Piano Performance*, Xiao-Sheng Zhao (b.1945) applied the Chinese philosophy to piano playing, creating a system that uses breathing as the inner source to lead physical movement, to reach the goal of becoming one with the piano. The more practical instructions on the techniques of the piano playing such as how to use fingers, wrists, arms and sound production and similar techniques are offered by the other two authors.

There are two Chinese dissertations on the history of piano culture in China. The first dissertation is Meng Bian's 1996 dissertation, "The Formation and Development of the Chinese Pianistic Culture."¹² It is the first dissertation in Chinese on the subject. There are six chapters that cover four main aspects of the music culture in China: (1) the history of the development of Chinese piano culture, (2) a brief introduction of Chinese pianists, (3) analyses of selected piano compositions by Chinese composers, and (4) a review of three pedagogical documents. In Bian's dissertation aspects of piano pedagogy are not the main focus nor is the evolution of piano pedagogy at the SCM. The second Chinese dissertation, "Chinese Piano Music Culture in the First Half of the 20th Century," (2007)¹³, by Xiao-Gang Feng, focuses on three subject areas: (1) Chinese piano compositions prior to 1950, (2) performance activities of Chinese pianists, and (3) a general history of piano pedagogy prior to 1950. Feng concentrates on how history has influenced Chinese culture and music. He examines how piano music matured alongside other elements of the society. However, an analysis on pianistic aspects from a pedagogical view is entirely missing from his dissertation. In these two dissertations, there is very little coverage of

12. Meng Bian. 1996. *Zhong Guo Gang Qin Wen Hua Zhi Xing Cheng Yu Fa Zhan* [The formation and development of the Chinese pianistic culture]. Beijing: Hwa Yue Chu Ban She, Hwa Yue Press.

13. Xiao-Gang Feng. 2007. *Ershi Shiji Shang Ban Ye Zhong Guo Gang Qin Yin Yue Wen Hua* [Chinese piano music culture in first half of twentieth century]. PhD dissertation, Nanjing Institute of Arts.

the impact of the Western European and Russian piano schools on the development of Chinese piano education.

There are also two English language dissertations on Chinese piano culture: “Piano Teaching Philosophies and Influences on Pianism at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing”¹⁴ by Chi Lin and “The Evolution of Piano Education in Twentieth-Century China with Emphasis on Shanghai and Beijing Conservatories”¹⁵ by Amy Wang. Lin writes exclusively about the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing—its piano programs, admissions, curricula, exams, and other academic requirements. The dissertation also touches on the Russian Influence on the teaching style at the Conservatory. As the piano pedagogical methods introduced by Russian teachers at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing were thirty years later on than those introduced by Zakharoff at the SCM, the approaches of the two conservatories to teaching are not identical. The evolution of the piano pedagogy at the SCM is not addressed in Lin’s dissertation.

In Wang’s dissertation, there are three chapters that share the same interest as my research; however, her perspective differs from mine. For instance, in Wang’s chapter on the first generation of piano teachers, one of the two teachers she discusses is Cui-Zhen Li. Her source is an article written by Zhi-Jue Chao,¹⁶ which was translated by Wang and is the only source she cites on the teaching of Li. For this dissertation, interviews with Li’s former students, including Zhi-Jue Chao, were conducted. More information has been obtained through recently completed, yet-to-be published articles, written by Li’s former students on her teaching methods.

14. Lin, Chi. 2002. Piano teaching philosophies and influences on pianism at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, China. Doctor of Music Arts dissertation, Louisiana State University.

15. Wang, Amy. 2001. The evolution of piano education in twentieth-century China with emphasis on Shanghai and Beijing Conservatories Doctor of Music Arts dissertation, University of Maryland at College Park.

16. Chao, Zhi-Jue. 1999. Piano pedagogue Li Cui-Zhen, *Art of Piano* 1: 68-72.

As a result, this study presents a more complete picture of Li's teaching and that of the other teachers of the first generation.

A chapter on pianist Fou Ts'ong is also included in Wang's dissertation. She essentially presents a general biography of Fou along with some quotes on the advice he offered on the subject of music-making during his visits to the Central Conservatory in Beijing. However, the details on how he interprets music are not touched upon. Finally, Wang's dissertation mentions none of the present piano faculty at the SCM. My dissertation includes a discussion of key present piano faculty members. The cross-cultural influence on the first-generation and the present generation is also discussed for the first time.

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation provides a detailed examination of the cross-cultural influences on the foundation and evolution of piano pedagogy in Shanghai. It offers new insights into the Chinese school of piano education, a pedagogy whose development first started in the late 1920s with the establishment of the National Conservatory of Music, which was the predecessor of SCM. SCM is the first conservatory in China and is the root of Chinese piano pedagogy. Since its establishment in the 1920s, the SCM has been the predominant musical center, and its piano department has trained hundreds of pianists, many of whom have gone on to become key members of music schools, arts organizations, and research institutes all over China. Many graduates have won prizes at major international competitions. Generations of teachers have helped to build up the level of pianism to an international standard in today's musical world,

including several piano superstars, such as Lang Lang (b.1982) and Yundi Li (b.1982). In recent years the piano has become the most popular instrument in China.

The SCM has created a unique teaching system that mixes both Chinese and Western philosophies, the result of over eighty years of experience with both Chinese and foreign (especially Russian) piano teachers. In this dissertation, I examine the foreign influences that formed the foundation of the SCM piano pedagogy. The narrative concludes with a brief look at the present faculty of SCM, and a summary discussion of the ideas, approaches, educational system, and above all, the cross-cultural influence of Western music in the field of piano teaching and studying at the SCM.

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Chapter 1

Historical Background of Piano Education in China

The Introduction of the Piano in China

The Italian priest Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) arrived in Beijing in 1595 with the goal of establishing a Catholic mission in the Imperial Court of the Ming Dynasty. In 1601 Ricci succeeded in arranging a meeting with the Emperor Wanli, and he presented him with a clavichord as a gift, the first example of a western keyboard instrument introduced into China.¹ The Emperor sent four court musicians to learn how to play it, and another priest, Father Pantoia, taught them to play it.² Ricci wrote eight short pieces for the clavichord which were based on Catholic hymns. These were the earliest examples of Western-style music composed in China. Unfortunately, the scores are no longer extant.³ Despite the interest shown by the Emperor at the time, the clavichord was regarded in China as little more than an exotic instrument.

The first harpsichord arrived in China during the early eighteenth century. Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty (1654-1722) took a special interest in the harpsichord and was the first Chinese Emperor to practice the instrument.⁴ Emperor Kangxi not only respected Western culture but also tried to understand it; he became close to the Western missionaries. Among them, three were particularly favored by the Emperor. The most favored was Verbiest Ferdinand (1623-

1. Melvin, Sheila and Cai, Jindong. 2004. *Rhapsody in red: How Western classical music became Chinese* New York: Algora Publishing, 53.

2. Trigault, Nicola S.J. 1953. *China in the sixteenth Century: The journals of Matthew Ricci: 1583-1610*. Trans. Louis J.S. Gallagher. New York: Random House, 376-377.

3. Feng. Chinese piano music culture in first half of twentieth century: 15.

4. Allan, C.W. 1975. *Jesuits at the court of Peking* Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, Ltd; reprint, University Publications of America, Inc., 187.

1688), a Belgian missionary who came to China in 1659. The second was the missionary Thomas Pereira (1645-1708) of Portugal, who was hired by the Emperor to be the court music master in 1673. Able to play Chinese tunes on the harpsichord by ear, Father Pereira was also a talented instrument maker who taught Chinese craftsmen to make Western string instruments and taught Emperor Kangxi to play a few pieces on them. Upon the request of the Emperor, Pereira wrote the first treatise on Western music theory in Chinese. The third most favored missionary was Pedrini Theodoricus (1670-1746), a harpsichordist, composer, and musicologist.⁵

By 1703, after 30 years of study, Emperor was able to play the harpsichord with ease, and was capable of transcribing ancient Chinese hymns for the harpsichord, as documented by the court official Shiqi Gao (1644-1703):

In the year of 1703, March 26, I followed the emperor into the palace. I was called by his highness to the study. He talked for a long time about Western music. There was a Western keyboard instrument in the room; there were 120 strings all together in the instrument. His highness sat down before the instrument and played the ancient hymn “Pu An”⁶.

The harpsichord became a most fashionable Western amusement in royal society during the Qing Dynasty. Emperor Kangxi planted the seed of Western music into Chinese society, which led to its promotion in Chinese high society. However, the harpsichord remained a plaything that could only be seen in the royal court.⁷

It was not until the nineteenth century that a modern piano found its way to China. At the end of the Qing dynasty, China was defeated by Great Britain in 1842 in the Opium War. As a result of the Treaty of Nanking, the Imperial government was forced to open five major ports to

5. Quotation from J. B. Du Halde. In Harrison, F. ed. 1973. *Time, palace, and music, an anthology of ethnomusicological observation c.1550 to c.1800*. Amsterdam: Frist Knuf, 124.

6. Feng, Chinese piano music culture in the first half of the twentieth century. Translation by the author.

7. Melvin and Cai, *Rhapsody in red*, 73-88.

foreign trade and colonization, and a great number of foreign missionaries and merchants immigrated to China. Foreign diplomats gave pianos as gifts to the Chinese Imperial court.⁸

In 1848 pianos began to appear in the homes of wealthy Chinese merchants in Beijing and Shanghai, and two years later the first piano store and factory was established by an English merchant, Mr. Moutrie, in Shanghai. In order to increase the production capacity and cut down the cost, Moutrie opened a piano factory and hired Chinese workers. Because of its excellent quality and low price, the Moutrie piano dominated the Chinese market through the 1910s.⁹ Several Chinese workers in the Moutrie piano company mastered the art of piano production, and in 1890 Ding-Hai Huang and his fellow workers founded the first Chinese piano factory, named Yong Xing Piano Company, in Shanghai.¹⁰

The Musical Environment in Shanghai from 1900-1930: Foreign Influence

In the nineteenth century interactions between an evolving Chinese society and Western music became evident in the Chinese educational system. Beginning in 1871, the first students were sent to the United States to acquire Western skills and knowledge, and in 1875 more of them were sent to Europe. After China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, China adopted the Japanese system of education, and the first Chinese students were sent to Japan in 1896. Between 1898 and 1911, at least 25,000 Chinese students went there. Between 1902 and 1911 among the students sent to Japan, thirteen selected music theory and piano as their fields of study. Among them was the future founder of the Shanghai Music Conservatory (SCM), You-Mei Xiao.

8. Ibid., 53.

9. Feng, Chinese piano music culture in the first half of the twentieth century, 20.

10. Zhang, Juan. 2006. *Aspects of the development of Western keyboard instrument in China during the Min and Qin Dynasty*. Shanxi: Shanxi Teacher's College Press, 42.

Upon returning to China, these scholars played a significant role in propagating Western art music.¹¹

During the 1898 Constitutional Reform and Modernization Movement, Western books in translation achieved wide circulation among Chinese academics, and this led to more schools being established to promote Western learning; between 1901 and 1907, 271 schools were established in Shanghai, five of which were set up jointly by Chinese and Westerners; thirty-five more were initiated by foreign churches. Piano courses were offered in many Christian high schools, and there students learned to play Catholic hymns and popular songs. Because the first teachers of Western music in China were Western missionaries and not trained musicians, they had no recourse to systematic methods of piano instruction.¹²

The Shanghai Connection

Shanghai stands out as a critically important location in the establishment of the Westernization of China's musical education system during the twentieth century. As it was the center of musical activities in China, many renowned Western musicians came to Shanghai for concert performances. Under the management of Avray Strok, concerts were given by pianists Leopold Godowsky, Lili Kraus, Artur Rubinstein, and Benno Moiseiwitsch and violinists Jascha Heifetz, Jacques Thibaud, Mischa Elman, Joseph Szigeti, and Fritz Kreisler. In 1904 Mario Paci (1878-1946), an Italian concert pianist and conductor, came to Shanghai to give his first piano recital in China at the Shanghai Deutscher Club. In 1919 Strok brought Paci back to Shanghai again to perform. Paci became sick during his trip, but the illness proved fortuitous for the

11. Ho, Wai-Chung. 2003. Westernization and social transformations in Chinese music education, 1895-1949. *History of Education* 32, no.3: 289-301.

12. Ibid.

development of Western music in China: After several months of convalescence, Paci decided to settle with his family in Shanghai.¹³

In 1920 Paci founded the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra, the first symphony orchestra in China, and became its first musical director. There were thirty members in the orchestra, and Paci managed to attract many European musicians to the orchestra's ranks. The concertmaster was Arrigo Foa, a graduate of the Milan Conservatory of Music, and many members of the orchestra became principal faculty members of the SCM. The Municipal Orchestra, under Paci's direction, soon became the best orchestra in the Far East, and it played a role as the most important purveyor of Western music in China, making significant contributions to the establishment of the SCM.¹⁴ Paci was a student of the prominent Italian pianist and conductor Giovanni Sgambati, who was a student of Liszt's. Paci organized a series of youth concerts in Shanghai, encouraging students of the SCM to attend his orchestra rehearsals.¹⁵

Two of Paci's piano students, Guang-Ren Zhou and Fou Ts'ong, became the most important pianists and pedagogues in China. However, their account of Paci's teaching conflict: According to Zhou, Paci laid a solid technical foundation. She agreed with Paci's concept of finger independence, firm support of the fingers, and a perfect round form of the hand. Fou, on the other hand, could only remember that, when he studied with Paci, the master put a coin on the back of his hand, and, if he dropped the coin, the master would beat his hand. This made his hand and wrist very stiff. Overall, it was an unpleasant experience for the eight-year-old boy. According to Fou, the most important thing he learned from Paci was how to play ornaments.

13. Ho. 1946. Paci gives highlights of life. *The China Press*. October 20.

14. Ibid.

15. Melvin and Cai. *Rhapsody in red*, 117.

Fou's negative experience notwithstanding, it is clear that Paci made significant contributions to the field of Chinese music.¹⁶

The First Professional Conservatory of Music in China 1927

In November 1927, the National Conservatory of Music, which was the precursor of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music (hereafter "SCM"), was founded by composer You-Mei Xiao (1884-1940). The SCM is often called the cradle of Chinese musicians, since most of musicians at Chinese music conservatories are associated with this one, the first in China. Xiao received his musical training in Japan and Germany. A native of Canton, Xiao had graduated from Shi-Ming Shue Ton High School when he was fifteen and then went to Japan to further his studies. He enrolled at the Preparatory School of the Tokyo Teachers' College and later transferred to study at the Department of Education at the Tokyo Imperial University. In 1904 he began to study piano and voice lessons at the Tokyo School of Music. His academic performance prompted the Chinese government to award him a scholarship. Graduating in 1909 at the age of 25, he returned to China, but, after working for the Ministry of Education for three years, he decided to continue his studies in Germany.¹⁷

Xiao felt it important to find the German roots of the Meiji Movement, the educational system he had absorbed in Japan. It was out of these roots that he planned to build a system of musical education in China. He enrolled in two schools at the same time: At the Leipzig National Conservatory he majored in theory and composition, and at the Leipzig National University he majored in philosophy. Hugo Riemann and Arnold Schering were his teachers. Xiao graduated

16. Wang, *The evolution of piano education*: 21.

17. Ding, *The development of the Shanghai Conservatory and Chinese contemporary music*: 1-6.

from both institutions in four years and became the first Chinese student to earn doctoral degrees from both institutions.¹⁸ In 1916, when the war blocked Xiao's return to China, he continued his studies in Berlin. He took classes in instrumentation and conducting at the University of Berlin and the Sternsche Konservatorium. At the same time, Xiao actively audited other music courses and tried to attend as many concerts as he could.¹⁹ In 1919 Xiao returned to China with a specific plan for building the educational system in his native country.²⁰

During 1927, the political situation in China became unstable because of the split between the Communists and the Nationalists. There were actually three capitals in the country: Wuhan, capital of the Communist regime; Beijing, capital of the warlord regime; and Nanjing, capital of the civilian military regime. The power struggles among the three regimes engendered chaotic living conditions and economic deterioration. With his determination and the enthusiastic support of the culture minister of the civilian military regime Yuan-Pei Cai, Xiao ultimately prevailed in the founding of the SCM. The SCM grew from an enrollment of twenty-three students in 1927 to 130 within ten years. The staff expanded from eighteen to forty, and ten departments (keyboard, voice, string, brass and wind, conducting, composition, music theory, ear training, Chinese music instruments, and music education) were established in the SCM. Although staffing was challenging in the early years, Xiao was able to hire musicians of the highest caliber, even though they might not have been Chinese.²¹

Tens of thousands of Russians fled to China after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, and among these were aristocrats and White Russian army officers. Some came to Shanghai directly

18. Ibid.: 1-6.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid. 1-6.

by sea, while most others settled first in Harbin, a city in northeastern China. By the early 1930s after the Japanese invasion of northern China, thousands of Russians in Harbin gravitated toward Shanghai, which was a free port at the time and required no visa or work-permit for entry.²² (For this same reason, Shanghai was later to become a refuge for Jews fleeing the Nazis.) Shanghai's Russian community included many prominent musicians who had been trained at Russian conservatories, and these musicians provided a professional teaching staff for the SCM. In its early years the SCM benefited significantly from the contributions of the Russian pedagogues, among whom the most prominent were pianists.

In 1934, Xiao appointed the prominent Russian pianist, Boris Zakharoff (1888-1943), as the first chair of the piano department, a position he held until his death in 1943. Zakharoff studied with legendary teachers Annette Essipov (1851-1914) and Leopold Godowsky (1870-1938). He was also a classmate of Sergey Prokofiev (1891-1953).²³

The first class that graduated from the SCM consisted of three students, including two pianists and a vocalist, and they shared a graduation recital in 1934. Among them was Xian-Min Li (Hsien-Ming Lee) (1915-1991), who was the first student to receive a graduate certificate from the SCM under the tutelage of Zakharoff. Her graduation recital repertoire was comprised of the Chopin *Etude*, op. 10, no. 2, and *Nocturne*, op. 27, no. 1, and the Saint-Saens G-minor Concerto (no. 2).²⁴ In only four years Zakharoff and his colleagues had raised the performance level from Clementi and Kuhlau sonatinas and Czerny etudes, op. 849 to a standard college level of professional pianism.²⁵ From the 1930s through the 1940s, about thirty pianists graduated

22. Melvin and Cai. *Rhapsody in red*, 100-06.

23. Liao, Fu-Shu. 1985. Zakharoff. *Shang Hai Yin Yue Xue Yuan Xue Bao* no.4: 35-37.

24. Melvin and Cai. *Rhapsody in red*, 100-106.

25. Feng. Chinese piano music culture: 40-50.

from the SCM, directly influenced by the Russian piano school. Xiao's plan to "borrow foreign chickens to produce Chinese eggs" proved to be a success. Some of the first class of graduating pianists, including Cui-Zhen Li (1910-1966), Jia-Lu Li (1918-1982), Shan-De Ding (1911-1996), and Le-Yi Wu (1919-2006), went on to Europe or the United States to continue their studies. These four are among those who later returned to China and taught hundreds of their own students at the SCM for decades afterwards. Ding, however, shifted his interest to composition and became vice president of the SCM.²⁶ Ji-Sheng Fan (1917-1968), who studied with Zakharoff, was heavily influenced by the Russian school and was also one of the major influences of piano pedagogy at the SCM.

Boris Zakharoff, the First Chair of the Piano Department at the SCM

Zakharoff was a member of the piano faculty at the St. Petersburg Conservatory of Music for seven years. While touring Asia in 1928 with his wife, the violinist Cecilia Hansen (1898-1989), his marriage fell apart during the Japanese leg of the tour. In 1929 Zakharoff decided to come to Shanghai. At the time, Xiao was searching for suitable piano faculty for the SCM. Admiring Zakharoff's pianistic skills and musicianship, Xiao sent a letter offering Zakharoff a position. Zakharoff initially declined the invitation, replying that "to teach the infants at your school, you don't need a professor of my caliber."²⁷ Xiao, however, was not discouraged by Zakharoff's rejection, and Zakharoff finally accepted Xiao's offer. Xiao offered Zakharoff the same salary as he himself received but with half of the workload of other faculty members. Years

26. Mao, Yu-Ren and Zhao, Jia-Gui. 1983. *The melody of the East: The music life of famous Chinese composer Shan-De Ding*. Hong Kong: Shanghai Book Co., Ltd.

27. Liao. Zakharoff,: 35-37.

later, at a faculty party, Zakharoff declared that his earliest judgment was prejudicial. He was impressed with the learning ability of his Chinese students.²⁸

Zakharoff included the standard repertoire for his students to study: Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*; sonatas by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven; and selected compositions by Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, and Grieg. In 1933, Zakharoff performed the newly published *Fourth Concerto* by Rachmaninoff with the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra under the direction of Paci. As a performer, Zakharoff was highly respected for his virtuosity and professionalism. As a teacher, Zakharoff repeated much of what he had learned from his teacher, Essipov, who was the student and ex-wife of Theodor Leschetizky (1830-1915).

Wu (1919-2006), recalled her studies with Zakharoff in an interview:

He was a passionate and devoted teacher. He stressed expressive playing. Very often, with a few simple words or a short demonstration, Zakharoff was able to get his musical ideas through to his students. He emphasized finger technique and insisted on a natural hand position. For technical studies, he assigned his students Hanon exercises and Czerny studies. However, he often said to his students that as long as they could produce the sound that the music requires, they could play with their hands upside-down.²⁹

Leschetizky's thinking on this matter is similar. Leschetizky described the situation as follows:

Don't have a method; it is far better to leave your mind blank for pupils to fill in. You will discover more easily, in this way, what he needs. Even in technique it is impossible to have a method, for every hand is different. I have no method and I will have no method. . . . Adopt with your pupils the ways that succeed with them, and get

28. Ibid.

29. Zhao, Xiao-Sheng. 1996. Interview with Le-Yi Wu. *Piano Artistry*, 2-4. Translation by the author.

away as far as possible from the ideas of a method. Write over your music room door the motto: NO METHOD!³⁰

As a student of Essipov, Zakharoff was also opposed to enforcing a rigid pedagogical method. Wu and her classmates thrived under his instruction. He had a lifelong influence on his students, many of whom went on to become the first generation of Chinese piano teachers.

Zakharoff's devotion to his students was recalled by Wu in an interview:

When he saw potential in a student, he did not hesitate to devote extra time and effort for intensive training. My lessons always lasted longer than the assigned time, and yet, very often, he still offered me extra lessons at his house on Sundays. He also gave lessons to selected students during the summer. When talented or diligent students could not afford his fees, he taught them for free.³¹

During Wu's years as a student at the SCM, Zakharoff found opportunities for her to appear as a soloist with the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra. Under the baton of Maestro Paci, she performed concertos by Grieg and Liszt in 1929 at the Lanxin Theater in Shanghai and was the first Chinese pianist to perform such repertoire in concert.³² As was the tradition of many master teachers of the time, Zakharoff took on the role of mentor as well as teacher, according to the same interview with Wu:

He arranged students' recitals by himself; he would try the piano, bench, and even the lighting on the stage. "What is the color of your dress for tomorrow?" he would ask. On the day of the concert, I had to report to him what I ate for breakfast. Minutes before the concert, he would be there backstage walking nervously back and forth and chewing dark chocolate. While I was performing, he would move back and forth between the backstage and his reserved seat in the hall. He listened to me with intensity and sometimes he observed the reaction of the audience carefully. After the recital, he would be

30. Uszler, Marianne, Stewart, Gordon, and Smith, Scott McBride. 2000. *The well-tempered keyboard teacher*. New York: Schirmer Books, 293.

31. Zhao, Xiao-Sheng. Interview with Le-Yi Wu. Translation by the author.

32. Han, Guo-Huang. 1995. Shanghai Gongguju Yuedui Yanjiu [Research on the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra]. *Yishuxue* 14: 143-205.

waiting backstage for me. “You can have tomorrow off, but must practice the day after.” And he would go through the recital with details as to what was good, and what was not in the next lesson.³³

He was a serious man, and his students were in awe of him. “Do I look like a tiger?” Zakharoff often asked his students.³⁴ Divorced and living in a foreign land, he exhausted himself teaching his students. Zakharoff was responsible for the raising the standards of the piano department at the SCM to a professional level.

Zakharoff also invited more than ten Russian pianists, including S. Aksakovl, Boris M. Lazareff, E. Valesby, Z. Pribitkova, Koustwith, H. Margolinsky, and E. Marcus, to teach or give master classes at the SCM.³⁵ Because of these guests, the Russian piano school directly or indirectly influenced almost every Chinese pianist of that era. Shan-De Ding (1911-1995), recalled his encounter with Heinrich Neuhaus (1888-1964) at the Chopin International Competition in 1960: “Neuhaus enthusiastically expressed to me his amazement at the high quality of playing by Chinese competitors. When I told him about Zakharoff’s teaching at the SCM, Neuhaus replied repeatedly, ‘No wonder, no wonder! He was in China! I was looking for him everywhere!’”³⁶ Ding was accepted into Zakharoff’s studio with only one year of previous study. Zakharoff trained him using Czerny, opus 299, and the sonatinas of Kulhau and Clementi. When he played well at his lesson, Zakharoff would be thrilled and hug him with joy. If he did not perform well, Zakharoff would scream, “I’ll kill you!”³⁷ Zakharoff’s dynamic reactions

33. Zhao. Interview with Le-Yi Wu.

34. Mao and Zhao. *The melody of the East*.

35. Feng. 48.

36. Mao and Zhao. *The melody of the East*.

37. Ibid.

made Ding work as hard as he could. Six years later, in May 1935, Ding gave his graduation recital, consisting of the following program:

<i>Sonata</i> , op. 27, no.2	Beethoven
<i>Two Arabesques</i>	Debussy
<i>Invitation to the Dance</i>	Weber
<i>Piano concerto</i> , op. 16 (1 st mvt.)	Grieg
<i>Etude</i> , op. 10, no. 9	Chopin
<i>Polonaise</i> , op. 53	Chopin
<i>Lullaby</i>	He Lu-Ding
<i>The Shepherd's Flute</i>	He Lu-Ding
<i>Two Pieces</i>	Tcherepnin
<i>Hungarian Rhapsody</i> no. 6	Liszt

Nearly 800 people attended the concert.³⁸

In 1943, Zakharoff died of cancer in Shanghai. He had taught piano for twelve years at the SCM (and for three years in Shanghai prior to that). Chinese musicians that followed looked upon Zakharoff as the father of the Chinese piano school.

38. Mao and Zhao, *The melody of the East*.

Chapter 2

Two Major Piano Teachers of the First Generation at the SCM Before the Cultural Revolution

Four piano pedagogues from the first generation of Chinese teachers, Cui-Zhen Li, Ji-Sen Fan, Le-Yi Wu, and Jia-Lu Li, laid the foundation of the piano school at the SCM.¹ Li and Fan were the leading figures in this department before the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), during which time music education in China entered a dark era.

Cui-Zhen Li

Li was born in Shanghai and began her piano studies at the age of five with an unknown Russian teacher. Li's gift and passion for the piano was obvious at a young age. She worked with her Russian teacher diligently for ten years. Upon graduating from high school in 1930, Li auditioned for the SCM. Ding recalled Li's entrance exam:

During the summer of 1930, after the audition date had passed and the new semester had already started, Zakharoff received a special recommendation from Li's teacher, a Russian lady who was his friend; he auditioned Li personally. Part of her audition repertoire was all thirty-two Beethoven Sonatas. No matter which sonata or movement was chosen, Li played it by memory with the utmost accuracy and fluency. Her unusual ability shocked Zakharoff, and he went around the school with excitement and knocked on the door of his faculty studios and called them out with enthusiasm, "to hear this wondrous girl." Li was accepted at once.²

Li became a student of Zakharoff's. He assigned her challenging pieces such as Liszt's *Transcendental Etudes* and the Chopin Concertos, which were far beyond the reach of the other

1. Ding. The development of the Shanghai Conservatory and Chinese contemporary music: 1-6.

2. Chao, Zhi-Jue. 1999. Piano pedagogue Li Cui-Zhen, *Art of Piano* 1: 68-72. Translation by the author.

students.³ After one year of study, Li played before her graduation jury, and Zakharoff gave her a score of 100 for excellence in performance. In two semesters Li had amassed sixty credits of requirements while the average student at SCM would spend six to nine years before completing the same amount of work.⁴

In 1932 the Sino-Japanese War began, and Shanghai was invaded by Japan. Li's home was destroyed by the bombardment. She fled to Hong Kong, where she settled for the next two years and continued to perform. In 1934 her application to the Royal Conservatory of England was accepted, and she received a full scholarship. In London Li was responsible for her board and lodging, but her family was not able to provide any financial support. Unable to afford sheet music, she would go to a music store and memorize the scores so that she could practice at home from memory. Two years later in 1936, Li graduated from the Royal Conservatory of England, and married a Chinese diplomat. Her duties as a housewife did not stand in the way of playing the piano. When World War II ended in 1945, Li, together with her husband and their baby daughter returned to Shanghai and the SCM, where she was appointed chair of the piano department.⁵

In 1949 the Chinese Communist Party won the civil war and proclaimed China to be "The People's Republic of China." Unsure about the political future of the country, many people fled. Li and her husband, however, decided to stay. She declared, "I chose to remain in China out of my love for the country."⁶ In 1951 Li's husband decided to move to Hong Kong. Li had to

3. Chao, Zhi-Jue. 2010. *Li Cui-Chen Zhen remembered: A collection of articles*. Shanghai: Shanghai Conservatory of Music Publishing House, 2010.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid. Translation by the author.

make a difficult choice between her career and her family. She chose to stay in Shanghai, writing to her husband about her love for her career and for Shanghai.⁷

In 1963 Li prepared a series of lectures on various aspects of piano performance. However, anti-Western music fervor was in the ascendant even prior to the Cultural Revolution, and she became a political target. Her expertise became her sin. She was labeled a “Dog of the Western Capitalism” in the Cultural Revolution, and, at the height of propaganda, the Red Guards on more than one occasion searched her home, confiscated her property, and beat her. In a series of meetings, she was publicly humiliated, and her love for her country and the brilliance of her contribution to piano pedagogy were reviled by the authorities. Having been tortured without mercy and unable to withstand the humiliation and oppression, Li put on a beautiful dress, made herself up carefully in the most “Western” style, sat down on her couch with a *Time* magazine in her hand, and turned on the gas. Her tragic death on September 9, 1966 was a great loss to the field of piano education in Shanghai as well as in China. Her legacy, however, has been carried on by her students.⁸

Musical Approach of Cui-Zhen Li

Principles of Expressive Music-Making

Singing Approach

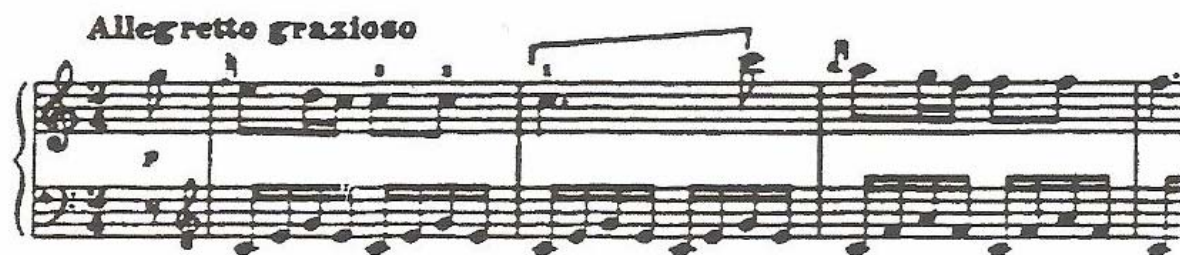
Li regularly asked her students to sing with their fingers. For example, in the third movement of Mozart’s Sonata in C major, K.309, the octave leap in measure two is not technically difficult for a pianist (see example 2-1). However, a singer must make an effort to

7. Chao, *Li Cui-Chen Zhen Remembered*, 9.

8. *Ibid.*

prepare for such a leap. Li taught her students to feel the interval between the two notes; they were instructed to take time for the leap, in imitation of a singer, to provide for more lyricism.⁹

Example 2-1. Mozart: Sonata in C major, K.309, third movement, mm. 1-4.



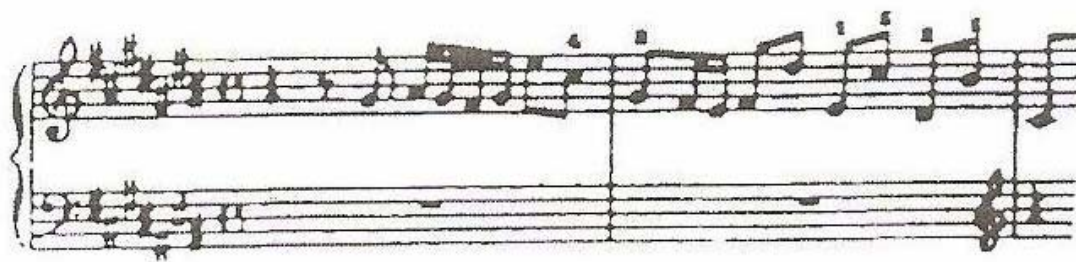
Rhythm

Li believed that the distinction between rhythm and beat was important. Beat is the steady pulse heard throughout the work; it must be clearly felt and understood before playing. Everything must fit into the framework provided by the beat. The beat must be constant, while rhythm is variable. Rhythm is the length and accent given to a series of notes in a piece; it is the pattern in which the notes of the piece move. Correctly playing the beat only metronomically is not enough; Li demonstrated how the tension and release of the phrase could be created when some notes were emphasized over others. For example, in Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, book 1, No. 3 in C-sharp major, the character of the fugue's subject is gracious and playful. Li suggested an emphasis on the first beat of the second measure, with a subtle pause before gently landing on G-sharp. With this subtle stretch between C-sharp and G-sharp, the harmonious character is clearly manifested when it is properly executed (see example 2-2).¹⁰

9. Chao. *Li Cui-Chen Zhen remembered*, 135-40.

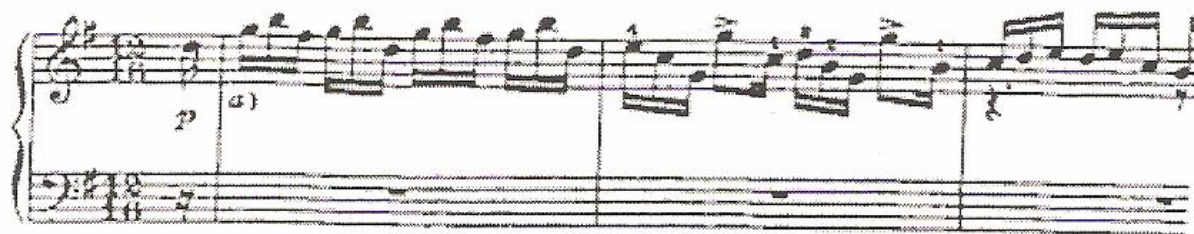
10. *Ibid.*

Example 2-2. Bach: *Well-Tempered Clavier*, book 1, no. 3, in C-sharp major, mm.1-3.



A similar case is found in the Gigue from Bach's *French Suite* no. 5, in G Major. In addition to using a light non-legato touch with the fingertips, Li required students to wait slightly before the first eighth note G in the second measure to bring out the character of the dance (see example 2-3).¹¹

Example 2-3. Bach: *French Suite* no. 5, in G major, Gigue, mm 1-3.

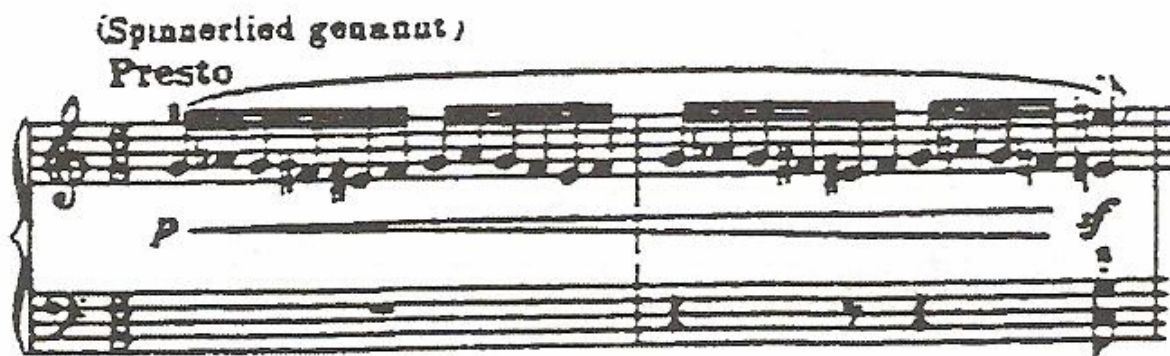


At the beginning of Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words*, "Spinnerlied," op. 67, no.4, the sixteenth-note sextuplets are light and fast with forward moving energy (see example 2-4). If a student played it metronomically, Li would say, "your rhythm is not right!" She would require the student to play the six-note groups with a supported wrist and fingers close to the keys. The

11. Ibid., 135-140.

wrist would follow the ups and downs of the notes, and would control the slight weight change necessary for a crescendo.¹²

Example 2-4. Mendelssohn: *Songs without Words*, “Spinnerlied,” op. 67, no.4, mm.1-2.



Li would forbid excessive *rubato*. She utilized the image of a tree swaying in the wind to represent a healthy sense of rhythm. The basic pulse is the root of the tree. It remains steady, while the *rubato* rhythm, as the swaying branches, is treated with subtlety within the base pulse. Li took the word *rubato* (robbed) literally and would tell her students that time borrowed had to be given back later. One could play a little bit faster or slower but only in such a way as to maintain connection. An example Li used was Chopin’s *Waltz in E-flat major*, op. 18, mm. 169-84 (see example 2-5). With a steady waltz rhythm in the bass, the melody in the right hand should be executed with rhythmic elasticity. Of the two eight-measure phrases, the second is a lightly ornamented version of the first. Each phrase starts with antecedent-consequent sub-phrases of two measures. The eighth notes here are to be played with *rubato*. At measure 173, the interval of the sixth should be stressed by slowing it down slightly between D-flat and B-flat. At the high note in m 181, more liberty can be taken between the D-flat and the C-flat. The

12. Ibid.

combination of the strict dance rhythm of the bass and the freedom of the rubato in the melody are combined into a whole, resulting in a rhythmic evocation of the dance.¹³

Example 2-5. Chopin: Waltz in E-flat major, op. 18, mm. 169-84.

Voicing

Li often called attention to the balance of voices, particularly in the middle and bass lines, because these are frequently neglected. Li would ask her student to play the left-hand part while singing the top line. Another technique was to refer to a Chinese watercolor painting: “If the red flower does not have the green leaves to set it apart, the painting would not be as complete and harmonious. The artist painted each leaf with the greatest detail and each one is different from the other.”¹⁴ To demonstrate her point, she used the second theme of the A-section in Chopin’s

13. Chao, *Li Cui-Chen Zhen remembered*.

14. *Ibid.*

Scherzo in B-flat minor, op. 31, mm. 65-74 (see Example 2-6). In this section, each first pitch in the eighth note of the bass tends to lead to the first eighth of following measure, forming a clear line. The bass line serves as a rhythmic frame to hold the elastic motion of the melody in the right hand.¹⁵

Example 2-6. Chopin: Scherzo in B-flat minor, op. 31, mm 65-74.

Color

To heighten her students' sense for harmonic colors, Li would play Bach's Prelude no. 1 from the *Well-Tempered Clavier* in block chords to show the harmonic colors produced by the progressions. Unlike her Russian teachers, Li did not like to use literary images to spark her students' imaginations. She felt that music with a program would limit a student's music-making imagination and sensitivity; she stressed that music was itself a language. She emphasized the importance of every marking on the score. She said, "as long as you play everything that is in the score, music is there." Li had her own map for each piece of music she played. She encouraged her students to make their own sketches of the structure and color of a piece according to their

15. Ibid.

understanding of the score. She required them to treat the repetition of a phrase with different color. Returning to the tree metaphor, she described it this way: “if you observe the tree leaves, none of them is exactly the same.”¹⁶ It was the student’s duty to figure out the meaning of the repetition.

Faithfulness to the Score

Li believed that following a composer’s markings was essential. She demanded that her students thoroughly study their scores before each lesson. When her students were amazed by the insightful ideas in her music making, she would say, “All ideas are written in the score.” Students were required to pay careful attention to all markings in the score regarding articulation, phrasing, dynamics, and tempo. Her goal was for them to acquire a true understanding of the musical style of each piece.

The Importance of Listening

Li demanded that her students listen to their own playing objectively. A typical remark was, “drag your ears to the door and listen from there.” Li’s demonstrations were an important aspect of her teaching. After her imitation of students’ clumsy executions, they could begin to correct their problems more easily.¹⁷

Technical Approach of Tone Production

16. Chao, Zhi-Jue. 1990. Professor Li Cui-Zhen’s piano teaching. *Yin Yue Yi Shu, Shang Hai Yin Yue Xue Yuan Xue Bao* 1: 68-72. Translation by the author.

17. Ibid.

Li believed that the arms should be loose and totally free from tension. She would often begin a first lesson by having the student hold her arm, and then letting it drop freely to feel the weight of the relaxed arm. She insisted on this relaxation but at the same time made it clear that there is no such thing as a completely relaxed arm in piano playing. It must be a controlled relaxation. To develop this, she would offer the following exercise: raising the entire arm above the keyboard, the pianist then drops one finger to the keyboard with the weight of the arm propelling it. While hanging on that finger, the arm is checked to see that it swings freely. This exercise is repeated for each finger. Next, the arm weight is transferred from one finger to the next in a five-note scale; the student should feel the weight moving from one fingertip to the next while maintaining a flexible wrist.¹⁸

To help her students experience the unity of arm and fingers, Li would have them strike a single note in different shades of dynamics. First they would strike a note using the finger only from the knuckle, and then they would strike it using the weight of the whole arm to produce the “long” arm and “short” finger sound. Students were then asked to describe the differences. Through their description of each approach, they were able to realize the unity of the fingers, hands, arms, and the upper body that provided for balance and connection.¹⁹

Li’s emphasis on the use of larger muscles (feeling the freedom of the arm) and tone production (feeling the weight of the arm, and transferring that weight into the wrist and fingertips) are two of the most important techniques emphasized by the Russian school, the same in both Moscow and St. Petersburg. In “Piano Playing with Questions Answered”, the Russian pianist Josef Hofmann (1876-1957), who was a student of Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894) said

18. Chao, *Li Cui-Chen Zhen remembered*, 135-140.

19. *Ibid.*

the following: “As a general principle, I believe in the free-hanging, limp arm and recommend using its weight in Cantabile playing.”²⁰ The correct use of the arm results in a total freedom with the instrument. The transfer of the arm weight to the fingers is the principle element of producing a beautiful tone.

Li went to England in 1934 and lived in London for the next six years, where she investigated piano pedagogy as it was taught there.²¹ From the last decade of the nineteenth century, piano playing became subjected to scientific research aimed at discovering the most effective and efficient forms of technique and methods of tone production.²² Li was certainly influenced by this scientific approach, and, to teach this new idea to the students at the SCM, Li had planned to give a series of lectures on “Principles of Piano Technique” in 1965; however, the series was interrupted by the Cultural Revolution after the first two lectures.²³ Zhi-Jue Chao, one of Li’s students, recalled in her interview that during Li’s first lecture, Li brought a skeleton to show the anatomy of the human body and the connection between the torso, shoulder, and arm. Discussions on the use of the arm, relaxation, using the weight of the arm, and the rotation of the arm were conducted during the lecture.²⁴

The above concepts show that Li insisted that finger action should be always in conjunction with the use of a free wrist and arm. She also claimed that, above all, the piano

20. Hofmann, Josef. 1976. *Piano playing with piano questions answered*. New York: Dover Publications, 8.

21. Chao, Li Cui-Chen Zhen remembered.

22. Kochevitsky, George. 1967. *The art of piano playing: A scientific approach*. Secaucus: Summy Birchard/Warner Bros, 21.

23. Chao, Zhi-Jue. 2011. Interview by the author. January 9.

24. Ibid.

should be played in a natural way.²⁵ This scientific and natural approach reflects the influential British pedagogy of the twentieth century; Tobias Matthay (1858-1945) was well known for several of the main concepts of the period—relaxation, rotation, and the use of arm weight.²⁶ Although there is no direct evidence to prove that Li had read Matthay, strong connections between Li’s pedagogy and Matthay’s can be found, as interviews with Li’s students (see below). In light of these connections, it is at least strongly possible that Li had studied Matthay’s first major work, *The Art of Touch*, which was published in 1903; two years later, an extract from the book was published as “The First Principles of Pianoforte Playing,” in which he classified movements involved in piano playing into three species: (1) the first: finger movement; (2) the second: hand movement; and (3) the third: arm movement.²⁷ Matthay makes it clear in his book how each of these touch species are applied to different passages: finger movement alone is for rapid passage work; movement with arm weight is for producing full sound; between these two extremes is the combination of finger and hand movement, with the arm being self-supported. Matthay wrote that, when the arm is in the self-supported state, it should never be rigid and noted that particularly in arm touch the player must let the arm fall on its own weight, rather than press it downwards.²⁸

The two basic techniques of finger touch were clearly demonstrated in Li’s teaching. One is the curved finger touch, which produces a brilliant, pearly sound, and the other one is a flat finger touch, which produces a singing tone, since a higher attack creates a louder and a close

25. Ibid.

26. Uszler, Stewart, and Smith, *The well-tempered keyboard teacher*. .

27. Matthay, Tobias. 1924, *The first principles of pianoforte playing*. 2nd ed. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 10-13.

28. Ibid.

attack produces a gentler sound. Li's demonstration of finger touch reflected the first species named by Matthay. Details of such teaching were recounted by her student, Zhi-Jue Chao:

She also demonstrated how moving fingertips with a more curved finger position could result in a brilliant passage and how use of flat fingertips and a controlled slow key descent resulted in legato. High fingers for brighter sound, and slowly raised fingers for gentle sound. She insisted that the wrist, elbow, and shoulder should be relaxed and coordinated at all times in order to avoid a harsh tone.²⁹

Matthay's influence on Li's teaching can be traced in her students' memoirs. The "finger touch," as Matthay called it,³⁰ can be traced in the article by her student Jing-Chuan Yang:

She made us understand exactly where the energy is generated from and how to use the energy from the hand knuckles. She asked me to rest my arm on the table, then just use fingers to play, and move the fingers from the hand knuckles. She repeated the importance of not using too much energy or not pressing or pushing with the arm.³¹

The "wrist touch" or "hand touch," as Matthay called it, can also be traced in this author's interview of Li's student, Yi-Qi Shen.³² "The first exercise Li gave me on playing techniques was to rest my fingers on the keyboard and then to move my wrist from all angles up and down or in a rotary motion. It freed my wrist right away and made it possible for me to play the instrument with ease even with my small hands."³³

The interviews with Li's students reveal Li's insistence that they should learn to control the quality of tone at all dynamic levels. Even at a brilliant forte, the keys should not be hit. Like Matthay, Li sought first and foremost to develop students' sensitivity to sound and touch at the

29. Chao, Zhi-Jue. 2011. Interview by author. January 9. Translation by the author.

30. Matthay, *First Principles*, 10-13.

31. Yang, Jingchuan. 2010. *Li Cui-Chen Zhen remembered: A collection of articles* Ed. Zhi-Jue Chao. Shanghai: Shanghai Conservatory of Music Publishing House, 111. Translation by the author.

32. Matthay, *First Principles*, 10-13.

33. Shen, Yi-Qi. 2011. Interview by author. April 4. Translation by the author.

piano. A “controlled key descent,” as Matthay named it in *The Act of Touch*,³⁴ was also elaborated upon in Li’s lessons, some details of which were recalled by Chao:

In my first lesson, she told me to hang my ear on the wall and listen to the sound. She also demanded that I control every note and that no “white spots” (notes without musical intentions), as she called them, would be allowed. The sound could not be too early or too late, too loud or too soft. If my attention wasn’t concentrated while playing on a passage, she would say, “I didn’t hear it!” She made me aware of a higher level of piano performance that I had never heard before. When teaching me how to produce a tone on the instrument, she remarked that different touches produce different sounds.³⁵

This echoes the points Matthay made in *The First Principle Of Pianoforte Playing*. It echoes Matthay’s elaborations on *legato* touch:

To obtain it, we must be careful really to weigh the key down by such arm-release, and not in the least to put it down by muscular-initiative. True legato, we found, is only possible in finger-passages; for the Tenuto form of the resting [the weight of the hands on the keys] must here be transferred from finger to finger during the continuance of each phrase.³⁶

Another of Li’s students, Yi-Qi Sheng, recounted her lessons, “She made me feel the transfer of the weight by asking me to climb the wall with my fingers. In this case, my fingers felt the connection in between each note instantly.”³⁷

Another major concept in Matthay’s teaching is rotation, that is, forearm rotation.³⁸ In an interview Chao recalled that Li also stressed the importance of forearm rotation:

Li usually taught techniques with simple daily physical movements. She taught me forearm rotation by asking me to turn doorknobs. She also pointed out that there are visible and invisible movements. She didn’t

34. Matthay, *First principles*, 25.

35. Chao, interview. Translation by the author.

36. Matthay, *First principles*, 70.

37. Shen, interview. Translation by the author.

38. Uszler, Stewart, and Smith, *The well-tempered keyboard teacher*, 301.

allow too much movement of the upper arm, because that would interfere with the music. Instead, she would ask me to feel the movement inside of my arm. She particularly prevented any stiffness in the arm and insisted my arm should hang naturally.³⁹

Since Li only had two Russian teachers in her early training, it is clear that her technical approaches changed after her stay in London. Although the Russian school and Matthay share similar points of view, such as the relaxation and flexibility of the arm, rotation, and the special attention to the use of larger playing units, their technical approaches are different, as the Russian School emphasizes power and the English School refinement. A few pianists from both schools can show the difference, e.g., Sviatoslav Richter (1915-1997), Emil Gilels (1916-1985), and Lazar Berman (1930-2005) representing the Russian school, and Myra Hess (1890-1965), Solomon Cutner (1902-1988), Clifford Curzon (1907-1982), and Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) representing the English school. The differences between the two schools were clearly shown in a video of Sviatoslav Richter and Benjamin Britten playing Mozart's Sonata for Two Pianos, K. 448.⁴⁰ The Russian pianist possesses the characteristics of utmost expression and grandeur, while his English colleague conveys delicacy and refinement.

Li taught technique through a connection to simple everyday movements such as turning a doorknob to demonstrate wrist movement, throwing a robe for shoulder movement, finger-climbing on the walls for weight transfer, feeling the key before playing it to control speed its descent, and grabbing the knee with the fingertips to illustrate how to apply weight to the key. Like many great teachers, Li claimed that she had no methods; she did not always give the same

39. Chao. 2011. Interview by author. January 9. Translation by the author.

40. Richter, Sviatoslav and Britten, Benjamin. *Mozart: Sonata for Two Pianos, K448*. Aldeburgh Festival 1965-67. Decca (BBC).

advice to all of her students. Furthermore, she stressed the precedence of musical concepts over technical ones, which can be clearly manifested in her lessons, as recalled by Chao:

Li's demonstration was always so alive, with a diverse range of contrasting colors, especially in her pianissimo, where the sound floated as if it would never end. Generally, Li's tone was never harsh since she abhorred harsh sound. That is the difference between her touch before and after she went to England. It is a benefit of her study in England.⁴¹

One might say that training in the Russian school gave Li a solid foundation before she went to London, while the English school polished her art both in the delicacy of her touch and the refinement of her music making. Li's contribution to the piano school of Shanghai as a teacher was undoubtedly significant. However, with the harsh and powerful attack on the keyboard and aggressive musical approach as the "new" sound of Red China during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1980), Li became a victim of that time, and her refined music making was accused of symbolizing capitalism.⁴²

41. Chao. 2011. Interview by author. January 9. Translation by the author.

42. Chao, ed. *Li Cui-Chen Zhen remembered*.

Ji-Sen Fan

Ji-Sen Fan, the second of the four professors of the first generation at Shanghai Conservatory of Music to be discussed here, was born on November 4, 1917. When he watched a silent film at a young age, he was fascinated by the live piano music performed with it and developed a great fervor for the piano. Deeply touched by Fan's passion for piano, a music teacher taught him the basics of piano playing and let him use the piano in the local music hall. Fan practiced piano every day until midnight and learned as much repertoire as he could. Three years later Fan auditioned for the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. In 1934 Fan was admitted into the SCM at the age of 17, and a year later he began his study under Zakharoff. In spite of Fan's passion for the piano and his diligence, he still lacked any real technique. In order to help him catch up, Zakharoff assigned him a great profusion of technical exercises, etudes, and other repertoire. Fan improved dramatically during the following two years. This experience influenced Fan's philosophy of pedagogy and informed his teaching.⁴³

Fan joined the piano faculty of the SCM in 1937, and in 1951 he became the chairman of the piano department at the SCM. In the 1950s the Soviet Union influenced not only Chinese politics but culture and art as well. Like Soviet leaders, the Chinese government understood the importance and the potential prestige of training many highly talented youngsters who could then be sent abroad to win major prizes in competitions. With this intention, a special secondary school at the SCM was established for such prodigies. The school was supported by the government, which reproduced the Soviet model for producing competition winners at young ages.⁴⁴

43. Xu, ed., *The devoted life*.

44. Feng, *Chinese piano music Culture*.

Russian influence played a crucial role in Fan's piano philosophy, not only affecting his technical and musical approaches but also guiding him in the creation of an educational system for the SCM. This system includes twelve years of training beginning at age nine; it is similar to the system created by Alexander Goldenweiser (1875-1961) for the Special Children Group for the Moscow Conservatory of Music. Even though strong fingers are not the exclusive trademark of Russian pianists, the Soviet school was the first to raise the level of purely technical prowess for a relatively large number of students. This high level of pianistic virtuosity became the goal of the Chinese piano school as well. At that time, nothing was more honorable for the Chinese government than for one of its citizens to win a prize in an international competition.⁴⁵

Fan, as Zakharoff's student, heralded the Russian approach for pianists in China. He tried to teach what he had learned from his Russian master. As a late starter himself, he had suffered from inefficient early basic training, which convinced him of the necessity of developing a solid technical foundation at an early age. Fan studied *Neuhaus's The Art of Piano Playing*⁴⁶ carefully and used it as the principal core of his teaching. Fascination with developing the mechanical aspects of piano playing weighed heavily in the balance of Fan's pedagogical work.⁴⁷ Fan was a strong advocate of Neuhaus's principles of technical training, as articles written by his students indicate. See, in particular, Wei Zhou's *In Memory of Professor Fan Jisen*.⁴⁸

In Fan's pedagogic approach, the first three to six months of training emphasized finger action and strength. The method included practicing scales in twenty-four keys, in thirds and

45. Xu, ed., *The devoted life*.

46. Neuhaus, *The art of piano playing*.

47. Xu, ed. Translation by the author.

48. *Ibid.*

sixths, with different fingerings and also with different touches. Fan asked his students to practice arpeggios in twenty-four keys and then add Czerny etudes. The method was quite effective. Wei Zhou recalled:

In my third lesson, Professor Fan announced his plan for me and demanded that I should start from zero. First, we spent three months focusing on exercises only, such as five finger exercises, single and double note exercises, scales with special fingering, arpeggios, chords, and octaves. Moreover, practices with different tempi and dynamics were demanded every time.⁴⁹

Fan planned a detailed routine for Zhou that included the following:

- Exercises for the independence of the fingers
- Exercises for the strength of the fingers
- Exercises for the strength of the fingertips
- Tempo gradation from slow to fast
- Scales with special fingering
- Arpeggios with variations
- A range of dynamics with a variety of touches
- Chords
- Octaves.

In addition to the comprehensive exercises, Fan also gave students specific exercises to fit their unique needs. To improve her finger independence, he gave Zhou special fingerings for scales, such as: 121212 or 131313, 232323, 343434, 454545. Because Zhou had a small hand, Fan gave her exercises in sixths, coordinating her wrist and her forearm to help her expand her stretch. To strengthen Zhou's weak fifth finger, he asked her to drop her arm from above and support it with the fifth finger on each of the black keys. Scale exercises with changing dynamics

49. Ibid.

were assigned for gaining control and creating color. Technical exercises were always associated with different demands on various kinds of touch.⁵⁰ Fan also used exercises from Neuhaus's *Main Elements of Technique*,⁵¹ which are presented below:

- The first element: single note

The great possibilities of tone production on a single note were explored by Neuhaus in a concept that he called the birth of sound (*ppppp*). Fan asked his students to produce this by pressing the key so slowly that the hammers barely hit the strings. Gradually the student adds weight and height by lifting the hands to the maximum possibility of sound (*fffff*). In this maximum noise overpowers the tone. Through this experiment, the maximum extremes of sound production are realized. Then demands of various expressions, such as tenderness, bravery, anger, ecstasy, loneliness, and emptiness, can be made. Such exercises turn a single note into an artistic creation.

- The second element: two notes

For this element, Fan presented two different kinds of touch. The first kind of touch is finger touch, i.e., lifting the fingers from the knuckles. The exercise involves striking the key starting from *pp* all the way to *ff* without a stiff hand or wrist. Next it requires a change in the tempo from slow to very fast and then the use of all the fingers in different patterns such as 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 4-5, or 1-3, 2-4, 3-5, 1-4, 3-1, 4-1. This can be done on the white keys, the black keys, or as a combination of the two. With non-legato touch, the fingers need to be lifted back lightly. It can also be practiced close to the keys without any space between the tips and keyboard.

Quite the opposite of finger touch, is the arm touch version of the two-note exercise, which was developed to maximize the use of the wrist and forearm. Fan repeatedly pointed out

50. Xu, ed., *The devoted life*.

51. Neuhaus, *The art of piano playing*. Translation from the Chinese by the author.


that the hand must be relaxed at all times. Using Neuhaus's quote of Chopin: "La souplesse avant tout!", Fan wanted to remind his students that piano playing should be effortless in the end.

- The third element: scales in all forms


Because scale playing requires the hand to be constantly moving up or down the keyboard, Fou emphasized the important of getting the thumb prepared. He used thumb movement exercises from Neuhaus's book.⁵² (see Example 2-7):

Example 2-7. Thumb Movement Exercises

1.



2.



The wrist is to be used with the utmost flexibility for turning.

- The fourth element: arpeggios in all forms

Neuhaus called attention to the preparation for turning and flexibility in the wrist. Neuhaus provided thirty-three kinds of exercises on the seventh chord alone. Fan used these exercises and also followed suggestions by Neuhaus of which etudes on arpeggios to study, which included Chopin's op. 10, no. 1; op. 25, no. 12; Liszt's F minor Transcendental Etude; and Etudes of Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, and Stravinsky.

- The fifth element: double notes for intervals of thirds to octaves

The term *double notes* refers not only to two notes, but to two voices as well. Neuhaus provided eleven exercises to practice double notes in different ways. They could also be applied to all intervals from thirds to octaves (see Example 2-8):

52. Neuhaus, *The art of piano playing*. Translation from the Chinese by the author.

Example 2-8. Exercises to Practice Double Notes

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



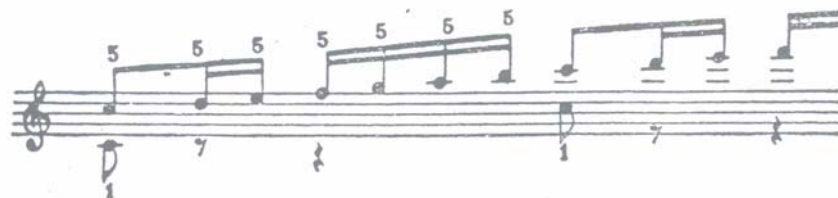
8.



9.



10.



11.



In octave playing, Neuhaus suggested forming a firm ring from the tip of the fifth finger to the thumb through the palm. The shape of the hand must be dome-like.⁵³

- The sixth element: chords

In chord playing, Neuhaus pointed out that every note should sound at the same time, no matter how the chord is voiced. Neuhaus repeatedly instructed students on the importance of relaxed wrists and arms along with the use of firm fingers. He also reminded his students that physical labor at the keyboard should always combine tension and release, just like the human heart, which never stops working from birth until death and has a rhythm of expansion and contraction. Thus, it is possible for a pianist to work for long hours without getting fatigued. The principle of tension and release is particularly important for chord playing. The trick is to be calm and relaxed from shoulder to fingertips, feeling the natural weight of the arm and moving fast from one chord to another, while staying close to the keys. Effortless chord playing is thereby achieved. Neuhaus also called special attention to the fifth finger in the right hand, since it usually supplies the melody line in a chord passage.⁵⁴ Neuhaus's teaching principles were implemented and expanded by Fan as displayed in Zhou's lessons.⁵⁵

In order to aid in his students' efficient progress, Fan offered guidance in the art of practicing. In his article "Ways of Practicing the Piano," Xiong Liao, Fan's student and teaching assistant, described Fan's demanding level of attentiveness to detail.⁵⁶ The bulleted points below represent an extensive synopsis of Fan's practicing recommendations, as outlined in that article.

- Full concentration in practicing

53. Neuhaus, *The art of piano playing*, 144. Translation from the Chinese by the author.

54. Neuhaus, *The art of piano playing*. Translation from the Chinese by the author.

55. Wei Zhou. 2011. Interview by author. October 15.

56. Nai-Xiong Liao, Ways of practicing the piano. *China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House* 1994-2000: 80-86.

The efficiency of piano practicing depends on the degree of concentration not the amount of time. Like real performance, practice also demands exclusive concentration and allows for not even a single momentary lapse of concentration. Piano performance is the combination of highly complex psychological activities, physiological/physical actions, employment of technique, and artistic representation. Only through repeated practice with intense concentration can a player find solutions to problems in technique and expression. Practicing with poor concentration, on the other hand, is not only useless but produces bad habits as well. The process of practicing the piano is in fact that of developing habits, either good or bad. Subject to psychological and physiological restrictions, a person cannot maintain concentration for too long. Reasonable time management, therefore, is of great importance. When feeling a lack of energy and physical strength, a person would be better off practicing less but with more concentration; however, students should still be asked to try to lengthen their concentration span. For instance, with the combination of rich imagination, calm control, and acute sense, every single note can be played naturally with consciousness, preparation, and control, which is highly conducive to memorizing musical scores, achieving accuracy, and improving the sensitivity of touch.

- On relaxation

Maintaining a maximal level of relaxation is a must in piano playing. Muscles can be relaxed consciously and can be steadied as well to exert a certain energy and force. Relaxation in piano performance is different from that in sleeping. The latter involves complete relaxation of nerves, while the former refers to controlled steadiness. Nervousness should be avoided all the time, but steadiness is required. Which parts of the muscles need relaxation or strength and which knuckles need relaxation or steadiness depends on different technical demands. For instance, when playing intense octaves or chords, wrists, fingertips, and knuckles should avoid

any slight stiffness and remain highly steady, while the muscles and joints of the arms, elbows, and shoulders should be kept relaxed. Only when certain parts are relaxed can the strength, energy, and weight be utilized fully and transferred to the keys. Problems in mastering technique are usually caused by a lack of relaxation in the shoulder, too much drooping of the elbow, or the lack of flexibility in the wrist. Hence, one should ensure that muscles and knuckles retain composure by conscious monitoring and by practicing in a relaxed way.

- Be strict

Habits develop in the process of piano practicing. Mistakes made repeatedly in practice tend to reappear in performance. The habit of correct movement must be instilled from the very beginning. Therefore, practice should not be hasty.

- Identify the key points and practice them separately

Piano practicing goes awry in two ways. One type of student relies on repetition without clear goals and thereby achieves incomplete results. Another type, aware of the problems but daunted by their multitude, attempts to tackle them all at once. Those of the former type are directed towards a kind of practicing characterized by full concentration as outlined above. Students exhibiting the latter tendencies are encouraged to divide the practice into distinct subtasks, such as the following:

- Practice of small units

Pick out difficult sections. Focus on one until improvement is achieved before moving on to the next one. It is the same with memorizing music. The music can be memorized by phrase or by period of eight to sixteen bars as a unit. Each unit is practiced until it is memorized, before moving on. This makes efficient use of practice time; it makes memorization easier; and it is more conducive to the focus of attention.

- Practice hands separately

A student will achieve better results starting with hands separately, then, once mastered in this way, with both hands together. This practice is particularly beneficial for polyphonic music.

- Exercises on transposing

(1) A good knowledge of keyboard geography and the relation between various tonalities is demanded.

(2) Do transposing exercises firstly with one hand while looking at the score. Then do transposing exercises from memory without the score. Finally, do transposing exercises with both hands. Transposing exercises are of great help in both memorizing musical scores and familiarity of the physical sense of the keyboard.

- Practice performing

If too much practice time is spent playing a piece all the way through, a sense of unity is achieved, but details are often overlooked. However, if not enough time is spent practicing performing, the unity of the music will be missing. Therefore, the work occasionally should be played as a whole. Moreover, practice in performing will stimulate a performer's expressive abilities and also serve as a comprehensive evaluation of daily practice.

The above suggestions were based on and developed from Fan's advice on how to practice by his assistant Liao. Points addressed above such as relaxation and practice performing were identical with Neuhaus's; other points such as practicing small units and the exercises on transposing reflect the influence of Cortot's study edition of the Chopin etudes. According to Zhou's interview, Fan was excited when someone brought Cortot's study edition to him. Fan studied it carefully and told Zhou that the exercises given by Cortot enlightened his thinking

about how to solve technical problems. After studying these two treatises, Fan experimented through his teaching and developed his own particular system.

Fan was enthusiastic about the Soviet educational system of early training for children. This was the reason he instituted a secondary school program at the SCM.⁵⁷ In the Soviet Union one factor contributing to the success of the Russian piano school was the involvement of major figures in education at all levels. Thus, Neuhaus gave up his concert career for teaching, and Goldenweiser started a school for children.⁵⁸ With the equal devotion to children's piano education, Fan, as the chairman of the piano department, started a system called "college – middle school – elementary school." In 1961 Fan also taught middle school students at the SCM. Besides that, Fan regularly attended the students' recitals at the middle school, conducted faculty meetings, and attended the lessons of younger faculty members. Ming Xiao, one of Fan's students and later his teaching assistant, recorded the key points of Fan's solutions and suggestions in the faculty's meeting on November 11, 1961, as follows:

- It is necessary for beginners to be given finger exercises both with raised fingers and closed fingers and for them to practice in one general dynamic before making the dynamic changes.
- Students in the middle school of the SCM generally have weak foundation in their technique. Their fingers lack independence and speed. In order to improve clarity in fast passages, the teacher should help students practice difficult passages slowly with raised fingers. If this method does not work, the teacher should check whether students had felt the support of each finger.

57. Xu, ed., 139-45.

58. Christopher Barnes, ed. 2007. *The Russian piano school: Russian pianists & Moscow Conservatoire professors on the art of the piano*. London: Kahn & Averill.

- The connection of mind and the fingers: Teachers should realize that, if students are still not able to achieve speed and clarity after going through all the exercises and etudes, then the problem is in their heads instead of in their fingers. In this case, the teacher shouldn't demand that they improve their speed right away but should guide them to speed up gradually from a tempo in which they are comfortable.
- Exercises include many aspects such as scales, arpeggios, double notes, chords, and octaves as well as special exercises written for a particular difficult passage of a piece. Always be sure to make an effort to simplify the exercises when teaching young students in case they get confused.⁵⁹

Fan gave these suggestions to the teachers in the piano department, and the ideas echoed Neuhaus's teaching philosophy. Fan's third suggestion, psychological and physical connection, was identical to what Neuhaus wrote in his book: Physical freedom comes from psychological freedom. Neuhaus manifested his teaching philosophy in his book. He pointed out that the first and most important thing is the artistic image of music, i.e., character, expression, and the meaning behind notes. Then comes the mastery of the mechanics of piano playing, including physical movements and the control the speed of the descending keys on the piano.⁶⁰

Fan always liked to say that technical assurance comes from a clear artistic image of the music. As Zhou recalled in her article, it was the foundation upon which the Chinese piano school was based, and such training gave a very good explanation for the fact that most current Chinese students have a solid technical foundation.⁶¹

59. Xu, ed. *The devoted life*, 139-45.

60. Neuhaus. *The art of piano playing*. Translation from the Chinese by the author.

61. Xu, ed., 139-45.

During the 1960s, the hardships involved in establishing the piano school were overwhelming, and the learning conditions were far from satisfactory. There were no concerts and only a scant number of old recordings available in the library for the piano department. One of Fan's prodigies, Hong Teng, was the first student from the SCM to win a major prize in an international competition. Her third prize in the George Enescu International Piano Competition in Romania in 1962 had a special meaning for the piano department at the SCM. It was reported in the article *Competitions and Musicians in Bucharest* by Evlyn Snior in the English magazine *Music and Musicians* (1962 No.1, p. 16) as follows:

I heard only one session of the pianists, and so found it impossible to comment on the jury's decision to award no first prize. They joined two for second-prize: two young men. Constantin Iliescu of Rumania and Arie Vardi from Israel. I am glad they gave a third prize to a fine young girl pianist from Shanghai, Hong-teng, whose delicacy of touch and truly musical feeling was something to marvel at. How do they teach Mozart-playing like that in Shanghai? ⁶²

Fan was abused physically and tortured mentally during the Cultural Revolution. He died in 1968 from cancer due to not receiving proper treatment and being tortured by the Red Guards. His death and Cui-Zhen Li's suicide were a great loss to the SCM. The educational system he helped to create, however, is still functioning today at the SCM.

62. Xu, ed., 139-45.

The Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976

The Cultural Revolution lasted for ten years. It began with the publication of an article entitled, “On the new historical opera *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*” published in Shanghai’s *Wen Hui Daily* on November 10, 1965.⁶³ Jiang Qing, the wife of the Chinese Communist Party’s Chairman, Mao Zedong, instructed Wen-Yuan Yao to write this article to criticize Han Wu, the author of the play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*. Wu was a renowned scholar of the Ming Dynasty as well as a vice-mayor of Beijing. Hai Rui was a Ming Dynasty official famous for his honesty, bluntness, and austerity. He was courageous enough to criticize the emperors and recommended the severest penalties to stop official corruption. Mao Zedong himself had once praised the play and encouraged intellectuals to speak out like this honest official. However, Mao later changed his opinion about the play, perhaps under his wife’s influence. By 1965, he obviously had drawn the conclusion that the play was a direct attack on his own leadership and that Hai Rui’s character was actually a stand-in for De-Huai Peng, a general who had written a letter to Mao in which he implicitly criticized the Great Leap Forward.⁶⁴ In order to secure political power and protect the newly established political regime from capitalism and feudalism, *Hai Rui* and its author became the platform from which Mao and his wife, Jiang Qing, launched the Cultural Revolution.⁶⁵

In the early months of 1966, Jiang Qing began working as the cultural adviser to the Chinese People’s Liberation Army. She informed the nation that there was a sharp struggle in

63. Qing-Chao, Xue. 2010. *Zhong Guo Xian Dai Shi Lun [History of modern China] Volume 5*. Sichuan: Sichuan People’s Publishing House, 1-10.

64. Great Leap Forward refers to the period between 1958 and 1961, during which the Chinese Communist Party initiated a nationwide campaign aimed at quickly transforming the country from an underdeveloped economy to a modern industrialized economy.

65. Roderick, MacFarquhar. 1974. *The origins of the Cultural Revolution, Volume 1: Contradictions among the people*. New York: Columbia University Press, 201-02.

China's cultural world and that, since 1949, Mao's policies had been consistently thwarted by the dictatorship of a sinister anti-Party, anti-socialist group of people who favored art and literature that was either bourgeois or revisionist or dated from the semi-colonial era, as she called the period of the 1930s. Jiang Qing also addressed musicians in November 1964. In her comments, she described Western music as politically unhealthy and characteristic of social snobbery. In her opinion, music should not be exclusively enjoyed by the bourgeois elites, and musicians should try by every means possible to break their isolation and make music accessible to the working class.⁶⁶

Editorials in the newspapers of the Chinese Communist Party heralded the revolution. By May 1966 the Revolution had spread to schools and universities. A group of college students declared themselves to be the Red Guards and wore red arm bands.⁶⁷ With a title and a uniform, the Red Guards quickly found themselves a mission: to destroy the "four olds" of the "exploiting classes" namely old customs, old habits, old culture, and old thinking, and to promote the "four news" of the proletariat. The almost immediate effect of the movement was one of massive stagnation. Schools were shut down, and factory workers fought violent in clashes with each other.⁶⁸

Priceless cultural treasures, including temples, tombs, and museums were condemned as "old" and plundered or destroyed. When the definition of the four olds was broadened, the violence escalated and led to public attacks against intellectuals who had a specialization, for example, musicians, having a background of bourgeois Western education or a fondness for

66. Roderick, *The origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 201-02.

67. Red Guards refers to a dedicated group of people consisting mostly of students who aimed to push forward with the Cultural Revolution.

68. Roderick, *The origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 201-02.

China's traditional culture. In the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, university professors were paraded through the streets, publicly humiliated, and punished. The SCM professors and their families suffered from this kind of abuse. The piano, an obvious symbol of Western culture, came under particular attack. The Western music was deemed to be dirt left behind by cultural imperialism to be cleansed for the sake of China's autonomy and dignity. Moreover, Western culture and capitalism were blamed for the alienation of the peasant majority of China's population.⁶⁹

The faculty members at the SCM were fiercely persecuted by the Red Guards. They were alternately rounded up and sent to jail or subjected by the Guards to public "struggle" sessions, consisting of mental and physical insults. Many renowned professors from the SCM were driven mad. Some of them could not stand such cruel criticism and inhumane treatment and, in despair, put an end to their lives and their suffering; some of them responded by fighting back in a defiant manner and did not admit their guilt. During the Cultural Revolution, twenty professors at SCM died from unnatural causes; among them, eighteen committed suicide and two died from not receiving proper treatment for their illness.⁷⁰ These included the two pianists, Cu-Zhen Li (1910-1966) and Ji-Sen Fan (1917-1968), who were leading figures for the piano department before the Cultural Revolution.⁷¹ During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1975), music education of China entered a dark era; all the courses in SCM were stopped and the school was closed. In 1976 the Cultural Revolution ended with the death of Mao. The SCM resumed operations soon thereafter.⁷²

69. Spence, Jonathan. 1990. *The Search of Modern China*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 572.

70. Melvin and Cai, *Rhapsody in red*, 234.

71. Chao, *Li Cui-Chen Zhen remembered*.

72. *Ibid*.

Chapter 3

Two Major Piano Teachers of the First Generation at the SCM After the Cultural Revolution

The faculty at SCM had been decimated by the Cultural Revolution. After ten years of political chaos in which music education came to a complete stop, there was a great need for professional expertise and energy to restart the piano program at the SCM. Two innovative professors, Le-Yi Wu (1919-2006) and Jia-Lu Li (1919-1982), rose to meet this need and became leading figures of the piano department after the Cultural Revolution.¹

Le-Yi Wu

Le-Yi Wu was born in Shanghai on March 27, 1919. Her parents were amateur musicians: her mother a singer, and her father a pianist. When she was nine years old, Wu won second prize in a piano competition. After that she began studies with Rui-Xian Wang, who, according to Wu, laid a solid foundation for her future piano endeavors.²

In 1935 Wu was admitted, together with Ji-Sen Fan and others, into Zakharoff's studio. Wu studied with Zakharoff from 1935 to 1942. Zakharoff was strict with his students, but nurturing as well. He offered them many chances to appear in concert, which helped Wu to make rapid progress.

In 1937, after studying with Zakharoff for two years, Wu, at the age of 17, appeared as the soloist with the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra under the baton of Paci. The success of her performance of the Grieg Piano Concerto earned rave reviews and many more performance

1. Ding. The development of the Shanghai Conservatory: 1-6.

2. Yang, Yun-Lin. Forthcoming. In memory of Le-Yi Wu, in *Collected articles in memory of Le-Yi Wu*. Shanghai: Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press.

opportunities with the orchestra. In the same year she gave her solo debut recital, which Zakharoff had planned, in Shanghai. Her recording of Liszt's Concerto No. 1 captures the brilliance and fiery quality of her as a performer.³

Wu was thin and of short stature. To play in the grand style required by the Liszt concerto, she needed to mobilize her whole body and, in particular, the weight and flexibility of her arms. Zakharoff had passed the essence of the Russian piano school to Wu during the eight years of her study with him. Wu's memoir recounts how strict Zakharoff was. After Wu graduated in 1941, she was appointed to the faculty and continued to study under Zakharoff until 1943, when he died of cancer.

During one of Wu's concert tour in Indonesia, the Indonesia Association for Chinese sponsored her going to France for further study. Aboard ship, she played recitals and, coincidentally, was introduced to several renowned professors at the Paris Conservatory. She began studies with Yves Nat (1892-1956) soon after arriving in Paris. Wu graduated with distinction in 1950. Afterwards, Wu became the first Chinese student of Marguerite Long (1874-1966)⁴. In an interview with a student, Wu was asked the differences between the two traditions. Her answer was clear and simple: "the French school is very different from the Russian school."⁵ According to Wu, Long's technical approach was the opposite of the Russian school and used the weight of the arm sparingly. Long taught technique from the knuckle and wrist and aimed for clean and precise finger work.⁶ Not much sound was produced, since Long played with her fingers only.⁷

3. Wu, Le-Yi. 1957-1963. *Piano performance of Le Yi Wu*. China Record Shanghai Co.

4. Yang. In memory of Le-Yi Wu.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

During the nineteenth century, French culture had a profound influence on the Russian world of music and art, especially in St. Petersburg, where the lighter approaches to music were held in esteem. On the contrary, in Moscow the musical approach was more dramatic, romantic, and full of grandeur. Despite the exchanges between the two traditions, the differences between the two musical approaches were obvious. Marguerite Long, who studied with Debussy, held that pomposity had no place in musical expression. She favored the sublime, wit, and the unity of musical flow.⁸ The recordings of Wu's performances reveal the influence of the two schools clearly. Her 1963 performance of Liszt's Concerto no.1, which she studied with Zakharoff, was full of grandeur and dramatic contrast, the passion and bravura of the Russian school. The two Debussy pieces recorded in 1957, *Clair de lune* and *Reverie*, which she had studied with Marguerite Long, were full of atmosphere and subtle nuances.⁹

While abroad, Wu received frequent letters from her former classmates and acquaintances, including Lu-Ting He, Cui-Zhen Li, and Ji-Seng Fan, who expressed their hope that she would come back to teach at the SCM. In 1954 Wu did, in fact, decide to come back to Shanghai. Her schedule combined concertizing and teaching, since she believed that musicians must integrate these two activities. Wu became one of the most active pianists of her generation. Ten years after her return, her career was unfortunately interrupted by the Cultural Revolution. After the revolution, she resumed her career as a pianist and a teacher. She had been invited to judge piano competitions at home and abroad, and, meanwhile, some of her students (Qi-Fang Li, Jian-Ming Qin, and Yi-Fan Liu) won prizes in competitions abroad.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Wu, Le-Yi. *Piano performance*. China Record Shanghai Co.

In 1979 Wu became the third person to chair the piano department of the SCM when the school resumed operations after the Cultural Revolution. She served as chair for almost ten years and, after stepping down from that position, taught at the SCM for another ten. In 1999, at eighty years of age, Wu was struck by an illness that ended her teaching career, which had lasted for forty-five years. She had taught hundreds of students. Unfortunately, she left few written materials about either her teaching philosophy or her methods. The articles her students wrote in memory of her were collected for publication by the SCM. These accounts contain almost no descriptions of her pedagogy. Most of them focus on remembrances of a devoted teacher. They depict an elegant woman with an impeccable taste for art and with a temperament that ranged from delicacy and charm to passion and aggressive power. According to her student Yun-Lin Yang, Wu rejected any vulgarity in music. Any unnatural expression that would disturb the flow of the music would be an unbearable irritation to her.

According to Yang, Wu's teaching gravitated towards the interpretation of music rather than to technical matters. Wu repeatedly emphasized the importance of establishing a mental image of a piece of music. Her teaching was unpretentious and profoundly simple.¹⁰ According to Nai-Xiong Liao, Wu's teaching emphasized the following issues:

- Rubato

Wu saw music as an art of timing. Slightly exaggerated rubato or *accelerando* enhanced musical phrasing. Nai-Xiong Liao, a teaching assistant to Ji-Seng Fan, described Wu's approach to rubato:

When Wu heard my playing of Chopin's Barcarolle, op. 60, she told me: "You don't feel the breath between the phrases. It should flow freely and naturally."

10. Yang, Yun-Lin. In Memory of Le-Yi Wu.

Then, she demonstrated on the piano how she took a little time here and moved forward there. The subtlety of the rubato could only be done by a master.¹¹

- Technique and touch

Wu stressed several principles:

- a. Active and independent fingers
- b. Relaxed and flexible wrists and arms
- c. Unity between arms and fingers
- d. Downward flow of energy from arms to fingertips.¹²

Wu's approach was always simple and natural. Excessive physical and mental energy was eliminated. Wu encouraged sensitivity to the fingertips because they are the physical connection between the performer and the piano. She wrote about the fingertips, observing that the ends of the nerves were the most sensitive spot. Upon entering a dark room, she noted, people try to search with their fingertips first, by touch, and then they identify what they encountered.

Wu provided a few useful examples of how to connect sound and touch. In Prokofieff's pieces certain fortissimo chords need a particular attack—firm fingers and a preformed palm. If more volume is needed, the shoulders, back, and even the whole body can be involved. According to her student, Yang, Wu imparted a technical approach that incorporates the torso as an active playing unit, including the role of the muscles of the lower back and the abdomen. The upper-arms remain hanging lightly; the wrist stays flexible; and hand positions remain relatively

11. Liao, Nai-Xiong. Forthcoming. In memory of Le-Yi Wu in *Collected articles in memory of Le-Yi Wu*. Ed. Yun-Lin Yang. Shanghai: Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press. Translation by the author.

12. Yang, Yun-Lin. 2011. Interview by author. March 3.

open.¹³ Her student Yang recalled that Wu stressed the importance of a high position of the wrist in Chopin's Etude, op. 25, no. 1, in order to achieve the harp-like sonority. The hands should rotate like wheels with arms held lightly and with soft but firm fingers. For the Chopin Etude, op. 10, no. 8, she introduced a light touch with the fingers extended, fingertips close to the keys with a fast attack and a fast release, a *pizzicato*-like action in the fingertips. The arm remained light and floating. This touch is similar to the "*Jeu Perle*" touch used in the French school.¹⁴ With this approach she taught that the fingers should remain boneless and soft, yet the fingertips should remain sensitive and firm. However, the firmness is to be thought of as that of rubber, and any stiffness is forbidden. This kind of touch is for quick, light, and clear passage work. A close attack is necessary, with extremely quick and light motion in the fingertips.¹⁵

- Pedalling

Wu stressed the importance of mastering the pedal. She felt that pianists should observe every indication provided by composers. However, flexibility in the pedalling is sometimes overlooked by the interpreter. Wu gave her students pedal exercises on eighth, sixteenth, triplets, and thirty-second notes, to make them aware of fine distinctions in pedalling effects. Wu asked her students to feel the pedal in their toes as if the pedal came through their shoes under the premise that this kind of sensitivity would lead to greater subtlety.¹⁶

The use of the pedal in Debussy is one of the most challenging tasks for pianists. Wu had attained firsthand information on how to use the pedal in Debussy's works from Marguerite Long and conveyed what she had learned to the students at the SCM. According to interviews

13. Yang, Yun-Lin. 2011. Interview by author. March 3.

14. French *jeu perle* refers to passages played quickly, lightly, and clearly.

15. Yang, Yun-Lin. 2011. Interview by author. March 3.

16. Ibid.

with her students, Wu demonstrated the use of a light vibration of the foot on the pedal. Although this creates a slightly blurred effect, it allows a bass note to be held through the change of harmony.¹⁷ The melody line needs to be carved out distinctively, yet with subtlety. By careful voicing, layers of sound are produced with multiple dimensions. Running passages such as those in the prelude *Le vent dans la plaine* should be in background and played lightly with fingers close to the keys. Running passages and arpeggios were not treated as displays of virtuosity. In his book *How to Play and Teach Debussy*, Maurice Dumesnil (1886-1974) also testifies in favor of blurring running passages and arpeggios by the pedal. When playing fast notes, they should not be performed in a “neat” and “crisp” fashion, but drowned in the wave of tone.¹⁸ Wu made students aware of this pedal technique (Debussy’s “breathing pedal”) and demonstrated how it was to be accomplished. Wu brought an authenticity to the performance of Debussy that was innovative for Chinese pianists at that time.

- Character of music

In order to give her students an acute sense of the character of the music, Wu would explain the historical background of the composition including the cultural and social background that might have influenced the composer. As one of her students, Yang, recalled, the spirit of Wu’s teaching was “music comes first.” Yang recalled her lessons with Wu as follows: “Her teaching was so vivid. In order to show me the musical style of the Baroque period, she acted out for me how they talked and how they danced. At once, the music came alive...”¹⁹

17. Ibid.

18. Dumesnil, Maurice. 1932. *How to play and teach Debussy*. New York: Schrodeder & Gunther, 12.

19. Yang. In memory of Le-Yi Wu. Translation by the author.

Wu's fundamental effort was to make her students "own" the music they played: "The essence of musical interpretation is to pour your feeling into the music, express it from the deepest insight. Like an actor, be happy, sad, tender, or mad, as music demands."²⁰

Wu's goal was to capture an image of the work as a whole. The image would serve to stimulate the imagination and give direction so that a student never practiced in a void or towards empty mechanical perfection. Wu was particularly influential in bringing an authenticity to the performance of Debussy in China. Debussy remains a particular favorite among those whom Wu taught and their students. Wu devoted fifty years of her life to piano pedagogy at the SCM. Many of her former students are spread across China today, holding important positions in major music institutions.

Jia-Lu Li

Jia-Lu Li was born in the Fujian Province of China on December 17, 1919. As a young boy, he played the piano and the harmonica. He often played organ at school assemblies and was also responsible for accompanying chorus classes. He graduated from his primary school with distinction and, exempted from the entrance examination, was admitted into the Xunyuan middle school, a church school in Zhangzhou. The headmaster at Xunyuan, aware of Li's musical talent, introduced him to Stella Veenschoten (1892-1962), with whom he studied piano. Strongly devoted to his piano studies, he remained at school to practice even during vacations, although home was only a few kilometers away. Veenschoten believed that practicing with her students was important, and she would often play piano duets with them.²¹

20. Wu, Le-Yi. 2009. Impressions on piano teaching. *The art of piano* no. 11: 13. Translation by the author.

21. Wu, Zhi-Shun ed. 2007. *Sheng Ming De Zhu Xuan Lu: Li Jia-Lu Ji Nian Wen Ji* [*The melody of life: In memory of Li Jia-Lu*]. Shanghai: Shang Hai Yin Yue Xue Yuan Chu Ban She, 42.

In 1938 Li graduated from Xunyuan middle school and was admitted into the Department of Biology at Fukien Christian University, located in the Shaowu Mountains of Fujian. At the time the school had no music department but offered an optional course of study in piano. In Li's second year, Albert Faurot (1915-1990), a student of Matthay's, arrived to teach at the University. At a concert by Faurot, Li was deeply impressed by the subtle changes of tone color and the vivid musical images in Faurot's performance of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Faurot accepted Li as a student and assigned him copious and widely varied repertoire to broaden his musical horizons. Life at Fukien Christian University helped Li to develop his interest in birds. He spent the last two years at his university combining biology and music, transcribing the sounds of different birds into musical notation. He included these research results in his thesis, *The Birds in Shaowu*, and graduated from Fukien Christian University with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1942. Right after graduation, he was hired by Fukien Christian University as an assistant to Professor Faurot and began his career as a music educator.²²

The next year he was employed as a lecturer to teach piano at the Music School of Fujian. During his five years at the school, Li performed eighty piano recitals in Fujian and Jiangxi. Aside from his busy teaching schedule and performances, Li also offered a series of lectures, introducing students to various skills, including score memorization, the use of pedals, and a survey of different schools of piano technique. In 1945 his paper, "The Techniques of Piano Performance," was published in the school journal, and, in that same year, he was promoted to associate professor.²³

22. Wu, Zhi-Shun, ed.

23. Ibid.

In 1946 Faurot offered to help Li pursue further study in America. At the end of 1947, Li sailed to America to begin studies on a Master's degree in piano performance at Nebraska State University with Frank Mannheimer (1896-1972). On January 4, 1949, Li gave a recital that included works by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, and Bartok. Nebraska State provided him with other opportunities to lecture and to give recitals in America. In 1950 Li earned a Master's degree in Music and also a Certificate of Distinction and a Gold Key in recognition of his excellent academic performance. Four months after his graduation, he returned to China to teach piano in Nanjing for two years. In 1952 Li was appointed to the piano faculty at the SCM, where he remained for almost 30 years.²⁴

Li's two principal teachers, Faurot and Mannheimer, were both students of Matthay's. At Nebraska, Mannheimer was a visiting professor from London and, in fact, had been an assistant to Matthay.²⁵ Although there is no direct evidence that Li was directly influenced by Matthay's philosophy on touch and musical interpretation, Li's two teachers were both clearly influenced by Matthay. Li summarized his philosophy on piano pedagogy in his comprehensive guidebook, *The Art of Piano Performance*.²⁶ His philosophy resembles Matthay's in many respects. As his students recalled, Li stressed the importance of touch, a central part of Matthay's pedagogy. Li attempted to adopt a scientific approach to the complexities of piano playing as did Matthay. There are twelve chapters in his book whose topics include aspects of piano technique, the process of learning a new piece, the relationship between music and technique, and the relationship between student and teacher.

24. Ibid.

25. Wu, Zhi-Shun, ed. *The melody of life: In memory of Li Jia-Lu*.

26. Li, Jia-Lu. 1993. *Gang Qin Biao Yan Yi Shu [The art of piano performance]*. Beijing: Ren Min Yin Yue Chu Ban She.

In *The Art of Piano Performance* Li stressed tonal projection, which is related to a clear sense of touch.²⁷ This art of touch is realized through the integration of the fingers, wrists, and arms. To enhance tonal variety, Li emphasized pedalling. He examined different pedalling techniques such as full pedal, half pedal, and fluttered pedal.

The following is an outline of the technical issues in the third and fourth chapters of *The Art of Piano Performance*. Mattay's ideas on touch are clearly reflected in these two chapters.

- Different touches

The book isolates three basic touches according to the different speeds of the key descent: legato, non legato, and staccato. The slower the speed of the key descent, the more connected it sounds. The ways to produce contrast in tone with different touches are elaborated on with musical examples. In the book there are eleven touches, as follows:

(1) Legato

Slow attack, fingers slightly overlapped, weight transfer between the fingers (see examples 3-1).

Example 3-1. Chopin etude, opus.10, no 3.



(2) Legatissimo

With the slowest attack, weight transfer and overlap of the fingers (see example 3-2).

27. Ibid.

(5) Portamento

To press down the key slowly for three-quarters of the time value (see Example 3-5).

Example 3-5. Beethoven sonata, opus. 27, no. 1, first movement.

Andante (♩ = 84)
cantando, ma molto dolce

pp () legatissimo

pp () poco

Rd. Rd. * (3) Rd. Rd. *

Rd. Rd. * p () p () p ()

Rd. Rd. * 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1

(6) Delicato

Free wrist, with active fingertips, light and fast attack, with fingers close to the key (see example 3-6).

Example 3-6. Chopin preludes, opus.28, no. 23.

Moderato

p delicatissimo

p tr

Rd. * Rd. *

(7) Leggiero

Slightly more energy with the tips than in delicate playing, more speed in attack (see example 3-7).

Example 3-7. Chopin preludes, opus.28, no. 3.

(8) Articolato

Heavier and faster attack with the fingers, keeping the wrist free (see example 3-8).

Example 3-8. Beethoven sonata, opus. 109, third movement.

(9) Martellato

Clear separation between notes. Fingers, hands, and wrist are preformed, use wrist or forearm to bounce from the key (see xample 3-9).

Example 3-9. Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody no. 2.

(10) Staccato

Fast attack from the key. There exist several types of staccato, including finger staccato, wrist staccato, forearm staccato, and whole arm staccato (see example 3-10).

Example 3-10. Beethoven piano concerto, opus. 73, first movement.

The image shows a musical score for a piano concerto, specifically Example 3-10. The score is in 4/4 time and marked 'Allgero'. It consists of two staves: the upper staff is the right hand and the lower staff is the left hand. The music features staccato chords and triplets. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. Dynamics include 'f' (forte) and 'sf' (sforzando). The score is in B-flat major and 4/4 time.

(11) Staccatissimo

The fastest attack from the key, as if the fingers were burnt by the key. There are also three kinds of attack for the staccatissimo: finger, wrist, upper arm and whole arm (see example 3-11).

Example 3-11. Liszt *Spanish Rhapsody*.

The touches mentioned above can be accomplished both with lifted and closed fingers. Lifted fingers are for articulated fast passages, while closed fingers are for cantabile phrases.²⁸ In his book, Li echoes Matthay’s idea of “thrusting” and “clinging fingers.” In *The Act of Touch*, *Matthay* wrote: “The finger can be exerted in two completely different ways—the bent or thrusting attitude; and flat or clinging attitude.”²⁹ These touches are associated with four parts of

28. Li. *The art of piano performance*.

29. Matthay. *First principles*, 62.

the arm: fingers, wrists, forearms and upper arms. Combinations of speed and force are utilized in brilliant passages; slower attacks come into play in more mellow passages.

Among these three touches, in Li's opinion, wrist touch was the key to producing various tonal effects: finger legato with still wrist, forearm pressure through the wrist to the fingertips, and whole arm energy transfer through the wrist to the fingers.³⁰ Li categorized three kinds of movements and named them as follows:

- Wrist down↓ -- down touch
- Wrist up↑ -- up touch
- Rotation of the wrist ↔³¹

Like Matthay, Li believed that the ability to rotate the wrist fully and the lateral freedom of the wrist were the keys to controlling sound color. As Matthay wrote in his book, rotary and lateral freedom of the wrist enable a player to feel prepared for every note; rotational freedom of the wrist joint itself must be insisted upon.³² Only in this way can a truly free wrist be ensured. In *The Art of Piano Performance*, Li defined four parts of the arm—fingers, wrist, forearm, and upper arm. Matthay's three species of touch are found here in the third chapter of Li's book.³³

- First species: finger touch; finger alone exerted against key, in combination with “self-supported” arm.
- Second species: hand touch or wrist touch, that is, to produce the sound with fingers alone with wrist movement.

30. Li. *The art of piano performance*, 13.

31. *Ibid.*, 14.

32. Matthay. *First principles*, 9.

33. *Ibid.*, 13.

- Third species: arm touch with the weight of the arm.³⁴

Along with Matthay's idea of three species, Li also added two elements of sound production:

- Speed of key-descent
- Distance of the attack between the key and fingers.³⁵

Neuhaus's *The Art of Piano Playing* was another important influence for Li. Neuhaus pointed out the mechanics of the four basic elements in sound production: F = force, H = distance between lifted hand and the key before hitting the key, V = speed of the attack (since the force and the height of the attack is varied, the speed of the attack is different) M = weight.³⁶ In theory, Neuhaus's ideas are very similar to Matthay's, except for two elements: speed of attack and the distance of the attack between and key and fingers.

As a scientist, Li would seek answers through experiments and draw his conclusions from them. Touches depend on the amount of weight used. Li pointed out that the amount of weight used is not easy to quantify. Only the players can feel it physically. The best way to demonstrate it, Li suggested, was to ask students to hold the fingertips of the teacher and then to feel the subtlety of the weight difference directly.

Matthay emphasized that distinction between weight-initiated touch and muscularly-initiated touch. That body force and body weight are two different energy sources is crucial. This is important for students to understand but difficult to explain. Li taught this important distinction by holding the fingertips of students.³⁷ In many cases, the students' senses are ahead of their minds. Li also focused on other technical features in *The Art of Piano Performance*.

34. Matthay, *First principles*, 10.

35. Li, *The art of piano performance*, 9-11.

36. Neuhaus, *The art of piano playing*, 107.

37. Wu, ed., 125-26.

In Chapter 10, Li listed different uses of the damper pedal as follows:

- Syncopated pedal, of which there are eight kinds:

- (1) Pedal according to harmonic progression
- (2) Pedal through overlapped harmonies
- (3) Pedal according to the melody
- (4) Long pedal for climatic build-ups
- (5) Half pedal
- (6) Fluttered pedal
- (7) Vibration pedal
- (8) Abrupt pedal for loud or soft finish.

- Non-syncopated short pedal

- (1) Accent pedal
- (2) Short pedal for fast passages
- (3) Soft pedal
- (4) For echo effects
- (5) For pre-climatic build-ups.

Li provided a detailed technical guide for pianists. Nevertheless, Li made it clear in the beginning of the book that technique is only the tool, not the goal, of the art of piano playing.

The eleventh chapter of Li's book is a guide for students on how to learn a piece of music and on four basic steps:

- Browse through the piece and memorize it. The piano repertoire is fast-growing, so accumulating repertoire is an important task. In Li's opinion, there should be two categories of repertoire studied.

- Pieces to be studied carefully to achieve the final stage of the performance and
- Pieces to be studied as supplemental materials, mainly to understand the work mentally without polishing it technically.

Li suggested that a student memorize a piece at an early stage of learning. Doing so would enable the student to get a general idea of the musical structure. The process of memorizing could speed up understanding of the piece. As Li wrote in his book, both Faurot and Mannheimer demanded that the music be memorized away from the piano first. Li recalled Faurot's advice: "Professor Faurot once told me that he spent a week memorizing *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Mussorgsky away from the piano during a trip he took. The fresh sensation he experienced when he tried the newly memorized piece on the piano was overwhelming."³⁸

In order to memorize the music before touching the keyboard, Li suggested that a student should be capable of conducting a thorough analysis of its form and harmonic structure as well as the musical character and essence that the composer intended. This way of memorization profoundly benefited Li, helping to build a vast repertoire for him and to enhance his musicianship. More importantly, knowing the piece mentally first helped him to avoid automaticity and the gymnastic pursuit of piano technique.

In order to discover the musical progression and the logic of the composition, formal and structural analysis is necessary. In this way a basic understanding of the piece can be formed. Li also suggested that students carefully examine the markings in the score and compare different editions to decide upon their interpretation of the piece. Li focuses on the following points when analyzing a new piece:

- Distinguish the structural high points of the piece. For a multi-movement piece such as a suite or a variation set, treat it as an integral unit

38. Li, *The art of piano performance*, 118. Translation by the author.

- Identify the musical character of each movement
- Outline the formal structure unit and divide it into sections such as introduction, development, recapitulation, coda (Li borrowed the structure of Chinese poem writing here.)
- Clarify the roles of the different voices while approaching polyphonic music
- Be aware of tempo relationships and contrasts between or within the movements.

Above all, Li's demanded that his students recognize the climax of a piece.

The idea of movement toward something, the sense of purpose, is the vitalizing spark which turns mere notes into living music. The understanding of progression or movement was insisted upon by Matthay as the most important teaching principle of all. Matthay repeatedly pointed out that the old way of teaching form-analysis, structure, and the interpretation of disconnected segments of music—the “blocks or chunks” as he called them, was musically useless to students. Matthay stated “this law of progression in music applies as much to the smallest details of the music as to its largest swings of form.”³⁹

■ Solve technical difficulties

Li believed that to tackle technical difficulties was the most important aspect of learning a new piece. He remarked “on stage, the player only gets one chance.”⁴⁰ Thus, the mastery of techniques is a key factor for a successful performance. Chapters 2 through 9 cover piano technique issues, such as: (1) sitting posture, (2) variety of touches, (3) relationship between touch and tone production, (4) hand positions, (5) octave playing, (6) chord playing, (7) fingering, and (8) relaxation in piano technique.

39. *Ibid.*, 45.

40. Li, *The art of piano performance*, 124.

- Approaching the piece as a whole

In the previous stages, the student must have already analyzed, memorized, and mastered the technical elements of the piece. So at this final stage one must realize the artistic intention of the composer. As musical understanding deepens, Li opined, the student should recognize the musical character of the piece and become free of technical concerns. Li suggested that the student should always think ahead of the fingers during the performance. By being able to hear the music first, a player can better execute the climactic points. Li concluded that the goal of a performer is to let musical intentions lead techniques, so that the composer's musical picture can be manifested with vivid imagination.⁴¹

Li devoted thirty years of his life to piano education at the SCM. Being an exceptionally perceptive teacher, Li recognized each student's unique personality and analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of each of his students. Li also kept records of their lessons. He was the kind of teacher who was able to draw out the best results from all his students, whatever their talents. Many of Li's students became outstanding pianists and important piano pedagogues. One of his students during the 1950s, Shen-Yin Gu, (b. 1934-1968) brought honors to the SCM by winning prizes in numerous major international piano competitions. Min-Duo Li (b. 1940-), one of the most important piano faculty members at the SCM, who is now retired, was also Li's student during the 1960s. The student recalled his master's teaching:

In Li's teaching, he guided us to analyze the music, to have an overall picture of the piece first. Then, Li would try every way to stimulate our minds to think, to learn. A clear idea of what does constitute real practice was instructed by Li from the beginning. Any laziness of the mind or passiveness in attitude during the process of learning would be criticized

41. Ibid., 50-134.

and corrected persistently. It is impossible to fall off the track with such a teacher.⁴²

This article by Ming-Duo Li also demonstrated that Matthay's philosophy provided the spirit of Li's teaching. As Matthay stated, "Good teaching consists not in trying to make the pupil 'do things' so that the result of his efforts shall 'seem' like playing, but consists in trying to make them 'think,' so that they shall 'really' be playing."⁴³

Beyond his effectiveness as a teacher, Li prompted his students to grow into vibrant, intelligent human beings. This spirit is carried on by Li's students, many of whom hold important jobs in the major art institutes throughout China today.

42. Li, Min-Duo. My teacher—Jia-Lu Li in *The melody of life*. Ed. Zhi-Shun Wu, 179. Translation by the author.

43. Matthay, *Musical interpretation*, 2.

Chapter 4

Fou Ts'ong and His Special Contribution to the SCM

Fou Ts'ong was born in Shanghai in 1934. In 1953 he entered the Warsaw Conservatory. Major awards, including Third Prize in the 1955 Chopin Competition in Warsaw, led him to study further with Zbigniew Drzewiecki (1890-1971). Since 1960, Fou has been based in London, engaging in teaching and performing activities. He has been a juror at major international piano competitions including the Queen Elizabeth, Chopin, Dino Ciani, and those at Leeds and Geneva. Fou also teaches at the International Piano Academy at Lake Como. His father was one of the most important art critics and writer-translators in Chinese contemporary history.¹

Fou was born into a prominent family of bourgeois intellectuals. His father, who had a profound influence on Fou's artistic growth, was the renowned translator and essayist, Fu Lei (1908-1966), who translated fourteen novels of Balzac's and was best known for his Chinese version of Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*, the story of an imaginary master composer. Fou's mother, Zhu Meifu (1913-1966), enjoyed listening to Western classical music. Life in the Fou household was a mixture of capitalism, foreign culture, Confucian education, patriotism, and a desire for social reform.²

At seven, Fou began to learn the piano from an old family friend, Dan Lei (1912-2002), who had studied for three years at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. When Fou was eight years old, his father believed that no school could educate his son properly, so he decided to

1. Tan, Ai-Qing. 1981. Homecoming of pianist Fou Ts'ong. *Yin Yue Yi Shu, Shang Hai Yin Yue Xue Yuan Xue Bao* no.1: 77-80.

2. Fou, Min, ed. 2003. *Almost seventy years old*. Tianjing: Tian Jing Social Science Press, 5-7.

home school him. Fu brought in tutors for mathematics and English and a new piano teacher, Hui-Fang Li (1915-2008), a graduate of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Fu insisted on developing Fou's independent thinking in general, hoping to cultivate the child's intellectual ability and basic logic.³

When he was nine, Fou began piano lessons with Paci. Three years later Paci died and Fu Lei engaged several teachers for his son, but he found none of them qualified. So Fou had to study on his own under his father's stern supervision. In an interview with this author, Fou recalled his early study of the piano with various teachers as follows:

The days I studied with Hui-Fang Li are the most memorable. I had almost no musical foundation at that time, but Ms. Li wasn't strict about teaching me piano technique. She let me follow my heart to play the piano. Over that period, I played all of Mozart's sonatas. After those memorable days, I began my studies with Mario Paci. He commented on my performance when we first met: "This young boy is promising but he needs technical training first." He was such a stern teacher that I always felt rather nervous when playing the piano. Meanwhile, I also had had enough of my father's strict discipline at home, so I couldn't feel any joy in piano playing. Paci's teaching was dogmatic with many specific requirements. So, when studying with him, I had almost no chance to play a whole piece of music. Moreover, he always put a coin on the back of my hand and asked me to prevent it from falling off. Sometimes, he would ask me if I were relaxed. In order to avoid harsh criticism, I lied to him that I felt relaxed, but the truth was that my hands were very stiff because of nervousness. Therefore, I formed the bad habit of stiff hands. Even after so many years abroad, I still can't get rid of such bad habits formed during my three years' study with Paci. However, as a classical pianist, Paci had his special training methods. For example, his teaching of ornaments laid a solid foundation for my future performance of ornaments, especially those in the music of Scarlatti, Mozart, and Bach, etc. I studied with Ms. Bronstein⁴ for less than a year. Looking back, I found some of her notes on Debussy's work somewhat incorrect. In fact, over the past several decades, I am mainly self-taught. And to me, the most rewarding experiences have been my association with Menuhin in chamber music, as well as the frequent discussion with many intelligent musicians who were part of Menuhin's

3. Fou, ed., *Almost seventy years old*, 5-7.

4. Ada Bronstein (1916-2001), a Jewish pianist who resided in Shanghai in the 1930s.

circle in Europe. To me, learning actually takes place at any time and any place, but the ability to think about music independently is a must.⁵

In 1949, when Fou was 15, the family returned to Shanghai after a year in Kunming (a city in Yunnan Province), leaving Fou alone in Kunming for a year of high school. He refused to work on his academic studies; he played the piano sporadically and then swore not to play the piano again. In 1950 Fou entered Yunnan University's foreign languages department, not studying the piano but playing occasionally to accompany choral groups. He spent only one year there before returning to Shanghai, to his family, and to his music. He then studied with Ada Bronstein (1916-2011) for one year.

During the years after the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949), the ties between China and Eastern Europe were strengthened. The Soviet Union, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary used music as cultural diplomacy and offered to help the new Chinese government with a new musical education system, complete with teachers, competitions, and scholarships. In 1953, because of the success of Fou's first appearance with the Shanghai Philharmonic, he attracted the attention of Beijing officials who recommended him for entrance into the piano competition of the "Fourth World Youth and Student Peace and Friendship Festival" in Romania. In the competition Fou won Third Prize. Following that, Fou gave performances in East Germany and Poland. Fou's concerts were received enthusiastically in Poland, and he was invited to participate in the Fifth Chopin Competition in Warsaw in 1955. In 1954 the Poles also offered him a scholarship to study at the Warsaw Conservatory. Fou went to Warsaw to study the piano, preparing for the competition under the supervision of Zbigniew Drzewiecki. After three rounds of competition, Fou won Third Prize in addition to a special

5. Ts'ong, Fou. 2011. Interview by author. May 4.

Mazurka Award for his performance. Fou remained in Poland to study in Warsaw after the Competition.⁶

After the founding of the People's Republic, China underwent a series of movements. In the early 1950s, the political environment for music in China was fundamentally benign. Most musicians and intellectuals were somewhat anxious about the new government but still patriotic and hopeful about reforming Chinese society. During the political movement of 1956 and the first half of 1957, Mao encouraged intellectuals to speak up and suggest improvements for the new government.⁷ Fou's father, Fu Lei, actively responded to the Party's invitation for criticism. But that movement ended abruptly and was followed by the Anti-rightist movement, a systematic effort to tame unruly intellectuals by identifying target individuals as "rightist elements," enemies of socialism, against whom popular criticism could be directed. Fu Lei was labeled as a rightist and was publicly criticized and tortured mainly for raising his son as a prodigy.⁸ In 1957 Fou was forced to return to China to participate in the "rectification" movement for overseas students. When Fou graduated from Warsaw the following year, China was undergoing another political campaign, the Great Leap Forward. Considering what he and his family had suffered under the Anti-rightist movement, he decided to seek asylum in London.

Shortly after Fou arrived in London, he appeared as a soloist with the London Symphony Orchestra. In 1958 Fou married Zamira Menuhin, who was the daughter of the famous violinist Yehudi Menuhin (1916-1999). His marriage into the Menuhin family helped him to settle down in London, and his performing career also flourished at the same time. He was soon touring the globe, performing in South Africa in 1961 and in the United States and South America in 1962.

6. Fou, ed., 5-7.

7. Xue, Qing-Chao. 2010. *Zhong Guo Xian Dai Shi Lun [History of Modern China]*. Sichuang: Sichuang People's Publishing House, 1-10.

8. Fou, ed., 7-9.

That year Fu Lei began corresponding with Fou, hoping to convince him to return to China. In 1966, the Cultural Revolution began. Fu Lei's translation of *Jean-Christophe* was criticized as dangerous. In order to avoid further mental and physical harassment, Fu Lei and his wife sought escape from the Red Guards by committing suicide at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. In the same year Fou's marriage broke up. To escape his isolation in Europe, he frequently visited Hong Kong to participate in the annual Arts Festival in Asia.⁹

In 1979, three years after the end of the Cultural Revolution, Fou returned to visit his homeland, was honored by the government, and was given a professorship at the Central Conservatory. The following year Fou gave a series of four concerts in China, performing works by Debussy, Scarlatti, Schubert, and Beethoven, music not heard during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution. Fou also gave eight days of master classes at the SCM with thousands in attendance. The classes were viewed as a rebirth of classical music at the SCM, a school where almost 70% of the faculty committed suicide during the Cultural Revolution. Fou's concepts about music making influenced thousands of musicians from that point on. In 1979, letters from Fu Lei to Fou were published in a book that was bought by many families in China.¹⁰

Since 2002, Fou has been a visiting professor at the SCM for an annual series of master classes. Over the course of seven years, Fou has chosen repertoire from the following: Mozart piano concertos and sonatas, Schubert sonatas, Haydn sonatas, Chopin complete piano works, Debussy complete piano works, Scarlatti sonatas, and piano works by Liszt and Schumann.¹¹

9. Tan, Ai-Qing. 1981. Homecoming of pianist Fou Ts'ong. *Yin Yue Yi Shu, Shang Hai Yin Yue Xue Yuan Xue Bao* no.1: 77-80.

10. Ming, Fu, ed. 1988. The family letters of Fu Lei. Bei Jin: San Lian Shu Dian.

11. Repertoire list was provided by the Piano Department of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, 2009.

In master classes Fou frequently refers to Chinese poems and paintings. When he was teaching the Claude Debussy Etude No. 11 for arpeggios, he suggested that the atmosphere of that piece is exactly the same as the poem Chang Xiang Si (Longing for Homeland), written by the Chinese poet, Nalan Xingde (1655-1685):

The mountain, a march;
 The river, a march;
 The land over the Yu Kuan Pass I go.
 Countless lamps glow in the soft darkness .
 A night-blow of wind,
 A night-fall of snow -
 Sleepless, a clamor that shatters my home-sick heart.
 There is a garden where it is not so.¹²

In Fou's opinion, the nuance and atmosphere of Debussy's music displays the spirit of Chinese culture perfectly. When giving classes, he often interprets Western music through Chinese Tang poems, song lyrics, and Yuan dramas. Fou once said: "My father sent me Huang Binghong's essays on painting and told me there were some ideas that were also applicable to the artistic development of a musician."¹³

Huang likens the whole process of such artistic development to the life cycle of butterflies. He compares the first stage to the larval stage of butterflies. During this stage, caterpillars spend most of their time eating, and food gives them the energy and body-building materials they need. This is like an art student who needs to learn the basic technique of the craft. The second stage parallels the chrysalis stage. Inside the chrysalis miraculous changes are taking place. The animal inside is changing from a crawling insect into a butterfly capable of flying. This is the second step, the one in which young artists find their own artistic voice within

12. Xingde, Nalan. 2002. Chang Xiang Si [Longing for home] in *Selected poetry of Nalan Xingde*. Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 1. Translation by the author.

13. Ts'ong, Fu. 2009. Master Classes at Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Huang Binhong (1865-1955) was a renowned Chinese art historian and literati painter.

themselves. The last stage is compared to the adult stage of butterflies. When the pupa has finished changing, it molts one last time and emerges as a beautiful adult butterfly and flies off. This is the step in which an artist finally completes his or her evolution of learning and becomes artistically free.¹⁴

Nowadays most people learn exclusively from current masters, which is, according to Huang, only a shallow beginning to the understanding of an art. He feels that it is better to learn from past masters, the artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, who had nobler spirits and more profound inner perception than artists in modern times. Most important, however, is the music itself. Fou, following Huang, therefore teaches his students his inner perception of music. With the increasing number of available CDs and other media, Fou understands that music students today have easier access to the performances of both current and earlier masters, but he is concerned they might ignore the fact that the essence of the music comes from their inner perception of the music itself.

Fou often refers to Fu Lei's comments on Mozart: "Throughout his tragic life, Mozart kept on creating music. No poverty, ailment, jealousy, strife, or triviality in daily life brought distress to him. So his music never conveys any hint of his pain, anger, rebellion, or even struggle."¹⁵ Fou, however, does not completely agree with the last sentence. According to Fou, Mozart's music does convey such messages, but his greatness lies in his effort to keep them balanced. Fou's interpretation of Chopin is distinctly personal. In an interview with the author, Fou said: "In the Chopin competition, the Poles told me that my performance of the

14. Ts'ong, Fu. 2011. Interview by author. May 4.

15. Fou, Min, ed. 2010. *Selected writings on art by Fu Lei* Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 327. Translation by the author.

mazurka was more Polish than those of some Polish pianists. I felt the mazurka rhythm naturally; the strong intuition I have for the mazurka was inborn.”¹⁶

Fou feels a strong connection between Chinese poems and Chopin’s musical language. The character of Fou’s playing is poetic, full of color changes, and the timing in his phrasing echoes the recitation of Chinese poems, free yet “pulsive.” Through the small forms of the mazurka, prelude, or nocturne, a variety of changes in color and character are all reflected. In his interview, Fou said that he never teaches technique, as Fou only received three years of serious piano training from Paci, from ages nine to twelve. Despite lessons with Paci and Bronstein, Fou considers himself to be technically self-taught. He recognizes that technique is not his strong point; it is artistic essence that interests him most. Today, young pianists at the SCM and across China are strongly influenced by young virtuosos such as Yu-jia Wang and Lang Lang. Fou told the students in his master class: “I am here to teach music, not piano, since every young student here in SCM has better fingers already, but only a few know what to do with those fingers.”¹⁷ Fou’s anti-virtuosity attitude has contributed to the increasing importance of music interpretation over technique at the SCM.

Fou Ts’ong’s Master Classes on Chopin’s Twenty-four Preludes

Fou gave several Master classes on the Chopin *Preludes*, op. 28, at the SCM and addressed aspects of phrasing, rhythm, fingering, and character. The issue of technique was never mentioned and was even avoided in Fou’s class. Fou’s interest mainly lies in the psychological rather than physical side of music making.

16. Ts’ong, Fou. 2011. Interview by author. May 4.

17. Ibid.

In Fou's opinion, this work is not Polish, but universal. Chopin completed this work on the island of Majorca. Chopin was ill with tuberculosis and was shunned by the people on the island out of fear. The only person Chopin and George Sand met was the priest in the abbey where they lived. The twenty-four short preludes he wrote are a kaleidoscope of the mystery of life and death.

Fou points out that the twenty-four pieces were laid out in the order of major and relative minor keys. There are two lines going through the twenty-four preludes, one black and the other one white; the pieces in major keys are the white line—blissful and heavenly, while those in the minor keys are the black line—terror and hell. Every kind of happiness and sadness evolves in both lines. The fifteenth prelude—the “Raindrop” prelude—is the one that includes both major and minor keys. Even though it is not exactly the middle of the set, Fou feels it serves as the middle point of the twenty-four preludes. Coincidentally, Fou's musical principles are very similar to Matthay's on the progressional structure of music making. Fou emphasizes the importance of the climatic point of a phrase.

In his class Fou asks the students to determine the character of the piece being explored. What he expects above all are insights into the poetic context and the meaning of the work from the students' personal imaginations and sensibilities. For Fou there is a deep correspondence between the human soul and the universe. In his master classes, Fou comes up with countless poetic images from both Chinese and Western cultures. Then, he demonstrates on the piano but only to help his students awaken to their own imaginations. Fou wants them to have their own ideas and has stated that, as long as the interpretation was convincing, he would accept and appreciate it. French pianist Alfred Cortot (1877-1962) is one of Fou's favorite pianists. Fou often refers to Cortot's interpretation of Chopin's work in his class; the similarity of Fou's

interpretation of the *Preludes* with Cortot's is obvious. In Cortot's study edition of the *Preludes*, he inserted titles for each prelude.¹⁸

Fou agrees with most of Cortot's titles except those for preludes no. 16 and no. 23. Cortot viewed the sixteenth prelude as "the race to the abyss," while Fou sees it as the most terrifying prelude of all. It is like Faust going down to hell, he has said. For the twenty-third prelude, Cortot's title is "Naiads at Play," while Fou views it as the Holy light of Maria, a feeling of transcendence to heaven, very religious.

According to Fou, the preludes progress as a whole work. Major and minor keys alternate with each other. The mood of the preludes in minor keys becomes less dark as they proceed, and gradually the melancholy expressed in minor keys also changes: the Second prelude—the prophet of tragedy, the Fourth prelude—elegy, and the Sixth prelude—inconsolable pain and the reminiscence of the past.

The following descriptions are Fou's interpretation of Chopin's *Preludes* (summarized and translated by the author):

No. 1, in C major.

This piece, a complicated work, is multidimensional: One dimension is purely philosophical and poetic; one is pianistic. It is one of the hardest pieces in the set both from a musical and technical standpoint. The most challenging aspect of the piece is its rhythm. In addition, the melody line unfolds with two voices of different colors. Thus, the independence of the two lines demands great finger independence. Yet, the challenge is not only a technical issue; it is a psychological one as well. A performer has to be able to separate the two lines psychologically.

18. Cortot, Alfred. 2001. *Study edition of Chopin 24 preludes op.28*. Trans. H. Leory-Metaxas. Paris: Salabert Editions, 1.

No. 2, in A minor.

The left hand and the right hand are equally important in this prelude, in which the left hand represents fate, irresistible and merciless, while the right hand is the voice of the prophetess Cassandra from Greek mythology. The left hand is not the accompaniment of the right, but an independent voice. The piece begins with a doomed atmosphere: the end of the world. It should not be too soft. Even though it is in *piano*, there are endless kinds of *piano*. In the Greek legend, Cassandra was the Princess of Troy. Because of Apollo's curse, people did not believe her prophecies. In the myth, the Greeks brought the giant wooden horse to the gates of Troy while the people of Troy were celebrating. Cassandra knew the end of Troy was near, but no one believed her. The emotions expressed in this piece include not only sadness but also horror. The key changes from E minor to E major, then to a minor, and the progression sounds tragic. According to Fou, the Prelude is set in a tragic atmosphere from the beginning, as if it were stamped by death. He says that there is a problem in the Paderewski edition; because Paderewski lacked understanding of Chopin's intentions, the *crescendo* in measure 6 was omitted. It is difficult to understand why Chopin put a *crescendo* on one note, but Chopin did so. This effect can be achieved on the piano through timing.

No.3, in G major.

The character of this prelude is innocent and worry-free. However, if listeners only hear the brilliant finger work in this Prelude, then they are not listening well. According to Fou, this piece is nature-like, a creek flowing forever. Child-like purity is reflected in this piece—liberation, becoming one with nature. Life is reflected in nature and vice versa. The rhythm must be exact in the performance of this prelude. The tone of the ending has to float in the air.

No. 4, in E minor.

The last chord of this prelude is in *pianissimo*, and the ego of the composer has disappeared. A sense of emptiness and mystery is in the air. It is an elegy, heartfelt, hysterical. It reminds Fou of the third movement of Beethoven's Sonata opus 110—*Arioso Dolente*. All the expression should be discovered in the music itself and not added by the performer. Music has to make sense; the logic of music making is not in dogmatic rules but in musical insight.

In his interview with the author, Fou also pointed out that fingering is an important aspect in Chopin's work. There are a lot of strange fingerings in Schnabel's edition of Beethoven's Sonatas. Though strange, the music comes out just right if a performer follows them. In Cortot's edition of Chopin's *Preludes*, the fingerings are also a valuable reference. Just like Schnabel, Cortot also tried all sorts of fingering.

No. 5, in D major.

This one is a beautiful sunny day in the spring, the forest bathed in the sunshine, the color so brilliant. The small phrases should be performed in one breath. In order to discover the hidden magic Fou suggested in Chopin's work, the performer should examine the original handwritten score. In this prelude, the important thing is to maintain the same tempo for the entire piece.

No. 6, in B minor.

In Fou's opinion, there are two "Raindrop" preludes, and this is the first of them. It is an elegy with blood and tears. The feeling is perplexed and introverted. This prelude should not be played too slowly. Fou believes it develops into a distant realm in the minor key. The final note is the climactic spot of this prelude. Its pattern of progression makes it seem as if it is going ever onwards. Fou has compared it to Chinese lyrics by Yu Li (937-978), who was an ancient emperor in exile, known for his tragic and romantic poems, such as "The Beautiful Lady Yu":

When will there be no more moon and spring flowers
 For me who had so many memorable hours?
 My attic which last night in vernal wind did stand
 Reminds cruelly of the lost moonlit land.
 Carved balustrades and marble steps must still be there,
 But rosy faces cannot be as fair.
 If you ask me how much my sorrow has increased,
 Just see the overbrimming river flowing east!¹⁹

No.7, in A major.

The rhythm of this prelude is not a waltz but a mazurka. According to Fou, the realm of Polish melancholy is expressed most vividly with the mazurka. The prelude progresses as a complete work. This short prelude has to be played without pretension. The performer must let the music flow out from a pure heart and forget everything that teachers have said.

No. 8, in F-sharp minor.

This prelude begins out of the last note of the previous one, which is a storm inside and outside: howling wind and pouring rain, a sense of gloom. In Fou's opinion, this is one of the hardest pieces technically. One can only imagine how flexible Chopin's fingers must have been. A performer must pay attention to Chopin's phrasing, Fou notes, as rhythm could be a problem. The ending is a hint of the beginning of the next prelude.

No. 9, in E major.

This prelude is unique. According to Fou, it reminds him of the Japanese movie, *Rashomon*, in which there is a scene of a witch calling the spirits of the underworld. This prelude is that witch! There is a mysterious connection between this prelude and the ending of the last prelude—a horrific scene of ghosts in distress. There is horror in the rhythm. The scene is a primitive setting, as if the ghosts were climbing out from the Egyptian pyramid. The atmosphere is ancient, primitive, and heavy.

19. Xu, Yuan-Chong. 1992. *On Chinese verse in English rhyme*. Beijing: Peking University Press, 327-28.

No. 10, in C-sharp minor.

This prelude is a mazurka. Fou refers to Cortot's explanation: four golden arrows flying from the heavens.

No. 11, in B major.

Both lyrical but also liberated, this prelude expresses a sense of ecstasy, as if Chopin were being transported to heaven and immortalized. The ornamentation must be executed perfectly. Boundless freedom is expressed through the notes. The seven measures of the last phrase should be played in one breath; otherwise, the realm of ecstatic sensation will not be expressed.

No. 12, in C-sharp minor.

It seems that there are similar characters in these preludes, but actually each one is slightly different from the others. This is not a coincidence. The previous prelude is set in heaven, but this one is a nightmare, feverish, and must be done in a *presto* tempo. It is a nightmare with horror and mystery. A pianist needs to discover the inner melody of this prelude. The mazurka rhythm is hidden underneath the notes. According to Fou, this kind of melody and harmony was heard in the southern Polish mountains.

No. 13, in F-sharp major.

Chopin wrote 6/4 in his score; Fou points out that a performer should feel the impulse of 3/2 in this prelude. Even though it seems impossible to play it in 3/2, Fou wanted to remind his students that the music must flow in 3 beats, not in 6 or 2 beats. Chopin must have predicted how people would drag the tempo in this piece. The harmony is simple here, and through the change of rhythm, Chopin provided a hint of how the composition should be played. Chopin is so subtle and accurate that a performer must play it according to his marks. The mood in this prelude is

similar to No. 11 in B major: ecstatic, heavenly, liberated. F-sharp major is the most distant key from the starting C-major and feels as if it were from a faraway, divine planet. It should be played with deepest affection. There is not a trace of bitterness in this prelude; instead there is a certain serenity, a quality of floating in the air, a sense of ecstasy. The previous Prelude is a nightmare, while this one should be played as awakened yet still in a state of daydreaming. No. 14, in E-flat minor.

In the Oxford Edition of the *Preludes*, this prelude is marked *Largo*. In 1849 Chopin was invited by his Scottish student, Jane Sterling, to give a concert in Scotland. She must have been playing it too fast, which greatly annoyed Chopin. He crossed out *Allegro* and wrote *Largo* on her score. In the opinion of some people, this prelude is like the fourth movement of Chopin's Sonata No. 2, but in Fou's opinion, the two are totally different. The fourth movement of the Sonata is, as Liszt said, like the wind blowing over a tomb, while this prelude is like an earthquake. The ground is breaking, the intensity is shown through the hidden polyphony. The two voices are pulling away from each other, thus giving the sense that the whole world is shaking.

No. 15, in D major.

This is the most popular of all twenty-four preludes—the “Raindrop” prelude. In Fou's opinion, it serves as the central point of all twenty-four preludes. Some people have played it slowly, responding to the *sostenuto* marking. This is about raindrops falling all night long until the dawn. *Sostenuto* means this rain continues from the beginning until the end of the piece, in continuous development: At the beginning, this prelude represents light rain with a soft wind, which then slowly becomes a pouring rain; psychologically, it should convey a sense of horror. If it is played too slowly without development, the Prelude would be static. Fou also feels a

religious sense of Eastern Orthodoxy in this prelude. In the end, the dynamic marking is not *diminuendo*, but *subito pianissimo*.

When the interval of the fifth appears at the beginning of the middle section, it is mysterious. The raindrop in this prelude is endless, conveying the feeling of infinity. Fou referred to a Chinese painting when discussing this piece—only a flower or a branch is painted. However, the minimalist approach nonetheless captures a sense of the infinite. This is very different from Western painting. Chopin is like a great painter; the *Preludes* are like twenty-four little paintings that relate to each other. There is a connection between the *Preludes* psychologically. Some people have said that when Chopin wrote the middle section in this prelude, he imagined his own death: A priest in a black robe is moving his coffin. This is a story told by George Sand.²⁰ It can be used as a reference to help understand this piece. It carved out the black line to death.

No.16, B-flat minor.

This is the most terrifying prelude of all. It is wrong that many pianists execute it like an etude. For Fou, it is, as noted above, like Faust going down to hell. In fact, many people interpret this prelude incorrectly, Fou maintains. Cortot is the master Fou truly admires, but the way he played this prelude is wrong in Fou's opinion. Even though Cortot's analysis is always right, Fou believes, Cortot did not perform the piece as he had analyzed it. He did not dare to treat the pedal as Chopin indicated. In his interview with the author, Fou said: "I had a friend who told me how he felt when he heard Cortot's recording of this prelude: 'The right hand is like somebody riding a bicycle; the left hand is like a cripple trying to catch up with him, but never succeeding.'"²¹ A

20. Cortot, Alfred. 2001. *Study edition of Chopin 24 preludes op.28*. Trans. H. Leory-Metaxas. Paris: Slabert Editions, 1.

21. Ts'ong, Fou. 2011. Interview by author. May 4.

look at his original score reveals that Chopin wrote pedal markings in several places; there are two long pedals—all the chords are within one pedal. According to Fou, until this day, nobody dares to do it according to Chopin's pedalling. Some people have said that Chopin's piano was different from modern pianos, but Fou does not agree with that. Fou has played on Chopin's piano, which he felt is as colorful as the pianos of today.

Usually, this piece sounds brilliant and virtuosic as played, but without the sense of horror. Fou thinks the atmosphere of horror can be created only if the performer pedals according to Chopin's writing: chilly wind and bitter rain, nightmare to earthquake, a horror of nature. As Fou envisions it, the storm is the music, just like the horror Faust experienced when he was condemned to Hell. The key to executing the prelude well is to grasp the sense of *Presto* and *con fuoco*. Some people have great fingers; they play it fast and brilliantly, but, without following the *con fuoco* marking, the piece sounds like an etude with no imagination—completely boring. Players should perform it according to Chopin's intention. This is what Fou means by essence. No. 17, in A-flat major.

This prelude is joyful, passionate, longing, intoxicated. The tempo of this prelude is *Allegretto*, which is very close to the style of Mendelssohn's compositions; it is similar to Mendelssohn "On Wings of Song."²² It is a different kind of happiness, dainty and charming. Fou insists that it be performed as an *Allegretto* and not too slowly. It is not supposed to be sentimental. Fou calls attention to the bass at the end, which should be played as simply as possible. The harmony of this prelude is worthy of analysis, he notes. Some people say it is the sound of a bell. There are 12 strikes of the bell, and every strike should have an accent added to it, they maintain, but Fou does not think so. Some say that the bell sound is fading away, so it

22. Mendelssohn, Felix. (1809-1847). On Wings of Song, Op. 34, No.2.

must be made *diminuendo*; this kind of interpretation in Fou's opinion is detached from harmony and the essence of the piece. The bell sound cannot be approached from an imitational aspect; it needs to be seen from a psychological point of view. In Fou's opinion, the sound Chopin heard was not necessarily a real bell sounding; it was the mysterious voice he heard in his inner ear, which represents a sense of crisis. The beginning is so charming, so sunny, but then gradually darkness grows, creating a sense of anxiety. From the point of view of music making, there is a matter of line here; it should be a very, very, long line—creating a long phrase.

Fou has said: "Music can only express, not describe."²³ Music is like a poem, which should not be performed mechanically; it must be performed with a strong feeling from inside. The bell sound in this prelude is both from the outside world and the inner psychological world No. 18, in F minor.

This prelude is a struggle of life and death, like a mad lion. According to Fou, it is also like the fighting session in the Peking opera. The last two chords are so stern, unforgivable, two bullets.

No. 19, in E-flat major.

This *Vivace* prelude has to be executed with liveliness. Cortot played this one exquisitely, even though some notes in the left hand were missing.

No. 20, in C minor

This prelude, although marked *Largo*, cannot be played too slowly. The first measure is in four, not in eight. Each measure is a phrase; the first two measures are *fortissimo*, then *piano*, then *pianissimo*; the following crescendo is within the *pianissimo*. Looking into the harmony is essential. The performer should let the last chord ring after pressing it, as if the sound would last forever.

23. Ts'ong, Fou. 2011. Interview by author. May 4.

No. 21, in B-flat major.

This prelude is very intricate. Fou has imagined that when Chopin was composing this prelude, after he wrote the perfect fifth to end last Prelude, he must have felt challenged about how to continue. The mood in this one is very ambiguous, it is like searching for something, with a sudden outburst of fire. Fou felt the unspeakable bitterness in the left hand, just like the atmosphere described in a Chinese poem “Slow, Slow Tune” by Qing-Zhao Li (1084-1155), which ends with a question:

Slow, Slow Tune
 I look for what I miss;
 I know not what it is.
 I feel so sad, so drear,
 So lonely, without cheer.
 How hard is it
 To keep me fit
 In this lingering cold!
 Hardly warmed up
 By cup on cup
 Of wine so dry,
 O how could I
 Endure at dust the drift
 Of wind so swift?
 It breaks my heart, alas!
 To see the wild geese pass,
 For they are my acquaintances of old.

The ground is covered with yellow flowers,
 Faded and fallen in showers.
 Who will pick them up now?
 Sitting alone at the window, how
 Could I but quicken
 The pace of darkness that won't thicken?
 On plane's broad leaves a fine rain drizzles
 As twilight grizzles.
 O what can I do with a grief
 Beyond belief?²⁴

24. Xu, Yuan-Chong. 1992. *On Chinese verse in English rhyme*. Beijing: Peking University Press, 405-406.

No.22, in G minor.

This prelude is revolution; it is rebellion; Fou warns against playing it like an octave exercise. It is a grand piece, as if millions of people are crying.

No.23, in F major.

Cortot played this piece in a fast tempo, but it is written in four and marked *Moderato*. There are four down beats in one measure; so it should be in a moderate tempo. Fou always felt the mood of this prelude to be very similar in mood to Faure's *Requiem*; the atmosphere is very religious. The Holy light of Maria, a feeling of transcendence to heaven; it is a very different feeling from the Puritan or Russian Orthodox religions. According to Fou, there is sensuality in this Holy light, like that in paintings by Botticelli and Raphael. The flesh is transparent in it, a divine softness of femininity. There is always a strong contrast in Chopin's music, from the horrific chaos and rebellion to absolute peace. Here peace is the dominant mood.

No.24, in D minor.

This prelude is marked *Allegro* and is also filled with fifths, the essence of which is the spirit of fearlessness. Some people say there is Oriental blood in Chopin. Fou felt this piece to be Oriental in style, like an ancient Mongolian king—Genghis Khan, for example—fearless and heroic, with the addition of a sense of the savage being expressed here. At the end of this prelude, Fou points out that performers must not to slow down. The end is in a single pedal; the whole universe is in this one note. It is critical, he maintains, to let it vibrate. The kaleidoscope finishes on this note. Fou suggests that players study the *Preludes* as a whole; it is better not to separate them.

Fou's seven years of master classes at the SCM provide an opportunity for examining in detail his ideas and musical intentions. He has preserved the essence of Chinese culture and

combined it with the Western influence he acquired in his life, which together form a unique musical approach. In spite of this, or perhaps because of it, he has received many critical accolades. Aware of many traditions but not part of any of them, Fou aspires to achieve the complete realization of the score as his performance goal.

Chapter 5

The Present Generation of Piano Faculty at the SCM

The SCM faculty introduced in the previous chapters included four major faculty members who formed the first generation of piano teachers in the SCM. To acknowledge their contribution to piano education at SCM, four volumes of collected articles written by later faculty members and their students were published by SCM in 2007.¹ In the 1970s the second generation of piano teachers at the SCM started. Most of them were students of the four major professors of the first generation but did not have the same opportunities to study abroad that their teachers had had.

The following list shows students of each of the four teachers discussed in the previous chapters who became important piano teachers themselves.

- **Cui Zhen Li**: Zhi-Jue Chao (b. 1940), Yi-Qi Sheng (b. 1941), Lian-Liang Li (b. 1930), Rei-Xin Li (b. 1930), Ai-Lin Lin (b. 1930), Er-Yao Lin (b. 1938), Jian-Zhong Wang (b. 1930), Yan-Ru Yang (1930-2001), Yi-Qiang Sun (b. 1938). Another noted teacher from Li's studio is Ya-Fen Zhu (b. 1930), who has been head of the piano department at the Shenyang Conservatory of Music for the last fifty years and has produced many outstanding students, including Lang Lang.
- **Ji Sen Fan**: Nai-Xiong Liao (b. 1934), Teng Hong (b. 1934), Da-Chun You (b. 1934), Yu Wang (1934-2010), Lin Lin (b. 1930), Da-Lei Fan (1946-1994), Wei Zhou (b. 1947).
- **Jia Lu Li**: Shu-Xin Zhen (b. 1930), You-Fei Qin (b. 1939), Chang-Pin Zhu (b. 1930), Min-Duo Li (b. 1939).

1. The four books are *Li Cui-Chen Remembered: A Collection of Articles*, *The Melody of Life: In Memory of Li Jia-Lu*, *The Devoted Life: In Memory of Fan Ji-Sen*, and *Collected Articles in Memory of Le-Yi Wu*.

- **Le-Yi Wu**: Shi-Zhen Yao (b. 1937), Shi-Yu Zhou (b. 1939), Min-Xiao (b. 1940), Yun-Lin Yang (b. 1949). Yang served as the deputy chair of the piano department of the SCM from 2005-2009 and taught many students who have won national and international piano competitions.

Following the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, the second generation of piano teachers along with two of their teachers, Jia-Lu Li and Le-Yi Wu, sought to restore and maintain a professional level of piano education in the SCM. They were faced with tremendous challenges, including a lack of resources and the destruction of the library at the SCM during the Cultural Revolution. Hardly any Western musicians came to China to give concerts or master classes between 1965 and 1985. The setback caused by the Cultural Revolution may have contributed to a missing generation of piano teachers in the SCM, who would have been born sometime between 1950 and 1960. As a result, the present piano faculty of the SCM consists of a number of teachers of the second generation with an average age of nearly 70 and younger musicians born after 1960.

During the 1980s, waves of young students from major conservatories throughout China went to study abroad. Many of them came back to China during the 1990s. Nine members of the present full-time piano faculty at the SCM studied in the U.S. or Europe. Most of the present generation of teachers are relatively young and in their thirties. In general, they have a heavy work load and typically look after the studies of nine to twelve students, two lessons of forty-five minutes per week are required for each student. The teachers attempt to pass on the knowledge that they have learned abroad to their students. Unlike their predecessors, the SCM's current generation of piano teachers has come from internationally diverse educational backgrounds. Most have won international competitions and have made extensive concert appearances.

In 2010 the younger piano faculty at SCM included Jian Li (b. 1966), Wei Zhou (b. 1947), Cheung-Yu Mo (b. 1973), Zhe Tang (b. 1970), Ken Zhou (b. 1962), Chen Jiang (b. 1971), Yun Sun (b. 1970), Bin Su (b. 1963), Gao-De Dai (b. 1973), and Hong Wang (b. 1971). They were all trained in either United States conservatories or European conservatories, with the exception of Hong Wang. A sample of five faculty members is analyzed below.²

From U.S. Conservatories

Five current piano faculty members graduated from U.S. conservatories: Jian Li, Cheung-Yu Mo, Ken Zhou, Zhe Tang, and Yun Sun. A sample of three of them will be profiled below along with an analysis of their teaching methods.

Cheung-Yu Mo (b. 1973)

Born in Beijing, raised in Hong Kong, and educated in the United States, Cheung-Yu Mo is a recipient of a Doctorate of Musical Arts from the Juilliard School. Among many teachers from whose tutelage he has benefited, Mo feels most indebted to John Winther, Robert Shannon (b. 1962), and Yoheved Kaplinsky (b. 1947).

Mo's many honors include the Rudolf Serkin Award, the John Elvin Prize, the Starr Foundation Doctoral Scholarship, an honorary prize at the Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition as well as the grand prizes at the Oberlin Concerto Competition, the Music Teachers' National Association Ohio Competition, and the Arthur Dann Competition. He gave his recital debut at the Hong Kong City Hall, performing a selection of Debussy etudes, Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit*, Messiaen's "Le Merle bleu" from *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, and Liszt's B minor

2. Biographies of the five piano faculty members were provided to the author by the Piano Department of SCM, 2010.

Sonata. Mo has performed at various venues in New York, including Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall. In addition to solo and chamber music appearances in North America and Hong Kong, Mo has concertized in mainland China and in Taiwan.

Mo holds a full-time professorship in piano at the SCM. He is also on the piano faculties of the middle school affiliated with the SCM,³ the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Mo's teaching on technical issues focuses on those physiological movements that place minimal stress on the body. This approach is consistent with the view of two of his teachers, Robert Shannon and Yoheved Kaplinsky. Both were exponents of the Taubman Approach.⁴ Mo discussed the concept of forearm rotation in a public lecture at the SCM in May, 2011. He demonstrated how rotation is fundamental to all finger technique. During the class, students were advised to let fingers simply fall onto the key rather than using a thrusting or pulling finger stroke. Mo cautions against active use of the upper arm, because he believes that the upper arm follows rather than initiates movement.

Zhe Tang (b. 1970)

Born in China, Zhe Tang entered the middle school affiliated with the SCM at the age of twelve. Following graduation, he continued his studies in the United States and earned his Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the Eastman School of Music, where he served as a teaching assistant to Barry Snyder (b. 1940). In 2003 Zhe Tang began his tenure at the SCM. In addition to his teaching, he was appointed Director of the Shanghai Professional Pianists Society.

3. A special secondary school of the SCM was established for talented children. The school is supported by the government, which reproduced the Soviet model and a training system intended to produce competition winners at young ages.

4. Physiological movements invented by Dorothy Taubman (b. 1918) that are deemed to reduce stress on the body.

Tang has been a recipient of numerous awards and prizes, among them the silver medal in the Edvard Grieg International Piano Competition in Norway and first prize in the Kosciuszko Chopin Piano Competition. He was chosen as the winner of the Adele Marcus Foundation Grant, which enabled him to perform extensively in the United States. At the Eastman School of Music, he was awarded a grant from the Liberace Foundation and the received a coveted Performer's Certificate. Tang has appeared as a soloist with numerous orchestras and has collaborated with conductors Jahja Ling, Mitchell Arnold, and Fusao Kajima, among others. He gave the American premiere performance of the *Concerto No. 2 for Piano and Viola* by Alexander Tchaikowsky (b. 1946). He has presented solo recitals throughout the United States, Europe, and the Far East. His performances have been heard on radio and television, including Chinese National TV and Radio, Polish National Television, Oriental TV, WQXR (New York), and WFMT (Chicago). He is a frequent adjudicator of piano competitions and has served on the jury of the Bachauer, Bösendorfer, Eastman, and all the major Chinese national piano competitions.

In great demand as a teacher, Tang has taught master classes and presented lectures at many universities, conservatories, music schools, and festivals throughout China, Europe, and the United States. Many of his students have won top prizes at national and international competitions. Tang received his early piano training at the SCM middle school from two teachers: Da-Chun You and Ten Hong. Both were students of Ji-Sen Fan, who was discussed in the previous chapter. Strict technical training is the hallmark of Fan's studio. Although Tang received such training from both You and Hong at an early age, their instruction was balanced with a demand of attention to all details of music making. During his fifteen years in the U.S., Tang studied with Florence Kirsch (1915-2005), a pupil of Arthur Schnabel (1882-1951); Donald Walker (b.1930), a pupil of Josef Hoffman; and Barry Snyder (b.1940), a pupil of Edwin

Fischer. As a student of both the German and Russian schools of performance, Tang's approach is primarily built upon these two traditions.

Unlike two of his Chinese teachers, Tang claims that he does not assign technical exercises to his students. In his public classes at SCM in May 2010, Tang acknowledged that many technical approaches do exist, but he emphasized the importance of studying technique as a way of achieving freedom in playing. Tang laid particular stress on the importance of listening as a part of practicing. The technical approach he demonstrated is one that incorporates the whole arm as an active playing unit. He discussed the importance of relaxed shoulders, free arms, flexible wrists, and the control of the keys by the finger tips. He also illustrated varied attacks that produced a wide range of sound color. Tang cautioned against imitating models of performance. He also discussed importance of developing an awareness of the piece as a whole. He was particularly concerned about the uniformity of rhythm as an important element in a successful performance. His demonstration showed a balance of emotion and intellect, an interest in the inner voice, sensitivity and the capability of producing varied texture of sound color, an inborn rhythmical drive that is uniquely his own, and, finally, a personality that abhorred boredom in music making.

Yun Sun (b. 1970)

Born in China, Yun Sun studied with Guang-Ren Zhou (b. 1930) at the middle school of the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. She went on to the U.S. to study in the precollege division of the Manhattan School of Music as a winner of the Elwa van Gelder Scholarship. She received her Master's degree and received the Marian Marcus Wahl Award at Mannes College of Music where she studied with Nina Svetlanova (b. 1932). After graduating from the Mannes

College of Music, Sun studied with Vladimir Feltsman (b. 1952) and Robert McDonald (b. 1951). She considers Svetlanova, Feltsman, and McDonald to be her strongest influences. Sun is a winner of numerous piano competitions, including the Artists International Annual Young Artist Debut Series, World Piano Competition in Cincinnati and the Stravinsky International Piano Competition. Since Sun's Weill Recital Hall debut, she has concertized throughout the United States. Her European debut took place in the Kleine Zaal at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.

Sun's early training at the middle school of the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing provided her with a solid technical foundation of piano playing. Her teacher there, Guang-Ren Zhou, was a student of Paci. Zhou's technical approach is profoundly simple; it centers on finger technique and emphasis upon the independence of the finger and a round hand position. Zhou cautions against violent movement of the elbows and believes that the shoulder should be relaxed and always feel the weight of the arm as it flows to the finger tips. Sun incorporated these elements into her own playing and her teaching. Zhou places elegance, rhythmical accuracy and musical sensitivity above all other aesthetic values.

At the age of seventeen, Sun became a student of Svetlanova and studied with her for seven years at the Mannes College of Music. Svetlanova is a student of Neuhaus at the Moscow Conservatory. Following Sun's graduation from Mannes, she studied with Vladimir Feltsman for two years. Feltsman is a pupil of Yakov Zak's (1913-1976). The last teacher Sun studied with in the United States is Robert McDonald, a pupil of Rudolf Serkin (1903-1991) and Mieczyslaw Horszowski (1892-1993). Sun's pianistic growth went through three stages of development under these three teachers.

Despite her substantial agreement with the Neuhaus approach, Svetlanova has developed her own method. She focuses on the whole arm as a single unit, emphasizing the light elbow;

flexible wrist; and relaxed, “boneless” fingers. Finger tips are trained with a combination of different staccato exercises. Fingers stay in close contact with the key, and any excessive movement or energy must be reduced. She recommends practice in the *pianissimo* to *mezzo piano* range in a tempo slightly slower than the marked tempo. The weight falling and solid supporting fingers are not part of her teaching. Her method aims at a complete ease and control in piano playing.

The second teacher who has had a major influence on Sun is Feltsman. A supreme virtuoso, Feltsman is an objective rather than Romantic performer; his playing is marked by a sense of form and structure and a strong ability to concentrate during the performance, which he developed away from the piano through meditation, which, he believes, leads to confidence in performance, during which excessive activity of the mind and emotion is shut down. The performer maintains a connection to the breathing of the lower abdomen. The mind remains free yet focused, and therefore the playing becomes highly accurate. Feltsman urges his students to discover the very source of the manifestation when performing by remaining fixed at a point that transcends one’s ego and by opening one’s awareness to an infinite universe. He hardly discusses the solution of technical problems and the emotional content of the music.

To balance the somewhat abstract and spiritual approach of Feltsman, Sun decided to study with McDonald. McDonald is a stern pianist who avoids any suggestion of flashiness in his playing. McDonald’s playing is marked by sensitivity to color and texture, and by a warm sound. McDonald concentrates on the Germanic repertoire; his approach is quite different from that of Feltsman. The seriousness and the devoted attitude as a musician that Serkin emphasized to McDonald during his student years at the Curtis Institute of Music have affected him greatly as a teacher. McDonald believes that the pursuit of pianistic virtuosity instead of the composer’s

intent would be wrong. McDonald demands careful listening and expressive music making. Every note, he teaches, has to be deeply felt. He urges his students to attend to every tiny detail in the score. McDonald's technical approach is primarily based on the Taubman approach, which stresses the concept of rotation as fundamental to all finger techniques. Like Mo, McDonald advises letting the finger simply fall onto the key rather than utilizing a thrusting or pulling finger stroke and similarly cautions against active use of the upper arm. He also advises using straight, uncurved thumbs.

Since 2002, Sun has been on the college piano faculty at the SCM. She is also on the piano faculty of the middle school affiliated with the SCM. In her teaching, Sun includes all the facts that formed her technical approach from the four teachers mentioned above. Sun views the fingers as an extension of the arms and emphasizes the following techniques: elasticity in the hand, lightness in the elbow, flexible wrists, strong fingertips, and hands in close contact with the keys without excessive movement or energy. Sun focuses especially on the training of fingertips and the freedom of the arm with a sense of the unity of the arm and the fingers. Like Svetlanova, Sun believes it is necessary to practice in the *pianissimo* to *mezzo piano* range to acquire smoothness in the arm movement and sensitivity of the fingertips. Differing from Svetlanova's weightless technical approach, she considers the exercises for weight falling and weight transfer to be the key elements of *legato* playing and producing warm sound. Thus, Sun instructs students to practice with and without weight. She also demonstrates varied attacks that produce a wide range of sound color.

Being influenced by Feltsman, Sun also believes in the importance of meditation in piano playing to establish confidence in performance. Sun teaches her students how to maintain a connection to the breathing of the lower abdomen. She instructs them to go through the score

away from the piano then to try to realize it by their fingers; the process must be done with the connection to the lower abdomen at all times. The result is a gain in confidence, and students can discover the very source of the manifestation when performing by anchoring at a point. The awareness of the source of manifestation can be likened to the engine. Once it is turned on, the rest is just detail. At this point, like McDonald, Sun demands careful listening and expressive music making. Every note has to be deeply felt. She urges her students to attend to every tiny detail in the score.

As one of the few teachers in China who understand the essence of both the Russian and the Classical European piano schools, Sun has been invited to give master classes and has presented lectures at many universities, conservatories, music schools, and festivals throughout China. Her students have won prizes at national and international piano competitions.

From European Conservatories

There are four members of the SCM piano faculty who graduated from European conservatories: Wei Zhou, Chen Jiang, Bin Su, and Gao-De Dai. I will profile two of them below along with analyses of their teaching methods.

Wei Zhou (b. 1946)

Wei Zhou is a Professor in the Piano Department at the SCM. She started taking piano lessons at the age of six from Bian-Min Yu, a student of Paci, and Ji-Sen Fan of the SCM. In 1982, Zhou received her Master's Degree of Music from the SCM. As a Chinese government scholarship winner, she continued her graduate training from 1988 to 1990 at the Hochschule der Künste Berlin in West Germany under the guidance of Elmar Budde (b. 1935). Between 1990 and 1996 Zhou and her husband (a United Nations economic affairs officer) resided in Thailand, where Zhou was a visiting professor at the Western Music Department of Chulalongkorn University. She gave successful piano recitals and frequently took part in performing chamber music. Since 1996, Zhou has been teaching in the Piano Department at the SCM, where she not only serves as a teacher to students who major in piano performance and a mentor to graduate students of piano music theory and piano performance but also gives lectures on piano music repertoire and piano pedagogy and conducts academic seminars.

Zhou's technical approach is strongly influenced by her teacher, Fan. Zhou emphasizes the importance of exercise. According to Zhou, the aim of gymnastics is to strengthen physique whereas the aim of an exercise is to inculcate a particular correct habit. Students should focus their attention on exercises. Zhou points out that the main obstacle to achieving total mastery of the keyboard lies in the lack of correct and efficient habits of movement. Exercises are the cure for such technical problems. Zhou makes the following recommendations:⁵

- Exercises should be based on simple, natural movements.
- Exercises should relate directly to specific compositions.
- Exercises should be done in different keys.

5. Zhou, Wei. 2011. Interview by author. April.

- Students should pay attention to the beauty of the tone while doing exercises.

Zhou feels that she is more sympathetic to the German tradition of music making rather than to the Russian school, despite that school's influence. Zhou is an objective rather than Romantic pianist. Analysis of form and harmony, details of articulation, accuracy of rhythm, subtleness of pedal, flow of phrasing, and an intellectual understanding of the composition are of prime importance to her. Aside from her teaching responsibilities, Zhou often gives lectures in universities in many major cities in China. She has written numerous essays about piano music and published books; among them, *The History of Western Piano Music* is most noted.⁶

Chen Jiang (b. 1974)

Born in Shanghai, Chen Jiang began her piano studies at the age of five. Two years later, she won the Piano Competition for Young Children in Shanghai. In 1983 Jiang entered the middle school affiliated with the SCM, attending classes of Shu-Xing Zheng (b. 1920), Yan-Ru Yang (1930-1996), and Jian-Zhong Wang (b. 1930). She played with orchestras by the age of eleven and gave her first solo piano recital at twelve. In 1990 she was awarded Second Prize at the International Takahiro Sonoda Competition in Japan. In Saint-Nom-la-Breteche, France, she won the Third Prize and two Special Prizes. In 1997 she was awarded First Prize and the Special Roussel Prize in the Epinal International Piano Competition in France. After graduation from the SCM in 1992, Jiang went to Europe, where she studied with Pascal Devoyon (b. 1953), Dominique Merlet (b. 1938), and Pierre-Laurent Aimard (b. 1947). She was awarded four First Prizes at the Conservatory of Paris (CNSMDP) and the First Virtuosity Prize at the Conservatory of Geneva.

6. Zhou, Wei. 2008. *Xi Fang Gangqin Yi Shu Shi* [Art history of the Western piano literature]. Shanghai: Shanghai Music Publishing House.

Jiang has been regularly engaged in Asia and in Europe as a soloist and as a chamber music player and has performed with numerous orchestras. Her discography includes cycles of preludes by Debussy and solo piano music by Chinese composers and French contemporary composers as well as chamber music. Jiang has served on the jury of various national and international piano competitions. In September, 2001, she was invited to teach at SCM. One year later, she was appointed as the director of the Teaching and Researching Group in the piano department.

After studying in France for nine years, Jiang's playing is clean, precise, refined, and sensitive to the subtle layers of tone color. In her teaching Jiang calls attention to sound quality and stresses the importance of form and structure. She cautions against excessively emotional playing. Technically, Jiang's approach is eclectic. She believes that the basic difference between the French and the Russian schools lies in the use of the arm weight. The French school is noted for its weightless, light touch, using the speed of the attack to produce powerful sound. The Russian school utilizes the weight of the larger muscle groups to initiate the attack of the key.⁷ Jiang believes that good technical control and the good sound come from good coordination of the body. Like Merlet, Jiang opposes the older French school approach that relies on fingers only.⁸ Jiang's repertoire centers on Debussy, Ravel, Chopin, and the German Romantics.

Of the five faculty members sketched above, the three teachers who studied in the United States share somewhat similar technical principles, although their strengths are different. They often agree on the methods of sound production and the aspects of touch.

7. Jiang, Chen. 2010. Public classes at the SCM. April.

8. Ibid.

Most of the present generation of SCM piano faculty has studied with various teachers of different schools abroad and consequently employs a wide variety of teaching methods. Nevertheless, the old tradition of a strict technical approach, stressing finger technique, developing hand position, and slow practicing still predominates. Time-honored technical materials such as Hanon and Czerny are still widely used. Piano pedagogy at SCM has evolved as new concepts brought back by the present generation of teachers mingle with older traditions. This present generation of piano teachers has also discovered the importance of attending to the matters of injuries, neuroses, and psychic conflicts, and they have also introduced twentieth-century repertoire to Chinese students, including works by Charles Ives, Samuel Barber, Gyorgy Ligeti, Vincent Persichetti, Steve Reich, George Crumb, William Bolcom, and Gyorgy Kurtag. Twenty-first century repertoire will also be introduced.

Despite the thriving state of piano education in China, the present piano faculty members at the SCM are facing the challenges of attracting talented students and cultivating them in an environment otherwise lacking in cultural and spiritual inspirations. Based on interviews with the five teachers profiled above, the following section outlines some problematic aspects of the Chinese educational system at the SCM.⁹

Lack of Artistic Character in Chinese Students

There is a consensus that, while students at SCM have grown into expert technicians, few have evolved into developed artists with their own individual approaches. They have gone through strict training routines when they were very young and are still required to practice for five to ten hours a day. Their musical abilities have not been enriched by cultural understanding. For example, performing Schumann's *Kreisleriana* would benefit from reading E.T.A.

9. Summarized by the author.

Hoffmann's tales; understanding Debussy's musical language would be enhanced through the reading of Baudelaire's poems. Most of the Chinese students are technically impressive, but their musical understanding is poor. One of the causes of this problem lies in setting a perfect technical command of the instrument and winning competitions as the ultimate goals of their musical pursuits. No doubt, winning a major competition can pave the way to the concert stage, but in China it has more complex meanings. Historically, piano competitions are always looked upon as an opportunity to earn honor for the country and thus are viewed in the same context as international sports competitions such as the Olympics. To raise the national flag at an international event would be a positive political propaganda opportunity for the Chinese government. Presidents of music conservatories in China are under pressure to produce winners: conservatories are judged on the basis of the number of competition winners they produce. Under this system a conservatory must produce winners; teachers must produce winners; and students *must* win. The difference in priorities between the Chinese musical education system and those of the Western music conservatories is the biggest challenge for the current faculty members at the SCM.

Lack of Awareness of the Importance of Chamber Music

The different attitudes toward chamber music between Chinese and Western students are significant. In the West chamber music is looked upon as one of the most important means to gain musicianship, and a good chamber musician will earn great respect from his or her colleagues. The attitude is completely different in China. There, the prevailing mindset toward other instruments is that playing in ensemble is only appropriate for mediocre pianists. Good pianists should only play solo recitals; investing energy in chamber music is worthless. Thus, the art of chamber music generally is unrecognized and unfamiliar, and tickets to chamber music concerts are hard to sell in China.

The present generation of the piano faculty at the SCM has made an effort to educate students and government officials about the importance of chamber music on the international music stage. As a result, chamber music courses were added to the curriculum for the piano students at the SCM in 2002. Each student must participate in one year of chamber music ensemble class and also in one year of art song class. Consequently, students' abilities to cooperate with other musicians and to listen to other instruments have improved; their sense of phrasing and rhythm has also been enhanced. This is a group effort by all present piano faculty members of the SCM. There is still a long way to go to change the mentality and open the minds of the students and government officials to the idea that pursuit of the music rather than technical virtuosity should be their ultimate goal.

Conclusion

The influence of Western musical education from the 1930s to the present has been a predominant feature of piano education in China. The piano is a Western instrument that was one of the gifts offered to the Chinese emperor as part of an effort to open the door for the Western missionaries led by Matteo Ricci in 1601. Four hundred years later the thriving state of piano studies in China is astonishing. There are approximately 40,000 students who take annual piano exams for amateurs in Shanghai alone every year.¹

The development of piano education in China has been closely affected by the cultural environment of the country. This dissertation has traced the impetus for this remarkable development back to the Russian pianist Zakharoff, whose efforts provided the basis of piano education at the SCM, the first musical conservatory in China. In all likelihood, there would have been no Chinese piano school without the help of Western musicians.

Western musicians inculcated in the first generation of Chinese piano teachers a sense of professional dedication, strong will, and a diligent work ethic. They, in turn, passed these precepts down to their students. These qualities enabled the pioneering musicians to survive the destruction wrought by wars and political upheavals. They endured the long isolation from the West from 1965 to 1980. Despite the challenges, they managed to introduce standard piano repertoire and piano teaching methods. Following the reopening of contacts with the Western world after 1980, many Chinese students went to study abroad to acquire advanced knowledge. In the 1990s many of them returned China to teach. At the SCM 90% of the present piano faculty members were trained overseas. As a result, an explosion of piano teaching methods has occurred within the last fifteen years in China. Piano teachers returning from European and United States conservatories are aware of many teaching approaches. These methods span the

1. The statistics were provided by Shanghai Professional Pianists Society, 2010.

range of the so-called “national approaches” such as the Russian, French, German, and English schools. However, the essence of an ideal Chinese piano school is yet to be defined. In the author’s opinion, this should be a combination of something like the Russian system of intense early training from elementary school and a fusion of the various pianistic approaches with the ancient Chinese cultural attitude that considers music as a means for self-cultivation and for becoming one with the infinite universe.

Piano education at the SCM has yet to reach its full blossom despite its growth. The Western musical heritage has been carried on by the students at the SCM with enthusiasm despite all political setbacks and cultural differences. Music is indeed a universal language. The cross-cultural influence on the piano education at the SCM has played an important role in its establishment and continues to be the key driving force in enriching the piano education today.

Appendix

Repertoire Requirement of Annual Final Jury for the Undergraduates of the SCM

Freshman

First semester: 15 minutes of solo repertoire; jury time will be 20 minutes (15 minutes for self-chosen repertoire plus 5 minutes for required repertoire)

- (1) One Chopin Etude (Please choose from opus 10, no. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12; opus 25, no. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.)
- (2) One Sonata by Scarlatti
- (3) Self-chosen repertoire

Second semester: 30 minutes of solo repertoire

- (1) One Etude by Liszt
- (2) One Prelude and Fugue by Bach (Please choose from WTC book 1, excluding 4, 8, 22.)
- (3) Self-chosen repertoire
- (4) Repertoire by juror's request

Sophomore

First semester: 40 minutes of solo repertoire, jury time will be 20 minutes (15 minutes for self-chosen repertoire plus 5 minutes for required repertoire)

- (1) One Etude (Please choose from Rachmaninoff Etudes and Scriabin Etudes.)
- (2) One Chopin Nocturne (Please choose from opus 27, no. 1, opus 55, no. 1 or opus 62, no. 2.)
- (3) Self-chosen repertoire
- (4) Repertoire by juror's request

Second semester: 40 minutes of solo repertoire, jury time will be 20 minutes (15 minutes for self-chosen repertoire plus 5 minutes for required repertoire)

- (1) One Etude (Please choose from Etudes by Prokofieff, Bartok, Stravinsky, Ligetti.)
- (2) One Prelude and Fugue by Bach (Please choose from WTC book 2, excluding 11, 14, 22.)
- (3) Self-chosen repertoire
- (4) Repertoire by juror's request

Junior

First semester: 45 minutes of solo repertoire, jury time will be 25 minutes (20 minutes for self-chosen repertoire plus 5 minutes for required repertoire)

- (1) One transcription of Chinese folk music
- (2) One Etude by Debussy
- (3) Self chosen repertoire
- (4) Repertoire by juror's request

Second semester: 45 minutes of solo repertoire, jury time will be 25 minutes (20 minutes for self-chosen repertoire plus 5 minutes for required repertoire)

45 minutes of freely-chosen repertoire

Senior

One solo recital of freely-chosen repertoire for 50 minutes. (Concertos are excluded)

Notes:

- (1) The self-chosen repertoire is not to be interrupted by the jury; 5 minutes for required repertoire are decided by the jury and maybe interrupted.

- (2) The repertoire requirements remain basically the same for the last four years. Minor changes are made after discussions among the faculty members at the end of each semester.
- (3) Freely-chosen repertoire may be any composition written or transcribed for piano.
- (4) Returning piano faculty members have shown a special interest in contemporary piano composition, and they have assigned such works to their students, as a result, many contemporary works were debuted in China during the juries at the SCM.

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