



NAME: Cerlyne Tung Shuo Ling

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CHINESE TRADITIONAL MUSIC: WISH

This song entitled Wish (愿) by Red Chan. This is a Chinese traditional music and the reference track of it is from a mandarin song - Fuyao (扶摇) by Karen Mok.

Both songs are very calm Chinese traditional music and very different from the usual martial arts music. "Fuyao" is an original soundtrack from a Chinese historical drama, "Legend of Fuyao". This song talks about a girl who is willing to give up all for love while "Wish" is a piece that talks about a person who is moving away from his hometown for work and wishes to return soon to reunite with his family.

The major pentatonic scale is frequently being used in Chinese traditional music; for example, in C Major, the scale consists of the 5 notes – Do Re Mi So La. The reason that Chinese traditional music uses this scale is because they find that this scale is simple and harmonious, yet complex enough to create a variety of piece. (Gutierrez, 2022) "Fuyao" and "Wish" are in major key, and the melody is mostly from the pentatonic scales. Thus, both songs sound like a Chinese traditional music with the use of pentatonic scale note. "Fuyao" is in C Major while "Wish" is in G# Major. Most of the time, major key is judged as a happy key but in these two songs, although both songs are in the major key, but they do sound sad and depressing due to the use of instrumentations and arrangements. I chose G# major key for "Wish" as I feel that it evokes an emotional feeling going on internally with this key but still with a sense of hope. This is exactly what I want to convey in my composition, which is the person feels sad when leaving but having hope and cannot wait to go back to meet his loved ones.

"Fuyao" and "Wish" are in 4/4-time signature and the tempo is steady. Both songs are on beat and great enough to express the mood. The texture of them is Heterophonic as the chords are played by a few voices in different ranges and variations from the string instruments and erhu. (Jean, 2020)

Moreover, both songs got a very different chords progression. For example, in "Fuyao", the chords progression for the verse is IV-I-ii-iii-vi and chorus is IV-V-I-VI. This is quite a common straight line chords progression that commonly being used in 1960s and 1970s songs like Elton John's "Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters" and Dan Fogelberg's "Longer". (Brooks, 2017) This chord progression might sound a little bland sounding going as it is a straight-line progression. (Chu, 2017) However, this chord progression does a great job of fitting a sentimental song like "Fuyao" and ideal to have a space for listeners to picture the story. Not to mention, there is no chord V being used in this song as the fifth chord is a powerful chord that creates tension. Conversely, "Wish" is using the Canon chord progression, I-V-vi-iii-IV-I-V and repeat. The reason that I chose this is because I find that a lot of people probably familiar with it and this chord

progression is also simple but lovely. Also, I wish to create a crossover where Chinese traditional music can be combined with the western chord progression and fortunately, this creates a very good effect.

Traditional music is a practice of the local culture and both songs featured the traditional musical instruments in different sections. In “Fuyao” and “Wish”, both songs had a good balance of all the traditional musical instruments to showcase their own characteristics. Not to mention, both songs also contain the same instruments, like the strings, guzheng and erhu. Other than using traditional instruments, both songs also incorporate the western musical instruments like bass and drum kit in their pieces. By doing this crossover, the listeners might get fascinated by it and shift their impression of the typical Chinese traditional music that most of the people think of.

For the vocal part, in beginning of this song is very quiet, and Karen is singing delicately and lightly like telling a lingering love story. With the extension of the song, heavy drumbeats were added, and the mood of the song is like the emotions that had been held back for a long time finally found a chance to express, and this definitely indicates the song theme, that the girl can sacrifice everything for love but ends up everything ended in a sad way. Same goes in “Wish”, when the drum enters, it gives additional feeling to the song that the person is having a serious homesick. In Chinese traditional music, the drum that being used are usually the cymbals or gong and the bass that they use are normally Gehu or double bass. However, in both songs, they use the western drum kit and bass guitar. Both songs contain some western elements, but people can still recognise them as a Chinese style song with the use of the main instruments, arrangements, and lyrics. (REN, 2018) In a nutshell, I personally think that the mix of musical elements achieves the aesthetic in both songs.

Chinese music tends to focus more on the feelings and culture, so there is always a story to talk about when looking at the lyrics. Chinese traditional music usually uses a lot of used poetic words or phrases from the Tang and Song Dynasty’s Poetry. Poetic lyrics means that the lyrics is not straight forward and has a hidden meaning behind. Therefore, the listeners ought to have a very strong Chinese cultural knowledge in order to understand the fascinating lyrics. In “Fuyao”, the lyrics are in ancient Chinese, same goes in “Wish”, I use poetic words to make the song looks more elegant.

In “Fuyao”, Karen has a very strong Chinese accent when singing the song, but Red does not. We can recognise this by listening to the singer’s pronunciation and intonation of words. In “Fuyao”, Karen uses her unique voice in expressing the lyrics as she sings the song by using head voice. We can hear that her vocal has a little bit vibration and this contributes her able to sing in a higher range vocal. Other than that, she controls her vocal by using chest voice and this makes her vocal sounds powerful and strong. The way of her singing will make listeners have a scene when listening to it and that is why we will have the

emotion influenced when listening to “Fuyao”. Moreover, she got a husky voice which many people find it attractive and therefore her voice is suitable in singing Chinese traditional song as it gives people a place to imagine the scene. (JUN, 2021) However, there is not a lot of vocal technique being used in “Wish”. Red does not use complicated singing technique in presenting the song, but her comfort voice is more than enough to express the overall mood. As she got a feathery voice and her vocal is not as thick as Karen, so I make the vocal sounds fuller by having more layers by having one melody, one mid and one high harmony. The use of high harmony is to let the listeners feel that they are in the scene as this song talks about a person’s thought and feeling and I believe that there are some people out there got the same mood as well. Thus, the harmony is not only act as a complement to the main vocal but also project the emotions in this way.

ACOUSTIC MUSIC: SOME MOMENTS

This song entitled “Some Moments” by Red Chan. This is an acoustic music genre and the reference track of it is from “Beautiful in White” by Shane Filan.

Before started, I would like to make a clarify that “Some Moments” is an acoustic piece and “Beautiful in White” is a popular music. (Volunteers, 2022) Both songs have different instrumentations, arrangements, and production techniques but I used the lyrics as one of the references when producing “Some Moments” and both songs’ narratives are the same, which is about a couple’s relationship and some wedding scenes.

Both songs were written based on Johann Pachelbel’s “Canon” and was composed in C Major as this chords progression and key make people feel pleasant. However, there is no modulation in “Beautiful in White” but a one key up transposition in “Some Moments”. The reason that I have modulating one key up is to uplift the mood and raising the spirit. Then, the tempo of both songs is slow and stately, and the time signature is in 4/4-time signature and rhythm is on beat. Moreover, the arrangement of “Beautiful in White” is verse 1 – chorus – verse 2 – chorus – bridge - chorus, while “Some Moments” is verse 1 - chorus – verse 2 – bridge – chorus - outro. “Some Moments” can be classified as an unconventional structure as it does not follow the traditional lyrics structure. There is a bridge in “Some Moments” which is vital in a song as it creates a new feeling and then break the previous mood and then connect to the next section.

Not to mention, “Beautiful in White” is one of the most popular wedding songs in the world and therefore I am inspired to compose an acknowledgeable wedding song. When composing “Some Moments”, as it is an acoustic music, therefore the instruments that I picked are without any electrical amplification, like the acoustic guitar and cajon. (Volunteers, 2023) Both musical instruments are generally calm and in a relaxing mood, and this is exact the mood that I want to create in my acoustic piece. (James, 2021) In “Beautiful in White”, acoustic guitar acts as one of the instruments and gives a very good vibe in enhancing the wedding mood while in “Some Moments”, acoustic guitar is the main instrument that being used in the song.

To make this song recognisable as a romantic song, acoustic guitar is being used as the main instrument to enhance the good vibes. Then, avoid of being too monotonous throughout the piece, I change the guitar patterns in the sections to make it livelier. “Beautiful in White” contains guitar as well as a backing and it is definitely putting the whole song in the expected mood. Moreover, “Beautiful in White” contains simple drum beat while in “Some Moments”, I chose cajon as my percussion as it is a modern light percussion that functions same as the drum which provides a catchy beat. Most importantly, cajon is an instrument that without any amplification, so it meets the requirement of being an acoustic music. (Volunteers, 2023) The instrumentation is very

soothing and will make people relate to your story and start imagining the wander of love.

For acoustic music, the instrumentations are simple as in “Some Moments”, so that the lyrics can be focused more. Acoustic music often pairs with emotional and soft-spoken lyrics. Hence, in “Some Moments”, the lyrics looks like a storytelling medium. In my song, “Some Moments” filled with the scenes happened on the wedding day and show how happy the lovebirds are. I wrote this song with simple lyrics but full of emotions. From the small little things until the everlasting, the couples got married and the bride was reminiscing about their memories after years. Same as the reference track, “Beautiful in White” describes the speaker’s feelings when he first met his bride wearing a wedding dress. By listening to them, you can feel how sweet they are and how much they love each other. (Tutor, n.d.)

In both songs, the vocal stands out to express the story and thoughts. Then, the vocal tracks are the “real” tone, and not much vocal mixing work needed, especially in “Some Moments”. This is because the vocal in acoustic music is always clean and simple. Therefore, in both songs, we can feel that the singers are expressing their emotion into the music, and this definitely tap into listener’s emotions.

As there are not many tracks in “Some Moments”, therefore the timbre is warm and gentle and the whole piece is on the same frequency. Furthermore, “Some Moments” contains a melody line and some simple accompaniments supporting it, so it is in homophonic texture. (Gotham, n.d.)

In “Some Moments”, the arrangements are simple enough for the singer's voice to be fully expressed. Acoustic music is definitely a good way for listeners to pay attention on the lyrics and how the producers and audio designer design the instrumentations and create the vocals well. Last but not least, “Some Moments” is definitely an emotional connection between the singer and listener as the melodies and lyrics are played well into the plot.

MANDARIN POP: OUR LOVE

This song entitled “Our Love” (专属我们的爱) by Red Chan and it is a Chinese Pop song. The reference track of it is from a mandarin song – “Simple Love” (简单爱) by Jay Chou.

Chinese Pop music (C-pop) is also known as Mandarin Pop (mandopop). Mandopop is getting more commercialised in this age of globalisation, and musicians are trying to promote their works to the market in order to gain more popularity and income. Chinese music market is a single fastest growing market in the world in terms of recording sales and this means that mandopop have a very high views in the music market. Hence, many music companies continue to produce Chinese songs especially the romantic loved ones. (Cheng, 2021) The reason that producers nowadays enjoy making romantic love songs is because this genre is more connected to some scenes in our love story, and this makes listeners got a sense of relatability. For instance, the creation of "Simple Love" reveals a kind of simplicity in love as the song title. The story tells about the pure love in the student days like they are riding a bicycle, watching the sunset, and enjoying some little moments in this complicated world. Same goes in my original composition “Our Love”, it shows the couples fell in each other on their first met and finally get married because they want to stay with each other forever. In a nutshell, both songs’ lyrics contain the simple scene that shows the simplicity in love. (Volunteers, n.d.)

“Simple Love” and “Our Love” are using the same arrangement, which is verse – pre-chorus – chorus. Besides, they are in 4/4 beat and C Major key. Both songs are in C major as this key creates a happy and upbeat feeling as what exact the lyrics want to bring out. Moreover, C Major is the easiest key to sing for people of all ages as it does not have sharps and flats.

In addition, “Simple Love” and “Our Love” got the same chords progression, which is the Canon ones. The chords being used in the songs are all comes down to intervals and creates a pleasant and harmonious to the ear. The reason that the tonality of both songs is harmony as the scale degree is 1:3:5, which means the chords notes form a basic 3 notes triads. Furthermore, both songs are consonance music as the melody fits to the notes and no tension being created throughout. This makes the songs sound comfortable to listen to and evokes a feeling of joy.

Nowadays, the mandarin songs that we listen now got a fix structure. For instance, “Simple Love” and “Our Love”, they both are in a fast-tempo and lively. Besides, I got almost the same groove and beat as “Simple Love” in “Our Love”. Both songs started with a catchy rhythm and being used throughout the song. I hope some beats and grooves of each section can catch the listeners' attention and have brainwashed them after listening to it and then liking.

Both songs got almost the same instrumentations, like drum, pad, bass, guitar and synthesiser. Not to mention, these instruments are also common being used in the mandopop. For the bass, it has a significant role on these two songs as it provides them a strong rhythmic support and its bassline is being changed in every section to create a different mood in the representative part. For instance, the bassline is busier in the chorus so that the listeners can feel the excitement and recognise that the climax is here. Then, for the drum, it provides the beats and groove, therefore it will be repeated throughout. Both songs have a warm timbre as the snare are naturally bright while the bass drums and upright bass are naturally round. Then, both songs use the homophony musical texture as the vocal is combined with the rhythm and instrumentation to create a full texture. (Study.com, n.d.)

For both songs, Jay and Red does not use special technique in performing the song as only simple sound can create the simple love feeling. Hence, in "Simple Love", Jay uses his tender voice and in "Our Love", Red uses her sweet voice in expressing the piece.

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