

Introduction

Hello Everyone, thank you for coming – Today I will be presenting my topic: The Art of Violin in Arab and Chinese Musical Cultures.

For this recital I have compiled a selection of works from Arab, Chinese and Western repertoire. The purpose of my dissertation is to showcase how the violin exists within Arab and Chinese musical cultures, and to provide context of how its role was introduced and developed. In my accompanying document I go more into depth of the history of the violin's dispersion to these two musical cultures. With this lecture recital my main focus is to provide demonstrations of certain techniques, nuances, and characteristics that are specific to each musical culture. Throughout this recital I will first introduce each piece that I am performing, and then I will demonstrate small excerpts from each work. I will be isolating the different characteristics and phrases for the audience to hear. With the isolation of these examples my goal is to provide musical anchors for my audience. This way during the full performance of each work your ears will be drawn to these and other similar nuances that might not be heard otherwise without preparatory demonstration. Additionally, this music may be familiar to some of you, while it may be completely unfamiliar to others. By providing these examples with context of the different musical styles, I hope that will also aid the newer listeners.

Program

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I am starting off this recital with the first movement of *Sonata No. 5 in G Major, Op. 27:* by Eugène Ysaÿe. This movement is my selection of Western Classical repertoire. This work will act as the foundation and starting point for my audience. With this Virtuosoic sonata I will demonstrate the expectations of the western classically trained violinist. This Sonata is part of a

collection of six Sonatas for solo violin. I will be performing the first movement of this fifth sonata, which is titled L'Aurore, translating to "Dawn" in French.

In my experience, a large difference in violin repertoire between Western, Chinese and Arab music is the emphasis on horizontal vs vertical writing in compositions. Vertical writing focuses more on chord progressions, with the foundation of the work being based in harmony. Horizontal writing is based on the movement of an individual melodic line. In Western music there is a heavy emphasis on vertical writing. I also find that even in singular lines which may appear to be horizontal, with the placement of certain foundational notes on strong beats, a vertical sound is achieved. For example, in this sonata specifically, there is a section with arpeggiations of chords. It is written out as rapid singular notes, but the effect is a sustained chord progression.

[Slide]

Though Western music uses both, vertical writing is more dominant. In Arab music I would argue that horizontal writing and performance is the priority. The purpose is to follow the musical path, and to explore the maqam (aka the mode) In Chinese writing there is both vertical and horizontal writing, but in some styles, there is much more of an emphasis on horizontal writing. Often harmony is used, but with the emphasis on inflection, and ornamentation to the melodic line the ear is drawn to the singular melodic line, rather than the development of the harmony.

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The expectations of the solo violin in Western classical music have developed to be quite virtuosic. The virtuosic demands presented in this movement focus mainly on the creation of multiple voices. Ysaÿe does this several ways:

- Sustained sound with left hand pizzicato
- Contrasting moving lines in double stops
- Arpeggiations (already said)

Some additional extended techniques that are featured in this work are:

- 5 - note chords

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- Harmonics
- Double stop trills/tremolos
- micro-tones (this box indicates an A half flat)

* (one might think that the violin is limited to playing only four note chords, due the instrument only having four chords. however, with the technique of breaking the chord and re-adjusting one's hand position it is possible to perform a 5 note chord on the violin)

I will now perform the first movement from ysayes fifth sonata, L'Aurore.

[perform]

[Tuning]

For my next two pieces I will be performing in Arab tuning.

One of the only physical differences in performing Arab violin is the standard tuning. There are a few variations of how Arab violinists will tune their instrument, but one of the most prominent tunings is [G D G D]. There are several reasons for this tuning. Firstly, is the change in timbre of the instrument. With the change in tuning the violin has a deeper and warmer timbre. Secondly is the relationship to the maqāmat. With this tuning the fingerings of most maqām fit more seamlessly than with Western tuning.

[Nahawand G tetrachord example]

In the first read thru of my arrangement of lamma bada yatathanna, my quartet and I had just finished rehearsing a Haydn string quartet. Typically, any time I am performing Arab music I will re-tune my violin to Arab tuning. In this instance I forgot to re-tune. As we started playing, I

noticed right away how different it felt and sounded to play this piece in my Western tuning. Not only was the timbre very bright, but my fingers were confused; I am used to a certain fingering when performing Arab music, especially with this work. It is as if I have a switch in my brain for performing Arab music vs. Western music. I have not asked my fellow musicians to re-tune as they have not had my level of training in Arab performance practices.

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The following two works on the program will be performed back-to-back, as they flow from one into the other. The first work I will perform is a taqsim, which is an improvisation based on a maqam. For this taqsim I will be improvising on maqam nahawand G, as that is the maqam that the following muwashshaḥ, *Lammā Badā Yatathannā*, is set in.

A maqām is not simply just a scale or tetrachord. Though its foundation may be based in its intervallic structure, its essence is comprised of characteristic phases, sequences, and special intonations.

- Fundamentally a maqam is made up of two tetrachords stacked together. In maqam nahawand G that would be nahawand on the bottom, and hijaz D on the top

[slide]

[example of nahawand characteristics]

Now let us look at some of maqam Nahawands characteristics

Nahawand phrases, sequences, and emphasis examples

- Tetrachords

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A taqsim is an instrumental improvisation set in a maqām. This improvisation is an exploration of the maqām and the different ajnas (areas of melody) present in the maqam.

When performing in maqām there is an unwritten but conventional *sayr* (*translating to:*

path/course/motion). The sayr is an expected melodic behavior of a maqām. Even though each performance of a taqsim is perceived as innovative and improvisatory. The taqsim is often described as a story, in the way that it is composed of multiple, paragraphs, or acts. Each paragraph will focus on a jins (the jins or ajnas pl. is the area of melody within a piece based on a tetrachord). The paragraphs will have a clear beginning, middle and end. The end or cadence of the paragraph is referred to as a *qafla*. This *qafla* acts as a flourishing end to reinforce the fundamental note. The arc of the taqsim also follows the arc of a story: exposition, rising action, climax, resolution. With each paragraph there is more development and added musical interest as the musician explores neighboring ajnas. The resolution comes from the return to the core maqām.

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You will notice that some of the characteristic nahawand phrases that I perform in my taqsim will sound similar to the following song. That is because the melodic structure of the work is based in the same maqām. The song “*Lamma Bada Yatathanna*” is a muwashshah – one of the oldest continuously performed genres of poetry in the world. It can be traced back to the 9th century CE in Al-Andalus which is medieval Muslim Spain, or Spain and Portugal today. Originally these muwashshah would not have written notation. A Muwashshah consists of the poetry, maqām and iqa` . From there the musicians and the mutrib (singer or “enchanter”) would use these identifying characteristics to express the meaning of the words and explore the maqām

Topics of muwashshah are often about love: unrequited love, consummate love, broken hearts, and spurned lovers.

*“When He Appeared with his swaying gait, Amān (x4), My beloved’s beauty enchanted us.
Amān (x8). --- O my confusion and my fate, Who can intercede for my complaint, Of love and of
torment? None but the possessor of all beauty. Amān (x4).”*

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The arrangement decisions I made were a result of the Arab practice of musical arrangement: *tawzi`*, meaning distribution. I combined this with my experience as a Western chamber musician, and the collaboration with my colleagues. Farraj and Abu Shumays refer to *tawzi`* is the distribution of musical roles. These can be viewed as controlling the texture of the ensemble by reducing or adding parts, choosing soloists, and pairing instruments.

I have written several different variations on the *dawr* and *khana* (repeating cyclic melody, and verse) of this piece, and have decided the overall musical shape for the performance i.e. when we want to grow and fade, add or take away interest and intensity. There are several variations for more involved, and forward versions of the melody, and then there are several variations for a softer, more uninvolved version. With the path of the performance planned, the musicians have options from both types of variation to use when they feel appropriate. This way there is still a level of spontaneity and excitement to the performance, but everyone is comfortable.

Some of the variations include:

- Droning on the fundamental note (G)
- Pizzicato
- Filling in the intervals between two notes with scales or arpeggios (creating melismas)
- Embellishing with trills and mordents
- Tremolo
- Alternating the rhythm to what is on the page to create a contrasting rhythm
- Switching octaves (lower or higher)

We will now perform Lamma Bada Yatathanna with an introductory taqasim in Nahawand G

[Re-tune]

[Slide]

The following two works that I will be performing are examples of xiandai yinyue, (modern music) from 20th century China. These are works that are primarily composed for western instruments.

The first of the following works is *New Year's Eve* by Mao Yuan. *New Year's Eve* was composed by Mao Yuan in 1957. Yuan was a Chinese composer who lived from 1926-2022. Another one of his most prominent works is the following piece *Dance of the Yao People*, which was composed by Liu Tieshan and then orchestrated by Mao Yuan. In English I have seen multiple variations in the title of this work such as: "Joy of Spring" and "Spring Celebration." As one can gather from its name, this piece is lively, joyful, and celebratory. Some claim that the melody can be drawn from folk song materials from the Hebei province in China. In Chinese music, compositions and titles are often based on topics such as nature, day to day life, and events. This can be compared to the Western style of programmatic music.

This work was originally written for violin and piano. For this lecture recital, I have chosen to arrange the piano part for guzheng. My choice to arrange the piano part for guzheng is so that my audience will be able to hear Chinese nuances more clearly, and to have an example of the timbres of this instrument, and the appropriate stylistic ornamentations and intonations that can be executed on this instrument, unlike a piano. Based on my experience performing on and alongside guzheng, in addition to the performances I have listened to, the mannerisms of this piano part instantly rang in my ear as drawn from, or directly imitated from a guzheng, specifically when it is performing within ensemble or as accompaniment. The performance practice of a guzheng as a soloist is different.

[Slide: Example of guzheng characteristics]

- Moving in octaves
- "Chugging" pattern
- Octave "glissando"

[slide]

For this piece I collaborated with Vicki Lu on guzheng. The process of arranging the piece began as transcribing the piano part into jianpu notation for the guzheng. [explain slide] Halfway through our first reading the piece in its transcribed version, Vicki stopped us to announce that she did not like this version at all. The piano version had too much going on, and restricted her from making her own accompanimental choices based on the melody. Vicki explained that for her, reading off the melodic part and creating her own accompaniment is much preferable and “authentic” than reading a written-out accompaniment such as the transcribed piano part. This way she can be more flexible and respond to the melody directly. For the guzheng Vicki explained that the way she will perform accompaniment is by keeping her left hand performing mainly what is written on the page, while her right hand fills in around it. Along with ornamental additions Vicki will also add rhythmic variations throughout.

[slide]

[video recording]

[slide]

Dance of the Yao People was written in 1952, by Liu Tieshan in collaboration with Mao Yuan. After traveling to southern China for research, Tieshan collected several folk melodies he heard and compiled them into a piece. The Yao minority of China exists primarily in the Hunan Province of southern China. Long drum dances would occur at festivals and celebrations. There are many varying long drum dances. These dances can range from portrayal of connection to nature, the movements of everyday life in the mountains, and ritual animal sacrifices. These dances are a form of entertainment, and spiritual connection. This work was originally called the “*Long Drum Dance of the Yao People*”. It was then orchestrated by Mao Yuan. This piece is

incredibly popular and has been set to a plethora of different ensembles. This work features several main themes which depending on the arrangement can be revisited with variations. With the contrast of melancholic melodic sections, and bright energetic sections, I felt as though this piece provides a wide range of stylistic nuances to explore and present for this project.

For my arrangement of this work, I approached it several ways. Firstly, since the string quartet is composed of instruments all from the same family, naturally there is not a large difference in timbre without intentional adjustment. I wanted to add intentional contrasting lines, and timbres in the instruments to create more textural interest. Paired with this are the inflections and ornaments typical to Chinese performance. There are certain sections that I have in mind that are meant to be an imitation of a specific Chinese instrument. Finally with styles in mind such as teahouse music which I will mention more on later with Wu Man's piece, I have added variations to melodic lines to create different levels of balance between the instruments.

[Demonstrate examples]

- Tremolo
- Varying pizzicato and arco
- Knocks on the body of the instrument to imitate a woodblock
- Falls and bends in intonation
- Glissandi / portamento
- Rapid pentatonic arpeggiation (mimicking guzheng strummed glissando)
- Sul A sections on the violin (mimicking the nasal timbre of the erhu)
- Contrasting rhythms
- Variations in melodic line

[Perform]

The final portion of my program features works that have been composed within the last 10 years, specifically written for string quartet. I have Chosen prominent composers, Kareem Roustom from Syria, and Wu Man from China for their repertoire because I wanted to feature

works of those native to the Middle East and China respectively. To me these works represent not only the contribution of repertoire to the western canon, but also the level of cross-cultural collaboration that exists between the West and East at present.

The first work we will perform is *Syrian Folk Songs* by Kareem Roustom and we will be playing the first movement: *I - Oh, the Tawny Beauty*.

Kareem Roustom is a Syrian American composer and is claimed to be one of the most prominent active Arab composers. He has composed and collaborated with dozens of world-renowned ensembles internationally. His compositional style is defined by his blend of styles from Arab and Western classical. This collection of movements is Roustom's way of re-imagining folk songs of historical 'Greater Syria'. (These are the present-day countries of Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, the Gaza Strip, and Southern Turkey). To Roustom, these folk songs are a humanistic example of culture permeating through the artificial constructs of borders created by politicians. These folk songs represent more identity than a dividing line on a map.

The first piece in the collection is based on unrequited love, just like the topics that are used for a Muwashshah, and specifically the one we just performed.

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Oh, the tawny beauty, I am tired oh dear heart / Your love has thrown me / You with the wide eyes / Have put pain in my heart.

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Roustom uses the following characteristics and forms that are of the Arab style:

- Cello rhythm: iqā` malfuf

[example cello rhythm]

- Viola melody

The intervallic structure of this melody is 262 (half step/augmented second/half step) with the notes: [E F G# A]. This is the same intervallic structure of Maqam Hijaz. However, in

standard practice maqām Hijaz is not based on E. Roustom is also using characteristics common in Hijaz: Emphasizing the leap to the fourth scale degree, emphasizing the interval of augmented second. There is also the ornamentation, and variation of the rhythm the second iteration.

[example of maqām hijaz]

- Variation in second iteration of melody

variations include diminished rhythm in viola and cello parts, addition of flourishes in the violins, dropping the octave of the viola melody.

[example of variation]

[Perform movement]

The final piece on the program is *Two Chinese Paintings*. *Two Chinese Paintings* was composed in 2015 by Wu Man. Man is a world-renowned virtuoso pipa player, composer, and educator from China. In collaboration with the Kronos quartet foundation and their project “50 for the future,” Man was commissioned to write this work for string quartet. This was Man’s first composition for a string quartet. As Man’s father was an artist, she gained inspiration from paintings. These movements are created to resemble a set of portraits that showcase traditional cultures from around China. These two specific movements draw inspiration from Uyghur Maqam of the Xinjiang Province, Silk-and-Bamboo music and teahouse music from Hangzhou

Ancient Echo is based on a scale found among the oldest tunes for pipa. This is a slow meditative movement. It feels like there is time for each beat to be fully explored in the piece. Man creates a variation in texture by adding moving lines of quarters or eighths in contrast to sustained notes. There are slurs, portamento, trills, and tremolos that are typical of inflection and ornamentation in Chinese music.

[demonstration of examples]

The second movement of this work is titled *Silk and Bamboo (inspired by Huanlege)*. Silk and Bamboo music¹ is a popular regional music of East central China. This music is commonly performed in teahouses for the enjoyment of the musicians performing, like a social event². Silk and bamboo refer to wind and string instruments in the ensemble. In this style of music, the performance practice is a collective effort of altering or varying the main melody, creating a balance between the simple and more elaborate versions of the melody. In this style of music, the musicians are always working to maintain a balance, which maintains the excitement of performing because you must always be listening and adjusting with those around you. Within the genre of Silk and Bamboo the repertoire consists of eight main works³. Huanlege or Huanle ge⁴ is one of these eight main works.

An interesting, or I should say exciting quality about this movement is that the violist is now the percussionist of the ensemble, first beginning the movement with a gong solo, and then performing on the woodblocks for the rest of the piece until the end with the gong being used with the final chord.

[Demonstration of wood blocks and gong]

In this movement Man dictates the variation of melody and balance of texture. You will notice throughout the movement that some parts have more involved and moving lines, while others have less ornamented lines, more-so the skeletal outline. There will never be too much

¹ "Jiangnan sizhu"

² Lau 79-80

³ Lau, 80

⁴ "song of happiness"

going on at a time, but a balance of texture spread and passed throughout all parts. There are also written out stylistic portamentos within this movement.

[Demonstrate portamento and textural lines]

[Perform]

Conclusion

While there are similarities to the dispersion of the violin into Arab and Chinese cultures, there is a great contrast to how the violin was viewed and what its role developed to be within each culture. In Arab music once it was implemented into Arab ensembles, it was viewed as an Arab instrument due to its relation to past instrumentation (e.g., rabab and kamanja), and has since been an integral part of Arab music to this day. It also exists as a Western instrument performed by many Arab musicians. In this way the violin has several identities within Arab musical culture. However, in China the identity of the violin has remained as a Western instrument, and it did not replace any traditional instruments in Chinese music. There are no specific techniques or physical adjustments to the Western violin to make it “Chinese”. There is much modern music composed for the violin alongside other European instruments. There have been many Chinese musicians that study the violin in China and Europe. All of this to say, while the violin became a very popular instrument in China, its identity remained as a Western instrument, unlike in Arab music where the violin existed both as a Western instrument, and as an Arab instrument.

Now in the 21st century we are seeing more efforts, and the results of efforts in the late 20th century for these cross-cultural collaborations of instruments, genres and styles. I was

excited to showcase these contemporary compositions by Roustom and Man in this dissertation, to display the level of collaboration possible.

From the 18th through early 20th century Western classical music featured music from the 'East' commonly as fads of exoticism, and orientalism. These would be inspired by short, and often inaccurate or incomplete snippets of music and information passed along by soldiers, traders, and missionaries. Even when musicians themselves would travel to Eastern countries and would experience the music, there would not be a level of understanding deep enough to fully translate what was heard into western music.

Now in the digital age we have access to people all over the world. Information is at our fingertips, and we can reach out to scholars and musicians at the click of a button. We are able to listen to hundreds of recordings, and performances. Now that we have the ability to be better informed musicians, these collaborations have the potential to be more intentional, unique, and respectful of all traditions involved in the process of music making.