

Moving past Mozart: a critical evaluation of standard classical oboe repertoire
and exploration of contemporary east Asian oboe repertoire

by

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Abstract

Music is evolving and while more stylizations are introduced to the melting pot of art, the foundation of Western oboe technique remains centered around Eurocentric ideologies and literature. While it is important to study traditional works by composers such as Mozart and Bach, it is also necessary to see beyond Western perspectives. Although these composers were essential for the structure of Western classical music, Western compositions alone do not accurately reflect the historical context of the oboe, nor the extent of the oboist's virtuosity. In this paper, I will explore select pieces of solo oboe repertoire written by composers from east Asia, highlighting the importance of their cultural contexts and oboe technique. The primary goal is to broaden perspectives outside of the traditional Western oboe canon. I argue that there are reasons to reach beyond traditional Western ideologies and introduce repertoire written by underrepresented composers. Chinese composer Chen Yi, South Korean composer Jean Ahn, and Japanese composer Toshio Hosokawa wrote eloquent works for the oboe, taking inspiration from nature, their cultures, and the oboe's east Asian ancestors, the suona, piri, and hichiriki. These works give the oboe a new voice by utilizing extended techniques, non-Western modes, and free tempo. Each of these oboe solos uniquely combines the composers' Asian identities with Western musical styles to contribute unparalleled works of art to the list of oboe literature.

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Preface

As a passionate performer of contemporary music and works by underrepresented composers, I decided to research solo oboe works by East Asian composers. I performed Toshio Hosokawa's *Spell Song* for solo oboe in my senior recital at the University of Texas-Arlington (April 22, 2023). His use of oboe extended techniques and Japanese compositional style resonated within me, so I decided to research more solo oboe literature by Asian composers. I discovered Chen Yi's *Mountain Song* and *Elegy* during my graduate studies at Kansas State University and interviewed the Chinese composer in Kansas City, Missouri on April 11, 2025. Jean Ahn's *Blush* also resonated with me because of the South Korean musical characteristics and beautiful melody played by a single woodwind. All three of these composers have exposed me to non-Western styles of music that have improvisatory elements, ultimately restoring my passion to make music on the oboe.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Since its development in the mid-17th century, the oboe has become an essential instrument in the world of classical music. Thanks to composers such as Bach and Mozart, the oboe evolved into a more soloistic role, resulting in a multitude of orchestral excerpts and solo works.

When entering higher education or professional organizations, all musicians are expected to study specific pieces for their respective instruments or voices. These works are considered standard practice in preparation for auditions and performances; they include orchestral excerpts, solo works, chamber works, etudes, and method books. Over decades of studying these particular pieces of music and compiling repertoire books, the term “canon” described this collection of standard repertoire. Though the oboe canon is a work in progress, it focuses primarily on repertoire from the baroque to late romantic eras despite the sheer number of works written in recent years.

Although a myriad of compositions have been written for the oboe in recent decades, most have not been added to this list of fundamental repertoire that all aspiring oboists should learn and perform. Principal Oboist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra John Ferrillo’s *Orchestral Excerpts for Oboe* has been considered the go-to study guide for oboe excerpts since its publication in 2006. Ferrillo’s performance notes for each excerpt have guided many young oboists towards success and is valued in oboe studies. To no fault of Ferrillo, the chosen excerpts in this book are rather antiquated, as the repertoire selected focused primarily on works from the classical to late-romantic periods. As seen in Table 1.1, the most recently composed excerpt in *Orchestral Excerpts for Oboe* was Bartók’s *Concerto for Orchestra*, written in 1943, 63 years

prior to the publication of the book.¹ Ferrillo's acclaimed albeit outdated excerpt book also lacked representation of women and people of color. This problem can be resolved by incorporating new music into the standard method books or simply writing new compilations of music that include contemporary works written by underrepresented composers. By incorporating new, diverse excerpts into the standard practice, the school of oboe can evolve alongside the music being composed.

The tables below demonstrate the predominantly westernized compositions in standard oboe literature that are studied today. I provide examples from Ferrillo's *Orchestral Excerpts for Oboe* and founder of the American school of oboe playing, French-American oboist Marcel Tabuteau's recommended solo repertoire for oboists. Each composer listed is a man from Europe, Russia, or the United States. There is a lack of representation of women and people of color in collections of oboe repertoire, as well as an absence of extended techniques, which are utilized in late 20th century to 21st century oboe repertoire.

Oboe Canon Repertoire List

Table 1.1 List of oboe orchestral excerpts in Ferrillo's *Orchestral Excerpts for Oboe*²

Composer	Number of Excerpts	Piece(s)	Composer's Ethnicity
J.S. Bach (1685-1750)	13	Brandenburg Concertos 1 and 2, Cantatas 12, 56, 82, 156, 202, and Easter Oratorio (1701-1745)	German
Samuel Barber (1910-1981)	1	Concerto for Violin, Op. 14 (1939)	American
Béla Bartók (1881-1945)	9	Concerto for Orchestra (1943)	Hungarian
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)	12	Symphonies 3, 6, and 9 (1804-1824)	German
Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)	1	<i>Romeo et Juliette</i> (1847)	French

¹ John Ferrillo, *Orchestral Excerpts for Oboe*, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, Theodore Presser Co, 2006, 22.

² Ferrillo, *Orchestral Excerpt for Oboe*, 2-3.

Table 1.1 Continued			
Georges Bizet (1838-1875)	2	Symphony in C (1855)	French
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)	12	Violin Concerto, Op. 77 (1878), Symphonies 1 and 2 (1876/77), <i>Variations on a Theme of Joseph Haydn</i> (1873)	German
Claude Debussy (1862-1918)	4	<i>La Mer</i> (1905)	French
Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)	8	<i>Das Lied von der Erde</i> (1909) and Symphony no. 3 (1896)	Austro-Bohemian
Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)	3	Symphony no. 3 in A Major, “Scottish” (1842)	German
Modeste Mussorgsky (1839-1881)	2	<i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i> (1874) (orch. Ravel 1922)	Russian
Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)	5	Symphony no. 1, “Classical” (1917)	Russian
Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)	7	<i>Le Tombeau de Couperin</i> (1917/1919)	French
Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)	4	<i>Scheherazade</i> (1888)	Russian
Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868)	2	Overture to “La Scala di Seta” (1812)	Italian
Franz Schubert (1797-1828)	1	Symphony no. 9 in C Major, “The Great” (1849)	Austrian
Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)	2	Symphony Nos. 1 (1924-25) and 5 (1937)	Russian
Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884)	2	Overture to “The Bartered Bride” (1870)	Czech
Richard Strauss (1864-1949)	5	<i>Don Juan</i> (1889) and <i>Don Quixote</i> (1898)	German
Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)	2	<i>Pulcinella Suite</i> (1920)	Russian
Pyotr Ilyitch Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)	2	Symphony no. 4 (1878)	Russian
Richard Wagner (1813-1883)	1	<i>Parsifal</i> “Good Friday Spell” (1882)	German

Table 1.2 List of standard oboe solo repertoire by Marcel Tabuteau³

Composer	Piece Title(s)	Composer's Ethnicity
Tomaso Albinoni (1671-1751)	<i>Oboe Concerto in D minor, Op. 9 No. 2</i> , as well as 7 other concerti	Italian
J.S. Bach (1685-1750)	<i>Oboe Concerto in D minor, BWV 1059R</i> and <i>Oboe Concerto in G minor, BW 1056R</i>	German
Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)	<i>Six Metamorphoses After Ovid</i> (1951)	English
Domenico Cimarosa (1749-1801)	<i>Oboe Concerto in C minor</i> (1780/Arr. 1942)	Italian
Henri Dutilleux (1916-2013)	<i>Oboe Sonata</i> (1947)	French
Eugene Goossens (1893-1962)	<i>Oboe Concerto, Op. 45</i> (1927)	English
G.F. Handel (1685-1759)	<i>Oboe Concerti HWV 287, HWV 301, HWV 302a, Oboe Sonatas HWV 357, HWV 366, HWV 363a</i>	German
Alessandro Marcello (1673-1747)	<i>Oboe Concerto in D minor</i> (1717)	Italian
Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959)	Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra, H. 353 (1955)	Czech
W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)	<i>Oboe Concerto in C, K. 314</i> (1777) and <i>Oboe Quartet in F, K. 370</i> (1781)	Austrian
Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)	<i>Sonata for Oboe and Piano, FP 185</i> (1962)	French
Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)	<i>Oboe Sonata, Op. 166</i> (1921)	French
Robert Schumann (1810-1856)	<i>Three Romances for Oboe and Piano, Op. 94</i> (1849)	German
Richard Strauss (1864-1949)	<i>Concerto in D major for Oboe and Small Orchestra, AV 144, TrV 292</i> (1945)	German
Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)	<i>Oboe Sonata in A minor, TWV 41:a3</i> and 8 Concerti	German
Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)	<i>Oboe Concerto in A minor</i> (1943-44)	English
Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)	<i>Oboe Concerto in C major, RV 447, Oboe Concerto in A minor, RV 461</i> , and 10 other concerti	Italian

³ Marcel Tabuteau First-Hand. "Repertoire As Oboist," 2017-2024.

The Oboe's Relatives from East Asia

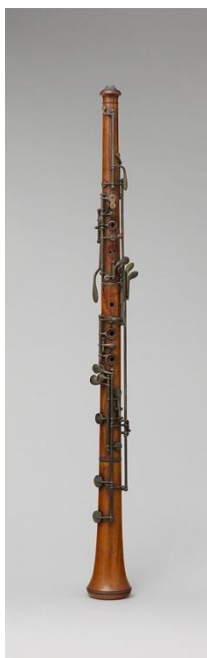
Evolution is necessary for advancements, especially in the case of instrumental manufacturing. The oboe has had many changes to its structure and keywork over the centuries. The Baroque oboe (Figure 1) was the initial start to the oboe family. The first keyed oboe, the hautbois (Figure 2), was developed in mid-17th century France, followed by the Triébert models in the 1800s.⁴ With help from pioneer French-American oboist Apollon Marie-Rose (A.M.R.) Barret, the Triébert (Figure 3) model included more keys in addition to the tone holes and simplified the fingering system.⁵ In 1906, Lorée and Gillet developed the standard model used



**Figure 3:
Baroque
Oboe (17th
Century)**



**Figure 2:
French
Hautbois
(mid-17th
Century)**



**Figure 1:
Triébert Oboe
(19th Century)**



**Figure 4:
Lorée Oboe
(20th Century)**

⁴ Irisamay, "The History of the Oboe," Timetoast, 2010.

⁵ Robert S. Howe, "Nineteenth—Century French Oboe Making Revealed: A Translation and Analysis of the Triebert et Cie '1855' 'Nouveau Prix-Courant.'" *The Galpin Society Journal* 64 (2011): 79.

today (Figure 4).⁶ I describe this for the purpose of introducing the modern oboe ancestors, as some of the works I will focus on in chapters 2, 3, and 4 reference or depict instruments that are East Asian oboe ancestors, including the suona, piri, and hichiriki. Having a Western point of reference with the modifications of the oboe will help bridge the gap between the understanding Western and East Asian double reed instruments.



Figure 5: Zurna
Recording Here



Figure 6: Suona
Recording Here

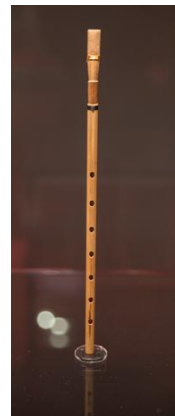


Figure 7: Piri
Recording Here



Figure 8: Hichiriki
Recording Here

The Middle Eastern zurna (زurna, Figure 5) is a double reed instrument invented in around 6th century B.C. It influenced many later non-Western double reed instruments, including the Chinese suona (唢呐, Figure 6), whose name derives from the Turkish zurna,⁷ and translates to “sound.” The suona first appeared in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. - 220 A.D.) and had a distinctive penetrating sound, making it perfect for outdoor performances and military events. Most suona players circular breathe to create a constant sound.⁸

⁶ Irisamay. “The History of the Oboe.”

⁷ The Met Museum, “Zurna,” accessed February 6, 2026.

⁸ The Met Museum, “Suona,” accessed February 6, 2026.

The Korean piri (피리, Figure 7) is a double reed instrument commonly found in folk, court, and shaman music. The body and reed are commonly made from bamboo with eight holes in the cylindrical bore. Its projecting sound makes it perfect for melodic passages, as it is easily heard above other instruments in an ensemble.

The Japanese hichiriki (篳篥), as shown in figure 8, is a short double reed instrument derived from other Asian double reed instruments previously mentioned. Its bore is cylindrical, but the reed (shita, shown on left) makes it appear conical. The player uses a loose, but controlled embouchure around the shita. It is commonly performed in court music alongside the Japanese ryūteki (a transverse bamboo flute). The body is made of internal lacquered bamboo and is wrapped with bands of cherry or wisteria bark in between the finger holes.⁹

These Asian double reed instruments all have similar timbres and musical techniques. This includes pitch bends/glissandi and quick, accented grace notes at beginnings of phrases.

Asian Musical Characteristics

China influenced most Eastern Asian musical traditions, but as time progressed, regional distinctions in art and music became more apparent across the continent. Ancient Chinese cosmology classified instruments by the eight timbres (八音 “*p’arūm*”):

1. Metal (bronze bells): *t’ükchong, p’yŏnjong*
2. Stone (jade chimes): *p’yŏn’gyong, t’ükkyŏng*
3. Silk (zithers with strings of twisted silk): *kŭm, sŭl*
4. Bamboo (flutes): *chi, yak, chŏk, so*

⁹ “Hichiriki,” Encyclopedia Britannica, December 20, 2021.

5. Gourd (mouth organ, the wind chamber of which was at one time made of gourd): *saenghwang*
6. Earth (globular flute): *hun*, and (struck pot): *msu*
7. Leather (drums): *chŏlgo*, *chin'go*, *nogo*, *nodo*
8. Wood (struck and scraped idiophone): *ch'uk*, *ŏ*.¹⁰

This became the standard classification system for instruments in Eastern Asia. Double reed instruments would be considered bamboo and wood because of the materials the bores and reeds are constructed from both materials. This relationship between man and nature through the construction of instruments is important in East Asian cultures.

Musical form in East Asia is often compared to calligraphy, focusing on the shape and inflection of phrases, rather than melodies or chord progressions. It is common for phrases to remain on a single pitch, shaping lines with dynamics, articulation, and vibrato. This is especially common in solo literature when there is only one voice present. This single pitch is a centralized tone, which could suggest a key center to Western ears.

Common musical characteristics in music from East Asia include ornaments such as pitch bends and quick grace notes.¹¹ These techniques imitate folk song styles that are both sung and played by traditional East Asian instruments. Most of the traditional musical characteristics originated in China and spread through East Asia, evolving into more regional idioms over time.

¹⁰ Byong-ki, Hwang. "Aesthetic Characteristics of Korean Music in Theory and in Practice." *Asian Music* 9, no. 2 (1978), 34-36.

¹¹ Kang, S., Yoo, H., Fung, C. V., & Matsunobu, K. (2024). "Virtual Musical Instruments in Music Classrooms: Performing with East Asian Music Cultures." *Music Educators Journal*, 110(3), 28–36.

Chapter 2 - Chen Yi's *Mountain Song* and *Elegy*



Figure 9: Chen Yi 陈怡

Chen Yi's Background

Dr. Chen Yi¹² 陈怡 (b. April 4, 1953) is a prolific Chinese composer and the Lorena Cravens/Millsap/Missouri Distinguished Professor of Composition at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music. Chen's compositional style blends familiar sounds from her home in Southern China with Western classical music, creating new soundscapes for ensembles of all sizes.

Chen's story began in Guangzhou, 1953, only a decade before the 1966 Cultural Revolution. Born into a musical family, Chen Yi started her music education very young—she took piano lessons at the age of three and began learning violin the following year at the age of four. Her siblings, Chen Min and Chen Yun—who played piano and violin respectively—were

¹² Given name 'Yi,' family name 'Chen'

also renowned musicians in Beijing.¹³ Chen began her studies at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, where she was the first woman to graduate with bachelor's and master's degrees in arts in 1978. She also met her husband, Zhou Long during her time at the Central Conservatory. Chen and Zhou moved to the United States in 1986 to study with Chou Wen-Chung at Columbia University. Chen taught at Peabody Institute in Baltimore, Maryland (1996-98) before she transitioned to her current position at UMKC in 1998, alongside Zhou who is also on faculty.¹⁴

The Chinese Cultural Revolution led to the horrific murders and suicides of educators in attempt to eradicate the “old ways.”¹⁵ Many musical manuscripts, phonograph records, and instruments were confiscated and destroyed. The young Chen Yi had to keep her music studies and love for her culture's folk songs hidden from the government, as they were considered borderline pornographic.¹⁶ Chen was sent to work barefoot in rice and vegetable fields for many months before she was approached and asked to serve as concertmaster of the Beijing Opera in 1970 at 17-years-old.¹⁷ Her time as concertmaster of the Beijing Opera introduced her to many musicians and created many compositional opportunities, which exposed her to classical wind literature.¹⁸

Mountain Song for solo oboe (2022)

Mountain Song for solo oboe premiered in 2022 at the bicentennial of London's Royal Academy of Music. Prior to the bicentennial, the Royal Academy of Music had commissioned Chen to write pedagogical exams, as well as works for piano and violin that could be performed

¹³ Leta E. Miller and J. Michele Edwards, *Chen Yi*, 8.

¹⁴ “Yi Chen,” University of Missouri-Kansas City.

¹⁵ Miller and Edwards. *Chen Yi*, 8.

¹⁶ Miller and Edwards, *Chen Yi*, 12.

¹⁷ Miller and Edwards, *Chen Yi*, 16.

¹⁸ Chen Yi Interview, April 11, 2025

by young players. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many restrictions were placed in order to meet Center for Disease Control protocols. These restrictions resulted in more unaccompanied repertoire being written, as ensembles would break social distancing regulations. Chen Yi was asked to write an unaccompanied work that was under two minutes to be broadcasted by BBC on International Women's Day (March 8, 2022). Because this work was written for an event to honor women composers, the commission for *Mountain Song* was free to support the organization and their cause. Chen Yi chose the oboe as the solo instrument because it sounded the most like a human voice, and because she had not written many oboe works at the time.

Mountain Song is inspired by Chinese folk songs and the dramatic beauty of nature. Chen evokes memories from her time working in the rice fields and mountains of China, where she would listen to the workers sing a multitude of folk songs. *Mountain Song* is a reminiscent imitation of farmers singing improvisational melodies. The piece does not quote any particular folk song; instead, it is an original melody that resembles an impromptu tune sung by a single person. Chen recognizes the limitations of classical musicians' ability to improvise, so she writes the music in a way that simulates improvisation, without the performer actually having to improvise a melody. By writing "freely" at the top of the music, Chen opens the door for the performer to interpret the tempo as they see fit. The rising and falling phrases create a mountain shape, with the ends of phrases "lightly flowing and disappearing, like a silk scarf being thrown into the wind."¹⁹ Her goal was to create a piece that utilizes the entire range of the instrument, while still sounding effortless and lyrical.²⁰

¹⁹ Chen Yi Interview.

²⁰ Chen Yi Interview.

Elegy for solo oboe (2023)

Elegy was written in 2020 as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and was part of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra's series of solo commissions. Chen Yi dedicated this solo to oboist Cassie Pilgrim, who shares her southern Chinese heritage. Pilgrim and Chen were introduced during this collaboration with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, where Pilgrim currently serves as principal oboe, a position she has had since 2019. Pilgrim's late mother was from Chen's home city of Guangzhou, so the composer decided to both commemorate Pilgrim's mother and honor those who were lost in the pandemic. Chen's compositional style in *Elegy* utilizes the mournful *Yifan* mode (乙反調式) by using quarter tones and pitch bends. *Yifan* refers to the emphasized tritone scale degrees in the mode: *Yi* corresponds to Western solfège *ti* and *fan* corresponds to *fa*.²¹ The downward pitch bends provide the sorrowful color, evoking a sighing sound. Chen Yi particularly draws inspiration from Cantonese folk tunes about hungry horses playing. *Elegy*'s overall theme is one of compassion, which Chen explains that society needs more of today. The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra paid Chen Yi \$5,000 for the work, but Dr. Chen donated the money back to the orchestra as her way of spreading compassion in the world.²²

Performance Analysis of *Elegy* and *Mountain Song*

Mountain Song should sound like an impromptu song leisurely sung by one person. Space between phrases is the key to creating the improvised singing style; allowing the melodies to breathe effectively resembles an improvised song. To achieve the flowing silk quality, decrescendos should be exaggerated, fading away to nothing. Beginning phrases with enough

²¹ Nathan L. Lam, "Pentatonic Xuangong 旋宮 Transformations in Chinese Music," Society for Music Theory.

²² Chen Yi Interview. April 11, 2025.

volume is necessary for these tapers to be effective. The downward pitch lip bends in measures two and five (Figures 10 and 11) can be achieved by manipulating the embouchure. Rolling the reed out while lowering the bottom jaw will bend the pitch down a quarter tone without having to change fingerings.

The peak of the mountain and the entire piece is the E6 in the final measure (m. 10, Figure 4). The player should reach up to this pitch with lots of energy and vibrato, then trail off with a decrescendo on the triplet sixteenths, floating away in the wind.

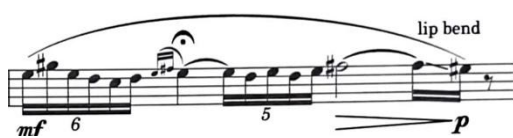


Figure 10: *Mountain Song* measure 2



Figure 11: *Mountain Song* measure 5



Figure 12: *Mountain Song* measure 10

Approaching both *Mountain Song* and *Elegy* the same way will guarantee a successful interpretation of the music. The pitch bends that occur in the main theme, as seen in measures 2, 13, and 32 (figures 10, 11, and 12) of *Elegy* can be achieved through the manipulation of embouchure, similar to the lip bends in *Mountain Song*. Also like *Mountain Song*, leaving space between phrases in *Elegy* is important to achieve the improvised singing style. Players have the freedom to interpret the grace notes and mordents, so as the snappy Chinese character is still provided. Differentiating the tempo and length of repeated figures such as these grace notes and mordents will evoke an improvised effect.



Figure 13: *Elegy* measures 1-2



Figure 14: *Elegy* measures 12-13



Figure 15: *Elegy* measures 31-32

Since *Elegy* and *Mountain Song* are often programmed together as a paired solo oboe performance, Chen Yi plans to write a third solo oboe work to serve as a third movement. For this new work, she wants to experiment writing other extended techniques, including circular breathing.²³

Summary

Chen Yi's culture influences many aspects of her compositions, drawing from Cantonese folk songs, modes, and lyrical styles. This is evident in her oboe works *Mountain Song* and *Elegy*, as they are predominantly inspired by folk music that was popular in her hometown of Guangzhou. The timbre of the oboe is perfect for replicating the human voice and the many ranges of emotions and inflections found in vocal music. By writing "freely" in her compositions, Chen Yi informs the player to treat each note as if it were improvised, allowing for rhythm and tempo to be up to the player's interpretation. Both *Mountain Song* and *Elegy* have

²³ Chen Yi Interview.

been transcribed for solo bassoon by Chen Yi and are available for purchase from Theodore Presser Company.

Chapter 3 - Jean Ahn's *Blush*



Figure 16: Jean Ahn 안진

Jean Ahn's Background

Dr. Jean Ahn 안진 (b. 1976 in Seoul) is a South Korean composer now based in San Francisco. She explores a compositional style that blends her Korean culture with Western musical styles. Her studies began as a child, and as an adult she received her bachelor's and master's degrees in music at Seoul National University. Ahn moved to the United States in 2001 to pursue a PhD in Composition at UC Berkeley, where she now serves as a lecturer. Director of Ensemble ARI and Music Director for CHIM Studio, Ahn is both an advocate and music educator for students with special needs.²⁴

***Blush* for solo woodwind (2008/2019): A Historical and Political Analysis**

Ahn wrote *Blush* for solo clarinet in 2008 and arranged the work for oboe in 2019 and created additional transcriptions for flute and saxophone. During that year, Ahn also wrote duet

²⁴ Ahn, Jean. 2021. "Composer Jean Ahn."

versions of the piece: *Blush II* for flute and alto flute, and *Blush III* for woodwind duet. *Blush* was inspired by an excerpt from *The Splendid Village: The Wanderer Departed, IV*. Corn Law Rhyme by the English poet Ebenezer Elliot (1781-1849): “*When daisies blush, and windflowers wet with dew...*” Ahn writes, “This piece is based on this image of flowers, shy to express fully with words but cannot help blush. The overall tempo and mood may be freely interpreted by the performer. The grace notes and glissandi evokes the Korean traditional music.”²⁵

Although the composer does not elaborate further on the poem’s influence on the piece, I argue that the political criticism in *The Splendid Village* is also present in *Blush*. Elliott’s Corn Law Rhymes were written as a social commentary about the working class. The Corn Law was an English regulation that governed the import and export of grain, which raised the prices of grain and led to food riots and crises between 1795 and 1813.²⁶ It was repealed in 1846—a victory for both manufacturers and farmers.²⁷ This particular excerpt from the Corn Law Rhyme “The Wanderer Departed, IV” can be interpreted as an optimistic outlook on life from the perspective of a poor, working class citizen during the era of trade prohibitions. The happiest part of the poem is about nature, while the rest *The Splendid Village* discusses topics such as loss, grief, and the stark contrast between the upper-class citizens living in mansions and the working-class citizens who built them.²⁸

The combination of the poem’s political commentary and the traditional Korean musical style creates an entirely new narrative about Korean labor laws and the appreciation of nature as a working-class citizen. South Korean laborers are often forced to work excruciatingly long

²⁵ Ahn, Jean. 2008. *Blush* for solo woodwind, notes from the composer.

²⁶ “Corn Law,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 20, 2019.

²⁷ “Corn Law,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

²⁸ Ebenezer Elliott, *The Splendid Village: Corn Law Rhymes and other poems*, (1833).

hours for little pay, which led to protests and strikes. The formation of independent unions by Haetai workers in the 1970s combatted the exploitation and abuse from the industry, ultimately leading to a shift in work culture.²⁹ South Korea still has highly demanding work schedules and expectations for their workers, but the demanding expectations have softened over time.³⁰

The overall tone of *Blush* is wistful with phrases that sound as though they are sighing, longing to see the blushing flowers. Repetitive motives, use of the upper register, and the flutter tongue evoke sounds you hear in nature: bird calls and insects buzzing. I interpret this as a connection to Elliot's poem from the perspective of a working-class citizen in South Korea. The yearning for nature and appreciation for the mundane—such as the wet dew and color of flowers—is relatable for many working-class citizens all over the world. The beauty of *Blush* is the many interpretations that can come from a short solo work.

Most Korean music—especially court music—and the associated music theory is cultivated from Chinese music theory, so there is some overlap in aesthetics, modality, and form between the cultures. Korean musical philosophy closely followed Chinese musical philosophy because of their identical governmental structures under totalitarian emperors.³¹ Over time, Korean music began to develop its own inherently “Korean” characteristics, stepping away from the Chinese foundation. Rhythm, melody, ornamentation, timbre, form, and orchestration became more distinct to Korean culture, which developed new traditions for classical Korean music.³²

²⁹ Koo, H. (2001). *Korean Workers: The Culture and Politics of Class Formation* (1st ed.). Cornell University Press, 1-4.

³⁰ Koo. *Korean Workers: The Culture and Politics of Class Formation*.

³¹ Byong-ki, Hwang. “Aesthetic Characteristics of Korean Music in Theory and in Practice.” *Asian Music* 9, no. 2 (1978), 34.

³² Byong-ki. “Aesthetic Characteristics of Korean Music in Theory and in Practice.” 34.

***Blush* Theoretical Analysis**

The approach to pitch in Korean traditional music varies from the Western understanding of pitch. Western pitch is understood to be a single, fixed tone, whereas the Korean understanding of pitch is all-encompassing. It disregards Western “intonation” by distorting and refracting the pitch, which Western listeners often interpret as multiple pitches, or microtonality.³³ Korean pitch gestures ebb and flow with vibrato and lifts, like Chinese music—as seen in Chen Yi’s *Mountain Song* and *Elegy*. This manipulation of pitch may be notated as glissandi or pitch bends in musical notation and is commonly referred to as “kkeokneunum” in Korean. The Korean concept of “sigimsae” refers to the manipulation or movement of pitch and translates to “embellishment” or “decoration.” Sigimsae is very important in Korean music, as it informs the performer of the musical shape and fluidity in context of the melodic phrase.³⁴ The author of “The Concept in Pitch in Korean Music,” compares this concept to calligraphy:

One stroke of the brush has an attack point, a sustained middle section, and a final tail, and the stroke itself varies from broad to narrow as the brush is lifted from the paper. Even if the stroke undulates and changes direction, it is still considered as one stroke. Thus, these calligraphy strokes are themselves rather complex, consisting of any number of smaller subtleties. These same observations apply to the understanding of pitch and the resulting pitch gestures.³⁵

Using this analogy, Ahn paints phrases in *Blush* with an accented attack, followed by a flowing melodic line that builds energy, and then trails off with a decrescendo. Sometimes these

³³ The Sejong Cultural Society, “Introduction to Korean Traditional Styles in Music: The Concept of Pitch in Korean Music” accessed 12 February 2026.

³⁴ The Sejong Cultural Society, “Introduction to Korean Traditional Styles in Music: The Concept of Pitch in Korean Music.”

³⁵ The Sejong Cultural Society, “Introduction to Korean Traditional Styles in Music: The Concept of Pitch in Korean Music.”

melodies change pitches and sometimes they remain on a single pitch. For example, the final phrase of *Blush* (measure 121, Figure 17) begins at a strong dynamic, followed by an increase of energy that leads to the accented downbeat of measure 122. This energy then dissipates with the drawn out decrescendo and subtle pitch bend up a quarter-tone. All of this is achieved with a single pitch with embellishments. If the notes on the page were drawn with a single stroke, the phrases would be quite clear.



Figure 17: *Blush* measures 121-123

Although there is not a written key signature, the central tone of *Blush* is D, as the phrases find their way back to this pitch. A is also a prevalent pitch, suggesting to Western ears a dominant function in the key center of D. The use of neighbor tones and quarter-tone pitch bends alludes to the concept of sigimsae, painting sound with fluid pitch by utilizing kkeokneunum.

***Blush* Performance Technique**

Ahn's inherent use of extended techniques, such as glissandi, harmonic trills, microtones, and flutter tongue evoke sounds that replicate the Korean piri. Although the composer does not explicitly say that *Blush* is an imitation of the piri, certain aspects of the piece suggest a reference to the Korean double reed instrument. For example, Ahn's overt use of gracenotes on the beat, quick downward leaps, and pitch bends emulates the piri's distinctive sound and the traditional Korean musical style. The piri is often performed outdoors and in folk settings, which parallels *Blush*, as it is a piece inspired by Korean folk songs and the outdoors. The projecting, nasal quality of the oboe imitates the piri even more accurately than other woodwind instruments. Ahn

instructs the performer not to stress the downbeats of measures and to play “freely with affection.” This free tempo and ambiguous meter create an improvisatory sound, without the player having to improvise any melodies. All of these musical characteristics are inherently Korean, creating sounds unfamiliar to Western oboe music, yet reminiscent to Korean natives.

The oboe technique in *Blush* is demanding, as the player must be fluent in many kinds of extended techniques. Upwards and downwards glissandi can be achieved through manipulation of embouchure, rolling the reed in and out of the player’s mouth (as seen in Figures 17 and 20). Some pitches require finger manipulation as well as embouchure manipulation, such as the upward bend from D5, which is achieved by gradually moving the right hand third finger from covering the tone hole to sitting on the edge of the tone hole. A similar approach is used in measure 46 (Figure 21): the F6 upward bend is completed by sliding the left hand third finger off of the key, whereas the pitch bends downward (Dbb6 in measure 44, Figure 20) are completed by loosening your embouchure and rolling the reed out. The C6 in the same measure would be produced by rolling your left 1st finger just off the tone hole but still pressing down the key.

The flutter tongue (“flzg.” as seen in Figure 22) is supposed to sound “noisy,” so the player should play with full air support while simultaneously rolling their tongue (alveolar trill) to create a rattly sound. If the player cannot physically achieve this, they may experiment with uvular trills, creating a similar sound by vibrating the back of their tongue against their uvula. This is similar to “growling” on single reed instruments.

Harmonic trills are indicated in the score with the text “subtle alternate finger,” suggesting that the player uses alternate fingerings to change the timbre of the same pitch. For

example, in measures 34 and 35 of *Blush* (Figure 19), the player alternates between regular and harmonic A5 by using the following fingerings (Figure18):³⁶

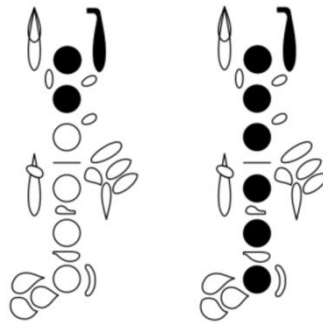


Figure 18: A5 Fingerings (Standard left, Harmonic, right)

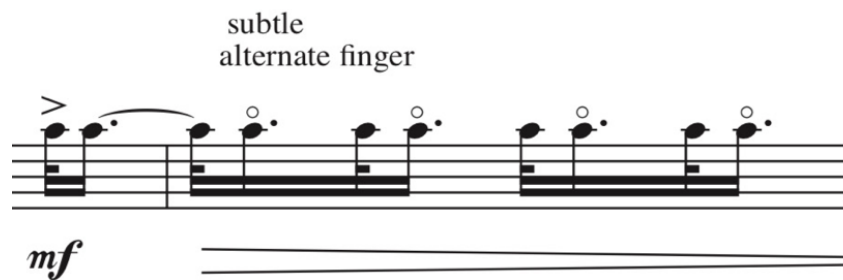


Figure 19: *Blush* measure 34

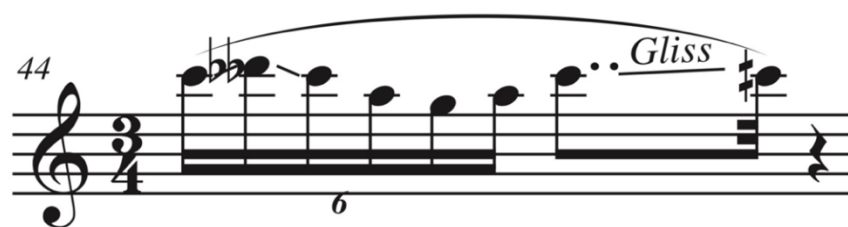


Figure 20: *Blush* measure 44

³⁶ International Double Reed Society. "Oboe: Fingering Chart," 2024.



Figure 21: *Blush* measure 46

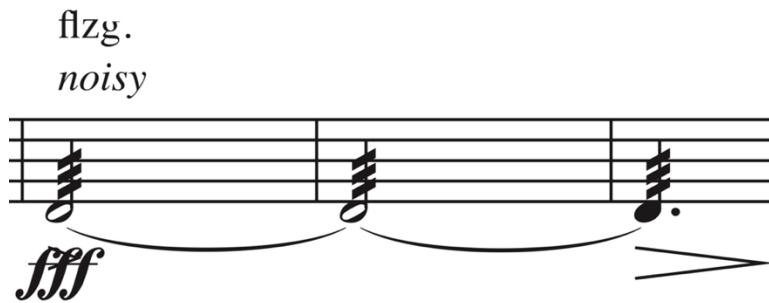


Figure 22: *Blush* measures 20-22

Summary

Ahn's South Korean heritage directly influences her compositions and should be observed in performance. Her *Blush* for solo oboe paints landscapes of blushing flowers using sounds that are reminiscent of South Korea. The manipulation of pitch via pitch bends/glissandi and quick grace notes are very common in Korean music, and mimic techniques used by the Korean double reed instrument, the *piri*. Although originally written for clarinet, the timbre of the oboe also suggests references to the *piri*. Understanding the cultural and theoretical context of a piece will ensure a more accurate reflection of the composer's intent. The composer's perspective is equally as important as the performer's; it is the performer's responsibility to use the framework of the music from all angles beyond the notes on a page.

Chapter 4 - Toshio Hosokawa's *Spell Song*



Figure 23: Toshio Hosokawa 細川 俊

Toshio Hosokawa's Background

Japanese composer and conductor Toshio Hosokawa 細川 俊夫 (b. October 23, 1955, in Hiroshima) is well-acclaimed, having won many awards in both Germany and Japan, as well as serving a multitude of composer in residence positions throughout Europe and with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra. Some of his awards include winning first prize in the composition competition of the 100th anniversary of the Berliner Philharmoniker in 1982, the Suntory Music Award in 2007, and the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award in 2024.³⁷ Hosokawa is known for his contemporary blend of Western and non-Western musical styles. He became well-versed in Western musical dialects when he studied in Berlin with Isang Yun, and in Freiburg with Klaus Huber and Brian Ferneyhough. He blends his Japanese culture with a multitude of Western musical styles, such as classical, contemporary, concerti, chamber music,

³⁷ "Toshio Hosokawa." Schott Music, accessed February 28, 2025.

operas, and film music. By combining traditional Japanese instruments and folk music with Western forms and literature, Hosokawa creates entirely new soundscapes.³⁸

Zen Buddhism is Hosokawa's primary source of compositional inspiration—creating symbolic imagery of both human and mother nature. Zen has heavily influenced secular art in Japan, prominently found in tea ceremonies, ink painting, and gardening. Spiritual and artistic vitality are expressed, centered around growth and inner peace.³⁹ Themes of flowers, oceans, and clouds are common in Hosokawa's works, whereas his more humane themes touch on subjects like war, dreams, and meditation.⁴⁰ Hosokawa explained that he:

Had begun to think that sound, just like the line drawn by the zen monk on a piece of paper, carries within itself a uterine domain that cannot be seen and cannot be heard. When thinking of the quality of a movement that leads to the articulation of a sound, what is at stake is not only human corporeity or the character of an instrument but also our most intimate relationship with the condition and nature of the space in which the sound played resonates. Sound in itself has no meaning. Sound acquires its vital and fundamental state of existence from the relationship between the space (*topos*) in which it comes into being and the person who is in that space. Recent European music has been overly concerned with sound as the result of a perceptible sonic articulation, of sound as the *écriture* of an object on paper, totally oblivious to everything related to image and imagination that cannot be seen and cannot be heard. The concept of *ma*, which is so important in traditional Japanese music, is time and space infused with a tension that extends

³⁸ Schott Music, "Toshio Hosokawa," accessed January 7.

³⁹ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Japanese art," accessed January 7, 2026.

⁴⁰ Schott Music, "Toshio Hosokawa," accessed January 7, 2026.

from infinity to the paper where the line is drawn, a tension that is in no way "silence" in the sense of a uniform and empty space, void of any sense of direction or meaning. It is a space that is full of direction and rich in multiple meanings, it is a space that has become fertile like a uterus.⁴¹

Hosokawa's philosophies are primarily inspired by his Japanese heritage and Zen Buddhism beliefs that revolve around space, time, and life. He views music as its own living entity, showing respect for all aspects, such as sound and silence.

***Spell Song* for solo oboe (2015): A Historical and Theoretical Analysis**

Spell Song for solo oboe was commissioned by the Sony Music Foundation to be used required audition repertoire for the second round of the 11th International Oboe Competition of Japan 2015 in Karuizawa.⁴² This seven-minute solo is regarded as one of the most difficult pieces of music for the oboe because of the extensive use of extended techniques, such as flutter tongue, multiphonics, timbral trills, microtones, pitch bends, and so on. Although *Spell Song* is regarded as a standard, virtuosic piece of solo oboe repertoire in Japan, it is not commonly performed outside of the country. In the program notes of *Spell Song*, Hosokawa writes:

I imagined the oboe to be a primitive instrument with a double reed, wood, and a cylinder. Perhaps music was born through a spell that calls upon the supernatural such as gods and spirits, and the voice became the 'song', and this 'song' creates an arc to the spirits. Each phrase of the 'song' has a form that is like eastern calligraphy, with a central note in one phrase. How to flexibly express the lively motion of the

⁴¹ Hosokawa Toshio, program notes for the first performance of Tōkyō 1985, 30 October 1985, republished in *Nihon no oto: Sōgō-gendai* (Japanese Sounds: synthesis-contemporary), Hōgaku hyakka nyūmon, vol. 4 (Encyclopaedic hōgaku manual) (Tokyo: Ongaku no Tomo, 1988), 179.

⁴² Schott Music, "*Spell Song* for solo oboe," 2015.

central note's 'life' is the major theme behind the performance. My music is a kind of calligraphy of space and time through the use of sounds.⁴³

The imagery described by Hosokawa informs the performer to emphasize the central notes of phrases at their own liberty. By evoking visual art with auditory expression, the song has purpose and is rooted in Zen Buddhist philosophies. Hosokawa's imagery of calligraphy ties back to the metaphor used in the previous chapter when describing Korean music. Each phrase begins with a strong attack, emphasizes a central tone, and trails off like ink on a page. The opening phrase of *Spell Song* (Figure 25) is a great example of this calligraphy form that centers around Eb.

The “primitive instrument” that the composer alludes to may be the Japanese hichiriki (箆簫) or the Korean piri (피리), as they are both East Asian ancestors of the oboe, often associated with sacred music.⁴⁴ The hichiriki's sound is described as “haunting” and is commonly heard in court performances and weddings.⁴⁵ The piri can be heard in court, shaman, and folk music, playing the role of the main melodic voice. The glissandi and quick, accented grace notes evoke the sounds made by both the hichiriki and piri.



Figure 24: *Spell Song* measure 1

⁴³ Toshio Hosokawa, *Spell Song*, 2015.

⁴⁴ "Hichiriki," Encyclopedia Britannica, December 20, 2021.

⁴⁵ Picken, Laurence E. R.; Nickson, Noël J. (2007). *Music from the Tang Court: Volume 7: Some Ancient Connections Explored*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. p. 28.

***Spell Song* Performance Technique**

In *Spell Song*, Hosokawa utilizes extensive extended techniques throughout the piece, such as pitch bends, flutter tonguing, and multiphonics. Hosokawa provides fingering charts in the first page of the piece for the multiphonics, which were sourced from Peter Veale's *The Techniques of Oboe Playing*.⁴⁶ Multiphonics are achieved by using specific fingerings and embouchure pressure around the reed, resulting in cluster chords. For example, the F# multiphonic in measure 20 (Figure 25) is played with the following fingering:

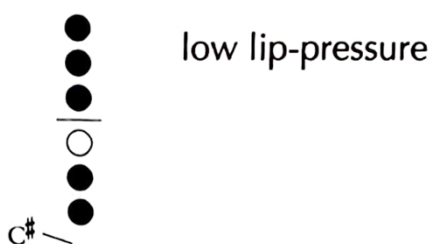


Figure 25: F# Multiphonic Fingering

The player will start by playing an F#, change to the multiphonic fingering, loosen the embouchure, and go back to the F#. The text “low lip-pressure” refers to the embouchure tightness around the reed. Low lip-pressure allows for more vibrations in the reed, creating the loud, rattly sound that oboe multiphonics produce. This effect creates a growling cluster chord in between the delicate F# drone.



Figure 26: *Spell Song* measure 20

⁴⁶ Veale, Peter. (1994) *The Techniques of Oboe Playing*, Barenreiter.

Hosokawa often combined extended techniques or wrote them in tandem. For example, on bars 35 and 36 of *Spell Song* (Figure 29), the player must bend up from an Eb to an E natural, then slowly produce the multiphonic that builds and decreases in intensity. The player can bend the Eb up a half-step using only their embouchure. Keeping the Eb fingering will make it easier to transition to the multiphonic fingering in measure 36. Hosokawa provides two multiphonic fingering options (Figure 27) because of instrument variations. Some brands/instruments have an easier and more difficult time producing certain multiphonics, depending on the fingering. This is because of the varying bore sizes, shapes, and space between tone holes. I prefer the first non-forked fingering and slide my left third finger to half-hole from the standard Eb fingering. The forked fingering did not produce as many pitches as the fingering with all right fingers down. I was able to perform this multiphonic on a Lorée Royal 125 with my left first finger remaining in the half-hole position.

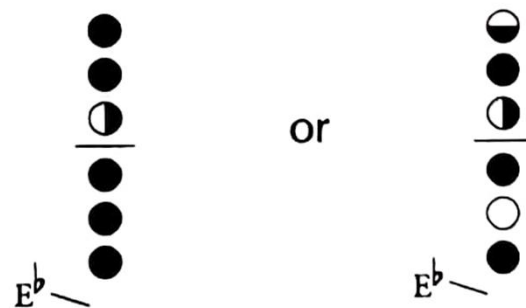


Figure 27: E Multiphonic Fingering



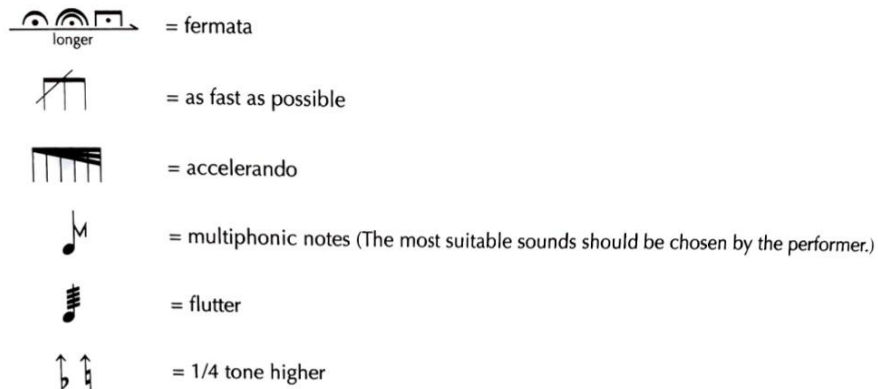
Figure 28: *Spell Song* measure 36



Figure 29: *Spell Song* measure 18

Flutter tongue/trill combinations are also common in *Spell Song*. As previously mentioned in Chapter 3 when discussing extended techniques in Jean Ahn's *Blush*, flutter tonguing can be achieved with either alveolar or uvular trills. This combined with the finger trills creates a very noisy effect.

Symbols:



Grace notes must come on the beat.

Figure 30: *Spell Song* Symbols

Quarter tones are prevalent in *Spell Song*, indicated by special accidental symbols. Hosokawa provides a key at the beginning of the work (Figure 30). Similar to pitch bends, the raised quarter tones are created by manipulating the embouchure. To raise the pitch, the player should make their oral cavity smaller, roll more reed into their mouth, and bring the instrument closer to their body.

Summary

Toshio Hosokawa combined his Japanese heritage, Zen Buddhist beliefs, and extensive knowledge on both Eastern and Western music composition to create masterpieces for ensembles of all sizes. Hosokawa's *Spell Song* for solo oboe used extended techniques and central tones to mimic primitive Asian double reed instruments, such as the hichiriki and piri. The form of *Spell Song* was inspired by Eastern calligraphy, with phrases trailing in and out like single brush strokes. The entirety of the piece reflects Japanese culture and the origins of the oboe family.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

Chen Yi, Jean Ahn, and Toshio Hosokawa combine sounds from their cultures with Western classical music to create new works for the oboe. East Asian solo oboe music uses pitch bends, single-pitch melodies, and effects like flutter tonguing and multiphonics to evoke sounds played by traditional Asian double reed instruments: the suona, piri, and hichiriki. The freedom of tempo also creates an improvisatory quality to the music, referencing people singing folk tunes from their home countries. Eastern calligraphy influenced art in East Asia, which led to musical form to be dictated by shape, rather than a certain number of beats.

Embracing music from cultures outside of your own is enriching and accessible to players of many ages. Learning different musical forms, modes, and techniques expands the players' wealth of knowledge on their instrument. By incorporating works by Asian composers into the standard oboe literature, we can expand the diversity and inclusion of underrepresented people in oboe performance. Learning repertoire beyond pieces you have been studying for years, or even decades, will encourage growth in your music education.

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Appendix A - Chen Yi Personal Interview Transcript, April 11, 2025

Farr: How did you get involved with the London Academy of Music?

Chen Yi: The Academy has produced a series of exams for student performers—they align with different ages as a pedagogy training for the Royal Academy. I have been commissioned by the school to write a piano solo piece for a 5-year-old and also slightly older children; so I wrote two pieces. Then they also selected two of my violin and piano pieces twice, in different years. The set pieces lasted a little bit long, maybe not even a year. The children would compete and get a grade ranking; they would play those pieces like a set, so they published those together. That was the start of the relationship [with the Royal Academy].

Chen Yi: When the pandemic came, they wanted to feature solo works for different instruments in their conservatory. They asked me to choose any instrument because they had good players. Then I chose the oboe because I had already written for all the other instruments. They limited the program because they commissioned [200] composers to honor the [200th] anniversary year. They wanted shorter works. The premiere was also set on March 8—which is International Women’s Day, to honor women composers, so my piece premiered with a mixed program written by women composers. After they commissioned all these pieces, I think it was free because they took composers that were already related to the Royal Academy. I certainly accepted because I always do such things to support organizations. Some [works] are high, some are prestigious commissions, some are not, and I write for students as well. In this case, this is an honor, so I wrote *Mountain Song* for free.

Farr: In your program notes for *Mountain Song*, it says that it was inspired by Chinese folk songs. Were there any specific folk songs that you were inspired by, or was it just the general style?

Chen Yi: The “*Mountain Song*” is an imitation of farmers singing—which would have improvisational elements—which is free and would have space with air that kind of sets the scene and the mood. There’s no improvisation; I wrote every pitch precisely in order to imitate that improvisational style. You can say it’s in a “*Mountain Song* singing style.” If I didn’t write out all of these pitches, it would not sound improvised. With western classical musicians, if you ask them to do improvisation for example, after 5 seconds they will go back to their regular repertoire, so I needed to write out how it would sound if it were improvised. The next point would be that I wanted to reach the whole range of the instrument in order for the player to show off. It’s a showcase. You have free elements, atmosphere, and yet you attach the technical part—besides practicing—you need to master the style and master the language. That is the point. The premiere was great! Many others also played that piece, including the State University of New York at Fredonia—their oboe professor played both [*Mountain Song* and *Elegy*].

Chen Yi: [*Sings the opening motive of Mountain Song, as her hands draw the rise and fall of the pitches.*] Like this. It’s open then drops down like a silk scarf floating in the air. It’s flying away and disappearing. You must address every pitch clearly, yet lightly. Not heavily.

At the end (measure 10, figure 4), you reach the E then you fly away [with the descending sixteenths]. You must reach the E with support and a full sound, like “look at me!” From the low register [in measure 9], you take a deep breath, then you reach for the high E. That will be the showcase, then you float away. That is the whole feeling.

Chen Yi: The next [piece, *Elegy*], has more [of a] story. I know [the] Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra pretty well. They commissioned me [to write] an orchestra piece called Prelude and Fugue for Orchestra. They hosted [my] residency, which is a prestigious commission. [They had] several performances in Minnesota. Before the pandemic, they also invited me to present my

quintet, which is called *Sound of the Five*, written for cello and string quartet. They provided excellent players, [as] this is a prestigious orchestra. During the pandemic they came to me after the quintet [and] they hosted me [for a] week; I had to talk to audiences in different locations to explain my piece, and they [had] musicologist reporters who came to write [papers] and radio programs to have the multicultural education [for] the local audience. Right after that, the pandemic came. They commissioned me to write a piece for one of their principal players of my choice, [so] I said oboe. In the beginning, I [had] a colleague who used to be a professor here [and] played in the Kansas City Symphony. Her name is Barbara Bishop and I tried to write for her because she is my old colleague. When I named her, the director said, “we have a co-principal, how about [Cassie Pilgrim]—the younger one who just graduated from Curtis, whose mom is Chinese?” That’s the reason I wrote for Cassie Pilgrim. Her father is white [and] her mom is Chinese—and it happened to be that her mom was born in my home city, Guangzhou. We speak the same dialect, although I didn’t know her mom [because she] had already passed away, so I said: “How about I write you a piece to honor your mom, to remember your own mom, [who] is from my home city? Then I could use our folk elements from Cantonese music, which is very famous [and] popular folk ensemble music.” Cantonese music is a type of ensemble music in China, which is a big genre with many repertoire. Then I said, “This tune I took has a flat tone,” *[she sings the opening phrase from Elegy, emphasizing the downward pitch bend at the end of the phrase]* “That note is a quarter [tone] flat, so I used that as the element.” That piece is called the “prancing horse,” like a horse playing the bells, but the horse was hungry. That was the title of the folk tune, which has the flat tone as the signature of the mode. Because this mode has been used in Cantonese music in certain famous pieces, not only one piece. This piece is kind of popular, so I took it as the element. I met [Cassie] on Zoom pretty

closely [because of the pandemic] to chat and rehearse for [an hour]. I do know her well. She doesn't speak Chinese and her mom already died, so I dedicated the piece to the memory of the people [who] died during the pandemic to show compassion because we need that kind of compassion in society for our own people—friends and [neighbors.] The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra used that program and widely promoted it during the pandemic. They used all of their principal players because no orchestras were [performing] for two or three years. They still had to work, so that piece was one of the [pieces] they presented all [online]. By the way, [the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra] wanted to pay me, but I said no. It's about \$5,000 if they do [pay], [but] I said [to] use the money to donate back to your organization to feed your musicians. Many organizations die [because] they don't have any money to support their operation anymore, so they donated the \$5,000 back [to themselves]. They made sure I wrote this down [in our] commission contract.

Chen Yi: When I travel to other schools when they [perform] my chamber music, they would choose these two pieces [*Mountain Song* and *Elegy*] as a set. After I wrote these two, I thought that I need to add another movement [that is] fast [and uses] circular breathing. I even had a plan—I haven't had the chance yet, [but] later when I have the chance, then I may write another movement. Although Presser already published both pieces, [as well as] the bassoon version of both pieces. Bassoon can do circular breathing as well, so it would work.

Chen Yi: The Chinese oboe—called the *suona*—makes a much louder sound because the metal bell is bigger than the pure woodwind instrument like the oboe. Their bell is [flared], the reed is similar, and it's also [a] very narrow tube. They also have different sizes—the oboe [does not have as many]; they have big ones down to the small one, and the smallest one is screamingly

loud. The big one is lower and used to imitate speaking, like [mouth movements] and babies talking.

Farr: What is your compositional process to write solo pieces? Do you write out music first, or play it on piano or violin?

Chen Yi: I am trained to compose in [my] head. I have never touched any instrument when writing for any instrumentation. In my undergraduate first year freshman exam, we had to write a piano solo in 3-part form, like ABA, and you are not allowed to touch any instrument. In one day you have to complete everything. When you [went] to the restroom, you weren't even allowed to bring a pen, pencil, or paper from out of the room. The way we train composers is to read the score or write down notes on the score at the same time you hear the exam. I am a trained professional violinist and pianist, so usually you do sight reading. As long as you do as much as possible, then you will know the sound.

Farr: That's so interesting. How did you get introduced to writing for wind instruments?

Chen Yi: When I was 17, I became the concertmaster in the Guangzhou Opera Orchestra. I worked with the orchestra for eight years; can you believe it? Every day you have rehearsals, and in the evening, you have the opera. The orchestra had 30 people, [as well as] a small group of Chinese traditional instruments, besides the Western orchestra. I listened to all [of] this, and certainly we had [a] double reed orchestra, so I learned all of the instrumentation before I read orchestration books. I didn't learn how to orchestrate from books, I learned [by] writing for my own orchestras. Besides accompanying operas, we also did chamber and orchestra concerts. For example, when the whole opera troupe would go to [the] countryside to play violin ensemble works, I wrote all of these works, [which were] arrangements of Cantonese folk music. We

would send six violinists to go out [and] stand outside of the curtain to play for the audience.

Otherwise, it would be a longer break when they changed the staging. That was how we worked.

Farr: That's amazing. Well, that was all I had; you answered a lot of other questions I had while you were talking about the pieces. Thank you so much for taking time out of your schedule to speak with me today.

Chen Yi: Of course, it is my pleasure.

Appendix B - List of Selected Oboe Works by Asian Composers

Table 5.1: Select Oboe Solo and Chamber Works by Asian Composers

Composer	Title	Written	Instrumentation	Composer's Nationality
Abe, Keiko 安倍 圭子	<i>Conversation in the Forest II</i>	1993	Marimba, Oboe and 2 Percussionists	Japanese
Ahn, Jean 안진	<i>Blush</i> for Solo Oboe	2010/2019	Oboe	South Korean
Celli, Joseph	<i>Kwangju</i> : for piri, komungo, oboe & Korean drummers	1992	Oboe, Piri, Komungo, Korean Drummers	Italian-American (not Asian, but features Korean traditional instruments)
Chen, Gang 陈钢	<i>Nangma</i> Concerto for Oboe	1985	Oboe, Orchestra	Chinese
Chen, Yi 陈怡	<i>CONCERTO FOR REEDS</i>	2008	Oboe, Sheng, Chamber Orch	Chinese
Chen, Yi 陈怡	<i>JOY OF THE REUNION</i>	2001	Oboe, Violin, Viola, Double Bass	Chinese
Chen, Yi 陈怡	<i>Three Bagatelles from China West</i>	2014	Oboe, Cello	Chinese
Chen, Yi 陈怡	<i>Tibetan Tunes</i>	2007/2025	Flute, English horn, Piano	Chinese
Chen, Yi 陈怡	<i>Mountain Song</i> for Solo Oboe	2022	Oboe	Chinese
Chen, Yi 陈怡	<i>Elegy</i> for Solo Oboe	2022	Oboe	Chinese
Choi, Kyong Mee 최경미	<i>A Deep Light</i> for Bass Oboe	2021	Bass Oboe	South Korean
Choi, Kyong Mee 최경미	<i>Uncarved Water</i>	2010	Oboe, Violin, Viola, Cello, Percussion	South Korean
Choi, Kyong Mee 최경미	<i>Pendulum</i> for Oboe, English Horn, and electronics	2018	Oboe, English Horn, Electronics	South Korean
Cuong, Viet	<i>Extra Fancy</i>	2017	2 oboes, English horn, and 2 bassoons	Vietnamese-American
Cuong, Viet	<i>(Extra)ordinarily Fancy</i>	2019	2 Solo Oboes, Orchestra	Vietnamese-American

Cuong, Viet	<i>Six Canadian Scenes</i>	2022	Oboe	Vietnamese-American
Esmail, Reena	<i>Jhula jhule</i>	2013	Oboe	Indian-American
Esmail, Reena	<i>RE Member</i>	2022	2 Oboes	Indian-American
Fenn, Nirmali	<i>Blown Echoes</i>	2019	Oboe, Electronics, Pipe Installation	Sri Lankan-born Australian
Fenn, Nirmali	<i>A Reaction in Force</i>	2018	Oboe	Sri Lankan-born Australian
Hayashi, Hikaru 林 光	<i>The Blue Rock Thrush</i> Sonata for Oboe and Piano (No. 1 and 2)	2009	Oboe, Piano	Japanese
Hirao, Kishio 平尾 貴四男	Oboe Sonata	1951	Oboe, Piano	Japanese
Hsu, Cindi	<i>Light in the Darkness</i>	2020	Flute, Oboe, Bass Clarinet, Violin	Taiwanese
Hosokawa, Toshio 細川 俊 夫	<i>Spell Song</i> for Solo Oboe	2015	Oboe	Japanese
Ichianagi, Toshi 一柳 慧	<i>Cloud Figures</i> for Solo Oboe	1999	Oboe	Japanese
Itoh, Takuma プロフィール	<i>Taepyeongga</i>	2014	Ajaeng, Oboe, Guitar, Piano, Percussion	Hawaiian
Jen, Chen-Hui	<i>The May, the White Flower</i>	2004	Oboe, Pipa, and Cello	Taiwanese
Kawanaka, Akiko	<i>An den Wassern</i>	2018	Oboe, Piano	Japanese
Kim, Seolhee (Snow)	<i>Petite Dancer</i>	2024	English Horn, Electronics	Korean
Konishi, Nagako 小西 奈雅子	<i>Romanze V</i> for Oboe and Piano	2018	Oboe, Piano	Japanese
Lanzilotti, Leilehua	<i>Daphne</i>	2021	Oboe	Hawaiian (Kanaka Maoli)
Lanzilotti, Leilehua	<i>meridian</i>	2022	Flute, English horn, Clarinet, Harp, Viola	Hawaiian (Kanaka Maoli)
Lee, Young Jo	<i>Sori #7</i>	1981	Oboe	South Korean

Li, Yuan-Chen	<i>Zang (The Funeral)</i> 葬 (2000)	2000	Pipa, Oboe, Percussion, and Bass	Taiwanese-American
Louilarpprasert, Piyawat	<i>Black Bird Soaring</i>	2016	Oboe	Thai
Louilarpprasert, Piyawat	<i>Strobe</i>	2019	Oboe and Electronics	Thai
Nishimura, Akira 西村 朗	<i>Karura</i> for Oboe Solo	2007	Oboe	Japanese
Nishimura, Akira 西村 朗	<i>Silent Autumn</i>	2014	Oboe, Piano	Japanese
Nishizawa, Kenichi 西澤健一	<i>Aubade</i> , Op. 102	2017	Oboe d'amore and Piano/English horn and Piano	Japanese
Nishizawa, Kenichi 西澤健一	Sonate for English horn and piano, Op. 114	2021	English horn, Piano	Japanese
Nishizawa, Kenichi 西澤健一	Sonate for Oboe and Piano, Op. 94	2015	Oboe, Piano	Japanese
Nishizawa, Kenichi 西澤健一	Sonate for Flute, Oboe, and Harp	2007	Flute, Oboe, Harp	Japanese
Nishizawa, Kenichi 西澤健一	Trio for Oboe, Horn, and Piano op. 27	2002	Oboe, Horn, and Piano	Japanese
Ohmasa, Naoto 大政直人	<i>Love Song</i>	1991	Oboe, Piano	Japanese
Rhie, Kay	<i>Minyo Fragments</i>	2003	Oboe, String Trio	South Korean
Sargon, Simon	<i>Homage to Hafiz</i>	2005	Oboe, Piano	Indian/Israeli
Shinohara, Makoto 篠原 真	<i>Obsession</i> for Solo Oboe	1960	Oboe	Japanese
Srinivasan, Asha	<i>Braiding</i>	2017	Oboe and Electronics	Indian
Sung, Stella	<i>Moods of the Pacific</i>	1998	Soprano, Oboe, Bassoon, Piano	Chinese-American
Takemitsu, Tōru 武満徹	<i>Entre-Temps</i> for Oboe Quartet		Oboe, Violin, Viola, Cello	Japanese

Tsang, Lok-Yan	<i>Music Manga Gallery</i>	2020	Oboe, Cello, Keyboard	Hong Konger
Tsui, Meilina	<i>Piece for Reed, Rosin, and Mallet</i>	2023	Oboe, Cello, and Percussion	Kazakhstani/Hongkonger
Tsui, Meilina	<i>Dancing Shades and Echoes</i>	2016	Oboe, Clarinet, Horn, Violin, and Piano	Kazakhstani/Hongkonger
Ung, Chinary អ៊ុង ឈីណារី	<i>KHMERASPORA triptych</i>	2023	Oboe Soloist, String Ensemble, 2 percussionists, Singer/Speaker (I & II), and Khmer Pinpeat Ensemble (III)	Cambodian
Ung, Chinary អ៊ុង ឈីណារី	<i>Tall Wind</i>	1970	Soprano, Flute, Oboe, Cello, and Guitar	Cambodian
Yamashita, Koji 山下弘治	Sonata for Oboe and Piano	2004	Oboe, Piano	Japanese
Yano, Marco Aurélio	Oboe Concerto	1991	Oboe, Electronics, Orchestra	Japanese-Brazilian
Yasuhide, Ito 作曲家 伊藤康英	Sonata for Oboe and Piano	2017	Oboe, Piano	Japanese
Yoshida, Chizuko 吉田千鶴子	<i>Cirrus</i>	~1950	Oboe, Piano	Japanese
Yoshida, Chizuko 吉田千鶴子	<i>Light Snow</i>	~1950	Oboe, Piano	Japanese
Yun, Du 杜韻	<i>Angel's Bone</i>	2015	Oboe, Tam-Tam	Chinese-American
Yun, Isang 윤이상	<i>Ost-West Miniature I</i>	1994	Oboe, Violin, Viola, Cello	South Korean
Yun, Isang 윤이상	<i>Piri</i>	1971	Oboe	South Korean