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Original article

Fujianese Provincial Brass Band Traditions of Chinese Immigrant Musicians in New York City: *The Chinese Voices*

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Abstract. This article focuses on the Chinese Voices Wind Orchestra. Fujianese brass band musicians immigrated to New York and changed Chinatown's musical soundscape. The bands perform mainly inside or on the street outside of funeral parlors on Canal and Mulberry Streets. Their profession is mainly that of a funeral musician. They also travel to Philadelphia or Washington, D.C. for rites. They accompany families and decedents to cemeteries to play special repertoire. After the burial they perform songs of prosperity at receptions in restaurants. They maintain a wide repertoire of funeral songs and national marches. Funeral performances are a hidden music tradition performed at a sacred place for a sacred function, not intended for the public. Passers-by though observe bands performing outdoors when a coffin is brought to the hearse. There is a display of music and drama at this moment, for bands' sounds transform the Downtown neighborhood into a Taoist aura. Bands came to perform adjacent to traditional Chinese instruments and at funerals as early as 1908, during the late Qing Dynasty influenced by the European imperial tradition. Today Chinese brass bands are

Научная статья

Традиции духового оркестра провинции Фуцзянь у китайских музыкантов-иммигрантов в Нью-Йорке: «Китайские голоса»

ДЖОЗЕФ С. КАМИНСКИЙ

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Аннотация. Эта статья посвящена духовому оркестру «Китайские голоса». Музыканты фуцзяньского ансамбля медных духовых, эмигрировавшие в Нью-Йорк, изменили звуковое пространство китайского квартала (Чайнатауна). Группы выступают в основном в похоронных бюро или рядом с ними на улицах Канал и Малберри. Большинство исполнителей по профессии — музыканты похоронного оркестра. Также они ездят в Филадельфию или Вашингтон (Округ Колумбия) для проведения обрядов. Сопровождая умерших и их семьи на кладбища, исполняют особый репертуар, а после погребений — на поминках в ресторанах — песни о достатке. У них обширный репертуар погребальных песен и национальных маршей. Игра на похоронах — сакральная музыкальная традиция исполнения в священных местах в ходе ритуальных обрядов, не предназначенная для публики. Однако прохожие могут наблюдать за выступлением оркестров на открытом воздухе, когда гроб несут к катафалку. В этот момент идёт музыкально-драматическое представление, и эти звуки преображают центр Нью-Йорка, привнося дух даосизма. Подобные ансамбли выступали вместе с исполнителями на народных китайских инструментах ещё

transnational, and Fujianese bands bring the genre of a European brass band to New York in a Chinese interpretation of nationalism.

в 1908 году, во времена поздней династии Цин, находившейся под влиянием европейской имперской традиции. Сегодня китайские духовые ансамбли транснациональны, а в Нью-Йорке жанр европейского духового оркестра преподносится фуцзяньскими оркестрами в китайской национальной интерпретации.

Keywords:

Fujianese, Chinatown, Chinese Music, Funeral Music, Chinese Immigration, Transnationalism, Urban Ethnomusicology, Brass Bands, National Music

Ключевые слова:

Фуцзянь, китайский квартал (Чайнатаун), китайская музыка, погребальная музыка, китайская иммиграция, транснационализм, городская этномузыкология, духовые оркестры, национальная музыка

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Brass Bands in Chinatown

This article addresses the ongoing Fujianese-Chinese brass band tradition of immigrant musicians living and working as professionals in the Chinatowns of New York City. The bands mainly perform inside and on the street outside of the Chinese funeral parlors on Canal and Mulberry Streets in Manhattan (photo 1). The profession is mainly funeral musician, as bands travel also to Flushing, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Boston for funeral rites. They often accompany families and decedents to cemeteries where they play a special repertoire, and then they go to the receptions at restaurants where they perform happy songs of prosperity. The bands also perform for Chinese community ceremonies and association banquets, in all, performing a wide repertoire of funeral songs and national marches. Funeral performances are hidden to the public, due to them being performed in a sacred place for a sacred function and not intended for nonparticipants. Although, passers-by observe, often in amazement, the Chinese bands blowing outside a funeral home when a coffin is brought out to be placed into the hearse. The display of music and drama here is remarkable, for the bands' sounds transform the Downtown New York neighborhood into a Taoist aura of spirits. The author enters the funeral parlors to participate with the hidden music, and he travels as a professional trumpeter with the bands performing with them. This musical privilege gave him ethnomusicological access to the cultural domain, and with the permission of the musicians, I, the author, began research.

Chinese brass bands have been either overlooked or understudied in all of the fields of musicology, although they traditionally have been a widespread musical domain in China since the late nineteenth-century, originally under Yuan Shikai in the Qing Army since 1898, or in Robert Hart's recreational band, possibly since 1885

Photo 1. Hua Sheng Guan Yuetuan performing at a funeral. Flushing, New York, 2018 [credit: Joseph S. Kaminski]

[1; 2; 3; 4; 5]. China was never a colony of Britain, but it maintained international treaty ports [6, p. 241] through which Britain introduced the brass band tradition, first to Shanghai[1], and later to Tianjin and Beijing [3].[2] The modern Chinese military band came from the Prussian tradition and was taught to recruited Chinese military bandsmen by Prussian band directors, one of them known only as Goldstar.[3]

The current Chinese musicians in Chinatown learned their national music in China and brought their premigration values, attitudes, and customs to New York [7, p. 11]. Similar to the military bands of the People's Republic of China, the Chinatown musicians usually double on Western brass instruments and Chinese traditional instruments such as the *erhu* (fiddle), *suona* (oboe), *sheng* (mouth organ), *pipa* (pear-shaped lute), and *yueqin* (moon-shaped lute). They switch instruments for different functions. The brass instruments are typically trumpets, trombones, baritone horns, tubas, alto saxophones, tenor saxophones, and the band's usual percussion of snare drum, bass drum, and cymbals. Cymbals are replaced on certain songs by a gong. Women equally perform on percussion and brass instruments. The musicians primarily are of recent Fujianese immigrant descent and older Cantonese immigrant decent. Mostly they are Fujianese, hailing from Fuzhou City; their language is Hujiuwa, which in Mandarin is pronounced *Fuzhouhua*. The Fujianese musicians have immigrated to New York since 1993, after the shipwreck of the *Golden Venture* with 300 illegal immigrants onboard. It ran ashore on the Rockaway Peninsula of Queens, New York. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services since then safeguarded Chinese immigration from Fujian Province.[4] Stories for this article of individual musicians were neither obtained nor solicited other than those from their musical experience.

This article is a transnationalist study that underlies a principle of immigrants maintaining their national values across borders. The transnational domain of

the study is Downtown and Lower East Side, Manhattan, New York City. This neighborhood is walking distance from the New York Stock Exchange on Wall Street and the World Trade Center, the site of the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. Funerals were suspended the morning of 9/11 midway. This area of town along Mulberry Street in Chinatown intersects the former site of the notorious Five Points, the most poverty-ridden and overpopulated neighborhood from the 1830s until around 1900 [8; 9]. The former Five Points and the Chinatown funeral music domain now intersect the site of the United States Southern District Supreme Courthouse, as well as a newly developed Chinatown that emerged from Chinese business opportunities since the 1850s.

Mulberry Street is lined with funeral parlors that serve the Chinese communities: Buddhist, Taoist, and Christian. Some funeral homes used to be Italian run, particularly Wah Wing Sang Funeral Corp., which now combines two buildings that were once part of Little Italy: the Banco Italia (1881) built and managed by Antonio Cuneo,[5] and Bacigalupo Funeral Home (1888) founded by Carlo Bacigalupo [10] (photo 2). An Italian-American brass band, the Red Mike Festival Band, led by trumpeter Michael Acampora (1913–2004) and taken over by his widow Louise Acampora until her retirement in 2018, was continuing to perform funeral services at this funeral home when I came onto the Chinatown scene in 2006 [11, p. 9]. It was sold by Bacigalupo's family in 1976 to Chinese owners.

A tradition of Italian brass bands performing Christian hymns for Chinese funerals in Chinatown was already firmly established. Two *New York Times* articles from 1964 [12, p. 11] and 1976 [13, p. 41] include photographs of what they called "The Mulberry Street Band," performing on the street during Chinese funerals. In the 1976 article, one bandsman said, they play "everything from *fiestas* to funerals," *fiestas*

Photo 2. The old Banco di Italia [left] and Bacigalupo Funeral Home [right] in Chinatown, now combined as Wah Wing Sang Funeral Corp. [credit: Joseph S. Kaminski. Mulberry Street, New York, NY, 2013]

referring to the Roman-Catholic feasts of neighboring Little Italy. In the 1964 article, the band played the Christian hymn "Nearer My God to Thee" outside the apartment of the late Mr. Lee Eng at 112 Mulberry Street near Canal. Information about the Italian-American funeral bands is difficult to find, being that they were a secretive tradition – a guild. The *Times* reporter gathered that "the elderly bandsmen were reluctant to talk, other than to acknowledge that they were a pick-up group available for funerals in that section of the city where Chinese and Italians have always lived in harmonious relationship." One of the cornetists guessed that the old custom started years ago because the Italians "liked to play and the Chinese liked to listen."

Trombonist Carmine Venezia (d. 1993) led the funeral band before Mike Acampora, Acampora taking over in 1993. The Red Mike Festival and Funeral Band later changed owners with a new name after Ms. Acampora's retirement in 2017. The band continues to provide Christian and classical music for the Chinese funerals, mainly for the descendants of long time Cantonese families in New York and Wenzhounese Chinese who come from a predominantly Christianized province in Mainland China, known unofficially as "China's Jerusalem." [14] The Italian and Fujianese bands had mixed at one time at the same funerals when I joined, but this practice has been solely taken over by the Fujianese bands for the Taoist funerals, which is a transnational practice, from the older folk religion of Fujian Province [15].

In 1997, with the influx of Fujianese immigrating to the United States, the Fujianese bands set up band offices in Manhattan's Eastern Chinatown, a predominantly Fujianese business section of the Lower East Side, in Two Bridges, a different locale than the older Cantonese section of Downtown that was established with the arrival of Cantonese merchants in the 1850s, along Mott Street [16, ix]. The Fujianese-Chinatown musicians acquired their musical training in military and police academies. This Chinese military brass band-cultural paradigm fits Trevor Herbert's model of the development of British brass band-culture in nineteenth-century England: military music influenced civilian life and configures brass band performances [17, p. 49]. The Chinatown band musicians likewise wear military or police-style uniforms in line with the People's Liberation Army and Police. Fred Gales [18] stated that between the two world wars, Chinese warlords maintained their own bands, after the modern Chinese military precedent set by Yuan Shikai [1]. Bands' movements made the bands popular in the countryside, where civilian versions of military bands formed in towns for public ceremonial functions, recreation, and entertainment. These bands continued throughout the People's Republic of China after 1949, to the time of this writing. They are still maintained throughout the provincial Chinese countrysides, and now in New York City, with band musicians hailing from Fujian.

The premier Fujianese brass band in New York City is the "Chinese Voices Wind Orchestra" (*Hua Sheng Guan Yuetuan* in Mandarin). In Chinese, *guan* means "pipe," referring to the tubes of the brass instruments of the band (Photograph 1). The Chinese bands do not use woodwind instruments, for saxophones are technically brass instruments played with a reed in the mouthpiece. Saxophones really are regarded as "brass" instruments.

Hua Sheng organized in Chinatown in 1997 to perform at the Fujianese ceremonies, banquets, and funerals. *Hua Sheng* has been serving the Fujianese immigrant community of New York since that time, with the number of Fujianese associations growing. A second Fujianese band broke off and organized in 2014 for business competition, and later bands appeared and disappeared through the years. In 2019 a third band formed as a break off from the second with members leaving and forming a new corporation wherein profits are shared. At the time of

this writing, this third band acquired the most work, but the second band acquired larger scale jobs on a less frequent basis. I perform regularly with *Hua Sheng*, but I also substitute and play utility trumpet roles in the other bands. I, like the overlapping Chinese musicians who freelance in all of the bands, am allowed to accept and then obligated to stay with the first job I am called for, not to create a conflict by cancelling an accepted job for a later one. At least seventy brass band musicians freelance in Chinatown in this manner, so there are plenty of musicians to draw from. I frequently am called because I regularly transcribe the Chinese *jianpu* numerical notation of the funeral songs to five-line staff notation for the freelancing American, European, and Japanese musicians, who also are hired to perform at the large scale funerals.[6]

It is the general cultural practice to have a large number of musicians for a funeral of an important person, so at large scale funerals, the various competing bands are hired together to fill the ranks. On June 5, 2021, 100 musicians were lined up on Canal Street near East Broadway for the funeral of an important man of the community: ten bands with ten musicians in each, for ten is the best number in the culture, being a complete number. The pay may come from the decedent's estate, or paid for by friends and family as gifts to the decedent, not only signifying his or her importance, but to act traditionally in the metaphysical aspect of the religion: the powerful sound of the brass bands functions as a sound barrage to sonically deter evil spirits of the animist religion from harming the decedent's soul. I found that this function of the power of bands falls under an earlier paradigm for African music and sound barrage, outlined twenty years prior, in the Asante Region of Ghana.[7]

There is no rule prohibiting foreign musicians such as myself coming into the Chinese bands, even for a sacred function, especially when they enhance the gift of a family or friend in giving an added sound barrage. Foreigners have always been affiliated with Chinese brass bands. The Shanghai Municipal Band was made up mostly of Filipinos and Europeans, and there was an introduction of brass instrument playing to Robert Hart's band by the Portuguese cornetist E.E. Encarnaçao [19, p. 84]. Furthermore, the new Chinese military bands were taught by Prussian bandsmen [4].

Overview of Chinese Funeral Brass Bands and Repertoire

The first Western military band of the modern Chinese army was formed in 1897 by Zhang Zhidong, the Governor of Hebei and Hunan. He hired a Prussian bandmaster to train fifteen members in music and marching [19, p. 84–85]. Zhang's band was in response to China's modernization of its military after a consequential defeat by the Japanese in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895. Yuan Shikai formed bands in Tianjin a year later in 1898, and it was Yuan who had the most influence on the development of Western military bands throughout the Chinese armies [4]. After researching papers written in the 1940s and 1950s by Professors Hong Pan, published by Zhongqing in 1942, and Zhang Jinhong, who commented on Hong Pan's work in 1955, Han Kuo-huang reveals in an article, which is now at the Central Conservatory of Music, that the first written reference to a brass band performing at a Chinese funeral was in 1908, for the funeral of the Chinese Emperor Guangxu. The band, probably Robert Hart's band, performed "Old Black Joe," and "John Brown's Body," [Ibid.] which are two nineteenth-century American popular classics composed by Stephen Foster and William Steffe respectively [Ibid.]. Fred Gales stated that the warlords who emerged after Yuan's death in 1916 spread their military bands throughout the countrysides, and the troops' fame and movements popularised military-civilian bands in the villages [18]. I surmise from my collection of Chinese military-civilian band

Image 1. Chinese Funeral (The Band and Chief Mourner). Shanghai [© Mactavish & Co. Ltd, c. 1930]

videos from WeChat groups [20] that the current village bands are survivals of this older tradition that originally spread by the warlords. Such bands still exist and perform and carry out functions for funerals and public ceremonies.

Military-civilian brass bands more evidently remained popular after the unification of the Republic of China in 1928, particularly funeral bands. Francesca Tarocco indicates that a Buddhist funeral in 1931, of one of Shanghai's wealthiest men, included Buddhist chants and a brass band [21, p. 109], I find, in the manner of Buddhist funerals in the Chinatowns of New York. Also, a photograph of a Shanghai brass band from the 1930s appears on a postcard with the caption, "Chinese Funeral (The Band and Chief Mourner)" (Image 1).

A 1937 film, *Malu Tianshi* (Street Angels),[8] about life on the streets of Shanghai in the 1930s under Chinese Republicanism, portrays a performance of a Chinese military-civilian funeral brass band. The band's performance is seen at the beginning. It is part of a funeral procession through Shanghai's urban streets. The brass band is followed by a band of Buddhist monks sounding Chinese traditional string and wind instruments (*sizhu*, silk and bamboo ensemble). In the film, the band is performing John Philip Sousa's "Manhattan Beach," reflecting evidently the influence of the United States Navy Band and Western brass instruments in Nationalist China after 1928, during a period of focused American interest and investment [22, p. 324].

In *Malu Tianshi*, the simultaneous performance in the procession of the brass band with the Buddhist *sizhu* is typical of the way the brass bands and the *sizhu* groups perform on the streets of New York City when a casket is brought out from a funeral home. This is a premigration value of musical sound that has meaning in the home country, in Mainland China, and particularly in the provinces. Here, it is a funeral practice that derives from Taoism in the Minnan region (southeastern Fujian) and it carries over into Buddhism. Kenneth Dean states

that there is a considerable overlapping of ritual function between Taoism and Buddhism in the countryside [15, p. 100]. The sonic value in Chinatown of simultaneous performances thus carries over from Fujian, from an older Taoist practice. While the clashing of ensembles' sounds may appear to listeners as harsh and discordant, in sum, Bell Yung states that in Taoist ritual there is a gray area between music and noise, and that non-musical sonic events like that of the performance simultaneities of Chinese funeral bands have a ritual significance [23, p. 16]. Although, Yung was describing the sounds made by percussive instruments, he had not conducted fieldwork in the contribution of the brass band sound to the texture. He states that a clear distinction between music and noise is problematic [Ibid., p. 17], as the distinction between the brass band songs and their clash with the other ensembles shows there is meaning to the clash of sounds.

Many musical bystanders comment on how such a simultaneous performance of Chinese ritual and brass bands create a sonic event that they are already familiar with in the orchestral works of American composer Charles Ives (1874–1954), particularly in his *Country Band March* (1904) and *Putnam's Camp* (1912) [24, p. 101–104]. Ives got his musical idea of portraying the simultaneous performances of American brass bands in a single work of composed music from his boyhood memories, hearing the sound of two brass bands intentionally arranged by his father, the American Civil War bandsman, George E. Ives (1845–1894), to march in opposite directions and pass each other while performing different march tunes in clashing dissonance [Ibid., p. 16]. Ives' philosophy about composing this type of sonic texture in a work is simply to compose "not something that happens, but the way something happens."[9] Thus, such an approach to musical analysis is what ethnomusicologists seek, understanding the way music happens as in the case of sound barrages among the Asante [25] and currently in Chinatown. To the Asante, when several ensembles play simultaneously, it is a representation of spiritual power

Photo 3. Hua Sheng Guan Yuetuan and suona players on East Broadway as they send-off a funeral motorcade to the cemetery [credit: John Huang]

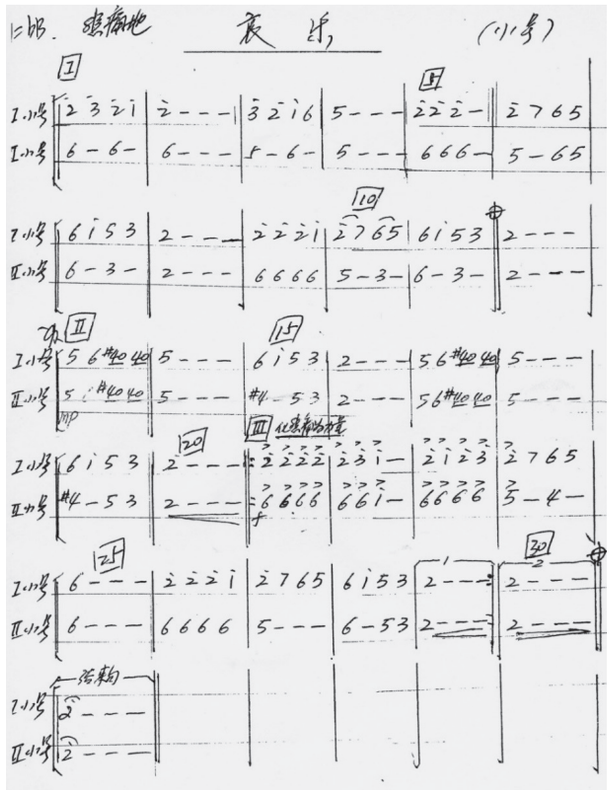
as ensembles make staggered entrances beginning separate songs in order. This results in a simultaneous performance of separate songs, an ancient aesthetic performed to protect the Asante kingdom and the ancestors. The "sound barrage" is believed to act in the metaphysical world, for there is a spirit in the sound. In the case of Taoist funerals, noise creates such a sonic barrier to caste off evil spirits from sacred events, the way firecrackers do. Firecrackers are illegal in New York but allowed at the funerals in Philadelphia. The addition of military styled bands at Taoist funerals is the twentieth-century replacement of the traditional buffalo horns blown by the priests in China to summon spirit soldiers to protect the soul of the decedent [15, p. 40]. The twentieth-century funeral event already had been transformed in Fujian to embrace the Western military style bands that became popular across the country. This premigration value, attitude, and custom [7, p. 11], transnationally diffused with Fujianese culture to New York. Photograph 3 is of *Hua Sheng* and *suona* players creating the Chinese funeral music soundscape on East Broadway as they send-off a funeral motorcade to the cemetery.

Chinese funeral brass bands maintain a twentieth-century repertoire, the earliest modern military dirges coming from the World War II era that mourn the Chinese war martyrs. For the Chinese, this war is known as the War of Chinese Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. The foremost dirge of this period is *Ai Yue*, which means, "Sorrowful Music," or just "Funeral," and it is performed at every funeral of this tradition prior to the beginning of the ceremony proper, after the band had already performed several songs for the decedent alone in the chapel. *Ai Yue* was composed in 1945 by Luo Lang. Lang heard the local theme of mourning sung and played by the villagers near *Jin cha ji gen ju di* when he visited the site of a Chinese military base located between Shandong and Hebei that was destroyed by the Imperial Japanese Army. All of the platooned Chinese troops had been killed[10]. Lang scored *Ai Yue*, based on this traditional funeral song, for military band. It is the first Chinese military funeral song of this rank.

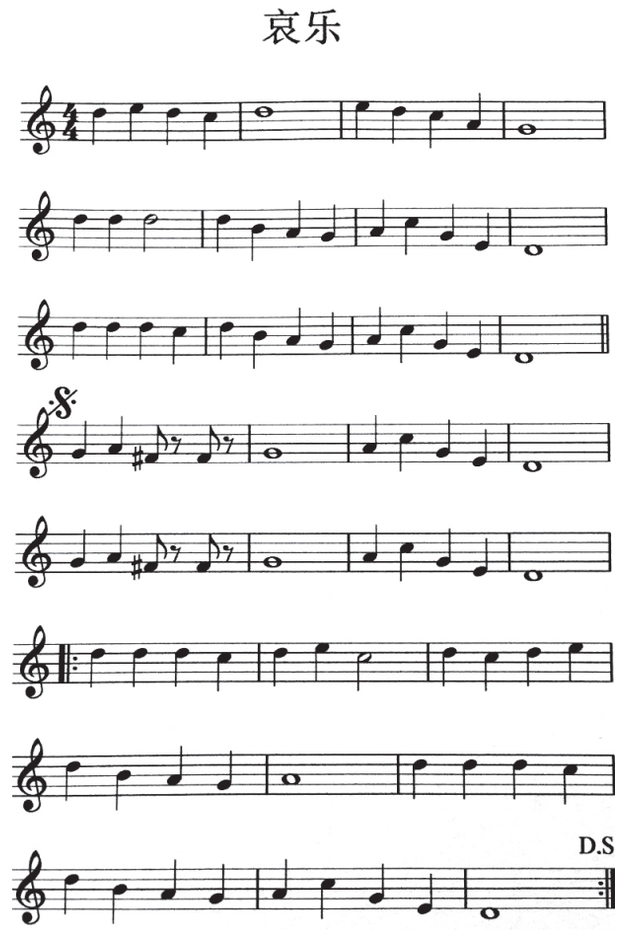
After the Chinese People's Revolution in 1949 and the founding of the People's Republic, Mao Zedong with the Chinese Communist Party saw the value of *Ai Yue* in honoring the soldiers of the war at their funerals. Funeral ceremonies still honor them in the twentieth-first century, many of which are in New York City. *Ai Yue* also was performed at the funeral of Mao Zedong in 1977[11].

Soldiers who served in the People's Liberation Army and those elders who lived through the War reach their moment of passing these days to enter into the ancestral world through the Taoist portal while being fulfilled by their China Motherland for what they have given to her. Performing *Ai Yue* is the highest honor for someone who has served China. Such honor also includes that for retired soldiers of the Sino-Vietnamese War of 1979, many of whom are of the older generation and passing these days. It is the attitude of the Chinese people to honor their soldiers, living and deceased, and it is their custom to do so in a traditional ceremony. This is their premigration value, attitude, and custom that maintains their transnationality with their homeland, and it makes New York City a cross sectional community where the sound of the Chinese military-civilian bands transform Manhattan. Katherine Brucher and Suzel Ana Reily have commented on this type of musical event, for the fact that these types of bands typically perform in public places, they are well suited to reconfigure the social geography of a place's space by their sound [26, p. 18].

Example 1 and Example 2 are transcriptions of *Ai Yue*, the first in *jianpu* numerical notation as given to me to learn by Chinatown band musicians when I joined my first team in 2015. The second is of my transliteration of the 1st trumpet part from *jianpu* to five-line staff notation. The bands' music notation system is exclusively *jianpu*, which literally means, "simplified scale,"



Example 1. Jianpu musical notation of the 1st and 2nd trumpet parts for Ai Yue (Sorrowful Music) composed by Luo Lang (1945) based on a traditional Chinese funeral song from Jin cha ji gen ju di [notation credit: Anonymous]



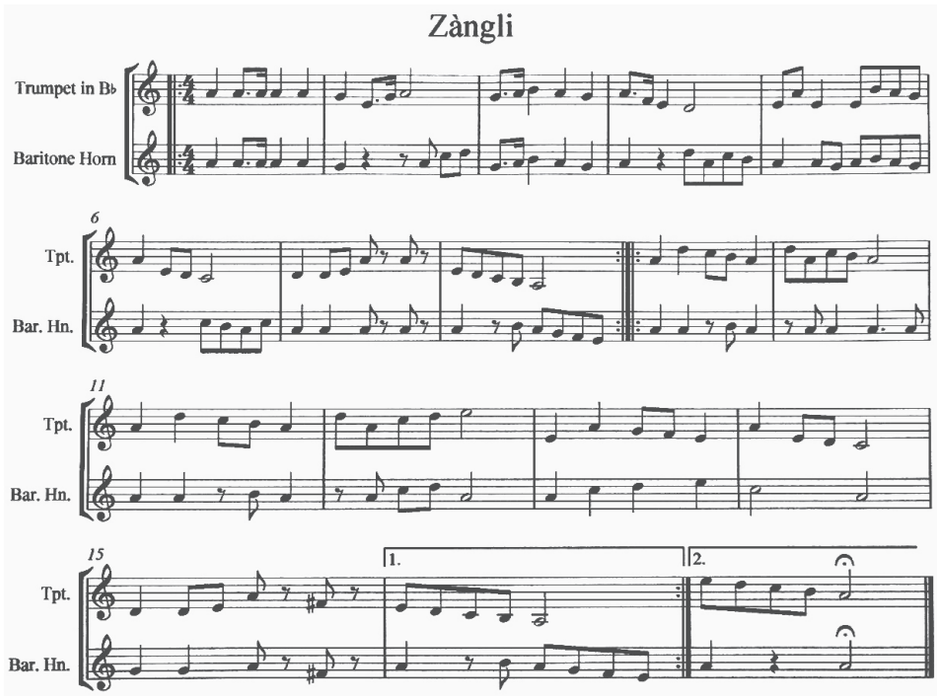
Example 2. 1st B-flat trumpet part for Ai Yue (Sorrowful Music) composed by Luo Lang (1945) transliterated from the jianpu musical notation of the New York Chinatown musicians by the author Joseph S. Kaminski (2015)

and it is written in numbers with moveable *do*, 1 being *do*, etc. *Jianpu* notation includes dots and dashes to indicate duration [27]. Example 1 is *jianpu* scored for 1st and 2nd trumpets, or an alto saxophone may play the 2nd part. The key is indicated as B-flat.

Another important military funeral song of the Chinese brass bands is *Zangli*, which means "Funeral," its full title being *Zangli Jinxingqu*, literally meaning "Funeral March." It was composed by Li Tongshu in 1947 to commemorate again the war martyrs, and it also was maintained by Chairman Mao as military funeral music. It also may be regarded as the foremost of the Chinese military brass band funeral dirges, for it is performed more often that *Ai Yue*. Li took his musical inspiration for *Zangli Jinxingqu* from Frédéric Chopin's *Marche funèbre* in the third movement of Piano Sonata no. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 35. *Zangli Jinxingqu* is in simple binary form (AABB) that repeats if needed. It is played once at the beginning of a funeral and then reprised as many times as needed on the street in front of the funeral home when the coffin is carried to the hearse. The bands' songs, as shown in the five-line staff notation of *Zangli* (Example 3) are in two-part counterpoint wherein trumpets and alto saxophones play the melody, and baritone horn, trombones, tenor saxophones, and tuba

play the tenor lines. The reader must heed that Example 3 is scored for B-flat trumpet and baritone horn, the most frequently used instruments. The key here is B-flat, so thus the B-flat trumpet part is written and read a Major 2nd higher from the sounding pitch, and the baritone horn parts are customarily written and read in treble clef a Major 9th higher from the sounding pitch. Harmony notes often are added at liberty by a 2nd trumpet or alto saxophone.

Zangli and *Ai Yue* are the two military dirges performed at the Chinese funerals by the brass bands. They are the most important and most played songs, performed at certain points of a funeral. Other Chinese songs maintained by the funeral brass bands are more recent and of a popular or romantic character, very often romanticizing the love of friendship and the world, a premigration value, attitude, and custom from the Motherland, China. Many are from the post-Mao decades, including songs of filial piety. Thus, important songs normally performed in the chapel for a decedent before a ceremony are *Fuqin* (Father) (c. 1992) written by Che Xing and Qi Jianbo, and *Muqin* (Mother) (c. 2004), also written



Example 3. Five-line staff notation of Zangli Jinxingqu (Funeral Music) composed by Li Tong Shu (1947) transliterated from the jianpu musical notation of the New York Chinatown musicians by the author Joseph S. Kaminski (2015).

by Che Xing and Qi Jianbo[12]. An older song of filial piety from 1958 is *Shi shang zhi you mama hao*, which means "The world only has a good mother," written by the collective of Liu Hongyuan, Lin Guoxiong, Li Xieqing, and Cai Zhennan. This song is less frequently performed, and when it is, it comes later after *Muqin*. Other songs of filial piety are the more recent *Mama de wen* (Mommy's kiss) written by Gu Jianwen and Fu Lin (c. 1996), and *Xiang die Niang* (Missing Mommy) composed by Fu Feishe (c. 2018)[13].

General songs of love and passion performed by *Hua Sheng* are manifold and pass through trends ceasing and then returning. In their 2020–2021 repertoire *Hua Sheng* performed *Mei hua lei* (Plum blossom tear) written by Liu Yimin and Liu Haidong

(c. 2017), *Song bie* (Farewell) (2003) composed by Li Jie who is the musical director and 1st trombonist of *Hua Sheng*, *Hao ren yi sheng ping an* (A good person's life is peaceful) written by Yi Ming and Lei Lei (c. 1990), *Bie ye nan* (Do not be also difficult) written by He Zhanhoa and Li Shangyi (c. 1988), *Yi lian you meng* (A curtain, a quiet dream) written by Liu Liachang and Qiong Yao and based on a novel of the same title in 1973, *Ke wang* (Longing) written by Lei Lei and Yi Ming (c. 1990), *Ai de feng xian* (Love's dedication) written by Liu Shizhao and Huang Qishi (c. 1989), *Renjian di yi qing* (People love each other) written by Liu Qing and Yi Ming (c.1995), and *Mengjiang nu* (Lady Mengjiang) written by Wang Fulin, Chen Dieyi, and Fang Bian (c. 1980), based on the folk tale of the same name in which a wife brings her husband's clothes to the Great Wall where he was working with the construction team to find out he had died and was buried in the wall [28]. Her sobbing made the wall collapse and this story may bear part for why some spouses toss a decedent's clothes onto the coffin at the burial to wear in the afterlife.

A song requested by a family to be played at a parent's funeral in 2018 is *Tuo ling* (Camel bell). *Hua Sheng's* cymbal player Zou Bin incorporated *Tuo ling* into the band's repertoire, and it stayed. The song is very appropriate for the funerals of Chinese men and women who gave their service to China during the Sino-Vietnamese War of 1979. The song was originally written in 1980 by Wang Li Ping for the film *Ying pian dai shou kao de lu ke* (Handcuffed traveler). Being that the song is in the collective memory of the generation of soldiers who served in 1979, it was brought back to the public spotlight in 2017 as a musical addition to a new film, *Fang hua* (Young Chinese adult) that tells stories of comradery among the military troops who served in that war. Comradery undeniably is a Chinese value and attitude maintained in the funeral music of this generation, many of whom are in New York City.

At a ceremony's end in the funeral home, *Hua Sheng* performs *Tong bie* (Do not be pained) when it processes past the coffin and the musicians bow to the decedent before bowing to the family standing left of the coffin. Musical director Li Jie told me that *Tong bie* has no known composer, but is a stock funeral melody performed in *Minju* theater performances during funeral scenes, actors and musicians making sure the audience knows that a funeral is taking place onstage.

At the burials in the cemeteries to which bands travel with the family and hearse, the bands play *Zangli* when the coffin is carried from the hearse to the grave. Bands here also perform some of the same songs that they play in the funeral homes. At the height of the burial ceremony, the band alternates in a musical repartee with the cantor performing the ceremony — a repeated catch phrase called *Da kong pi*, literally meaning "hit the community skin," which I gather to mean "hit the communal drum." Li Jie again told me that *Da kong pi* also is from *Minju* theater during burial scenes. It has an ancient value that many musician colleagues did not realize, but Li Jie did.

Suona and percussion perform as a trio, and their interludes alternate with the band throughout cemetery performances. They then play simultaneously with the brass band when the family and friends throw their flowers onto the coffin. Often, two brass bands will go to the cemetery for the burial and play simultaneously at this moment as well. Cheerful songs are played here by a band or bands at a burial's conclusion. *Hua Sheng* usually first performs *You yi zhi hua* (Flower of friendship), a song for group singing composed by Ye Wei and Li Weicai in 1973. Then when the flower tossing begins, *Hua Sheng* performs *Xiang jian xiao lu* (A small country road) written in 1978 by Ye Jiaxu.

The final part of a funeral day, after a burial, involves the band going to the restaurant of the reception to play a cheerful song before family and friends eat dinner. Sometimes the band eats with the family as guests

at the dinner. Here, *Hua Sheng* performs a standard national song that is appropriate every time: *Zu guo nian nian hao* (The Motherland every year is good) by Yi Miaoying, a woman soldier (c. 2008). If there are two *Hua Sheng* bands working together on a particular day, the second band will perform *Yang mao jian zi ka cha cha* (Wool sheers click), originally an Australian sheep wool sheering song, later adapted by the Chinese as a work song in Inner Mongolia for sheep wool sheering. Several years ago at the restaurants, *Hua Sheng* was performing a 2009 sixtieth year anniversary song of the People's Republic of China called *Zui xuan min zu feng* (The most dazzling national trend), written by Zhang Chao. *Zu guo nian nian hao* replaced it in their repertoire in 2017.

For the Fujianese Christian funerals, *Hua Sheng* maintains a separate hymn repertoire, some hymns with changed, translated titles from the English and played on the brass instruments and percussion. Christian hymns include *Qiyi endian* (Amazing Grace), *Yu zhu geng qinjin* (Nearer My God to Thee), *Zan mu mei de* (In the Sweet By and By), *En you Yesu* (What a Friend We Have in Jesus), *Zhe shijie fei wo jia* (This World is not My Home), and *Rongmei jiaxiang* (Glorious Home). Unique to the Chinese hymn repertoire is *Yidian guo* (Kingdom of Eden). It is based the melody of an agricultural song written by Jin Yongdao for a 1970 North Korean film titled *Xianhua shengkai de cunzhuang (Village with Flowers in Bloom).* It became popularized with changed Chinese lyrics in Shenyang as *Shenyang ni she wo de gu shang* (Shenyang, you are my home). This song was later changed again in the 1990s to be the unique hymn *Yidian guo*[14].

For Buddhist funerals, *Hua Sheng* performs the same music as for the Taoist funerals, with the addition of Buddhist chant melodies played by the band - songs about *Namo Amitofo*, the Fujianese pronunciation of the Sanskrit *Namo Amitabha* that means "Southern Buddha," "Infinite Buddha," or "Endless Light." This appellation pertains to Guanyin (the Bodhisattva of Mercy) [27].

For parades and festive evening banquets, bands perform the Chinese national march repertoire, including *Huan ying* (Welcome march), *Ge chang zu guo* (Sing a song to the Motherland), *Zhou xiàng fu xing* (Walk toward renewal), *Ai wo Zhongguo* (Love my China), *Dan bing de ren* (Soldier people), and *Women zou zai da lu shang* (We go to the larger road above), a march from 1963. The Chinese brass bands in New York also perform the Chinese People's Republic Anthem (*Zhong hua ren min gong he guo guo ge*) composed by Nie Er in 1935 originally as "The March of the Volunteers" (*Yi yong jun Jinxingqu*) for the film *Fengyun ernu* (*Children of Troubled Times*)[15]. The Chinese national anthem is performed along with the American national anthem "The Star Spangled Banner" at Fujianese Association dinners and at the beginnings of Chinese holiday parades, many of which begin with a ceremony at Kim Lau Square located within Chatman Square, named after Benjamin Ralph Lau, a Chinese American World War II serviceman from Chinatown who lost his life running airstrikes against the Imperial Japanese in Papua New Guinea in 1944. All of *Hua Sheng's* service and activity thus play a role, with their music maintaining Chinese national values, attitudes, and customs in the USA.

Introduction to *Hua Sheng Guan Yuetuan* (The Chinese Voices Wind Orchestra)

I first encountered *Hua Sheng Guan Yuetuan*, informally meeting Zou Bin and the members, in 2006 at my first funeral with The Red Mike Festival Band. Zou and I remembered each other through the years, and I finally was asked to substitute and adjunct in her band in 2017, after I already had been freelancing with the Fujianese funeral bands since 2015. At the time of this writing, I am a regular trumpeter in her band and play every funeral. Zou plays the percussion instruments – cymbals, snare drum, and bass drum – and she also arranges events, calls members, and chooses the

band's songs; although, she does not regard herself as the leader. Zheng Xiuxiang is the leader of *Hua Sheng*, although he really is the Director Emeritus, founding the group in 1997 and attending important jobs to coordinate rather than to play his baritone horn. Photograph 4 is of three members of *Hua Sheng Guan Yuetuan*, with five members of The Red Mike Festival Band on an October morning in 2012, posing in front of a shop on East Broadway after the send-off of a funeral motorcade past a decedent's place of association. Zheng is the first on the right holding a baritone horn. Zou is third from the right, and I am fifth from the right. Louise Acampora, the widow of Mike Acampora and the leader of The Red Mike Festival Band, is second from the left.

I became more closely associated with Zou Bin on February 5, 2017, the day of the Lunar New Year Parade in Flushing, New York. I merely attended the parade with my

Photo 4. Members of Hua Sheng Guan Yuetuan and The Red Mike Festival Band posing in front of a shop on East Broadway after the send-off of a funeral motorcade [credit: Zou Bin, 2012]

camera and video recorder not knowing *Hua Sheng* would be there. Zou knew me and said I may photograph and film the band as well as follow it throughout the parade route to the end. I had not realized at the time that this was my *Hua Sheng* musical education, and I followed the band to more events after this date as I had gone deeper into the ethnomusicology of the field. Photograph 5 is a picture from this day, of Zou Bin toward the right, clashing cymbals, the photographer and percussionist John Huang toward the left hitting the bass drum, and Zheng Xiuxiang standing out of uniform in a black leather jacket to the photo's right. Zheng was there to coordinate the event, not to play. He also conducted *Hua Sheng* on a few of the songs on this day.

Zou Bin is always supportive of my ethnomusicology research in her band and repertoire. A few years ago she had arranged for me an interview with the director, Zheng Xiuxiang. When Zheng and I had dinner together in Flushing on August 26, 2019, Zheng instead brought a handwritten history of *Hua Sheng* already prepared to give to me. So, instead of interviewing, we dined and drank. Below is a translation of Zheng Xiuxiang's *Hua Sheng* history.

Photo 5. Hua Sheng Guan Yuetuan performing at the Lunar New Year Parade in Flushing. New York on February 5, 2017 [credit: Joseph S. Kaminski]

"Introduction to the American *Hua Sheng* Wind Orchestra. The American *Hua Sheng* Wind Orchestra was formed to carry forward the Chinese culture and prosper the new spirit of the Chinatown community in New York City. The American *Hua Sheng* Wind Orchestra is an amateur non-governmental organization formed by overseas Chinese in the United States. There are nearly forty members, and everyone has their own career. After twenty-five years working together to make our due contribution to the prosperity of the Motherland, to the reunification of the cause, to the development of various activities to serve the local Chinese Community, and to the enhancement of the friendship between the American and Chinese people, cooperation has become possible. The orchestra has focused on the following aspects:

"1) The American *Hua Sheng* Wind Orchestra participated in the parade of Hong Kong's return to the Motherland, which was held by the Fujian Association in 1997. It participated again in the float parade celebrating the 20th Anniversary of Hong Kong's Return to the Motherland organized by the Fujian Association of the United States in 2017.

"2) The American *Hua Sheng* Wind Orchestra participated in the celebration of the return of Macao, held by the Fujian Association in 1999.

"3) In 2003, The American *Hua Sheng* Wind Orchestra greeted Premier Wen Jiabao in New York. Mr. Zheng, the head of the orchestra, took a photo with Premier Wen.

"4) In 2006, President Hu Jintao came to speak at Yale University. Under the leadership of the Fujian Association of the United States, *Hua Sheng* adapted the tactic of 'sounding the east and hitting the west,' ingeniously dealing with protesters by diverting people's attention by our sound, so that it made the motorcade welcoming Chairman Hu pass safely and smoothly. The Consulate General awarded us a certificate in recognition.

"5) In 2008 when Beijing hosted the Olympic Games, the American *Hua Sheng* Wind Orchestra was sponsored $1000 and

was recorded and included in the 'Water Cube' monument for their commemoration. In the same year, a major earthquake occurred in Wenchuan, Sichuan Province, and the American *Hua Sheng* Wind Orchestra participated for two consecutive weeks in the fundraising activities of the Fujian Association in Chinatown, New York.

"6) In order to celebrate the '70th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China and the 40th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between China and the United States,' a concert of original music by overseas Chinese in the United States will be held in Chinatown, New York on September 15, 2019. The Wind Quintet "Passion Years" is the work of Li Jie, the deputy director and music director of the American *Hua Sheng* Wind Orchestra. (Head: Xiuxiang Zheng August 28, 2019)."

Li Jie the trombonist is the acting musical director of *Hua Sheng Guan Yuetuan*, and also the composer of *Song bie*, mentioned earlier. He is regarded to be the most accomplished musician of Chinatown. On August 19, 2006, a passer-by named Shen Lin posted a random video onto YouTube of a Chinese funeral procession on Mulberry Street that was approaching Worth Street. Shen's video is a welcomed contribution to Chinatown research and the readers' viewing; although, Shen did not give much information about it. The video is of *Hua Sheng Guan Yuetuan*, and the performed song is Li Jie's *Song bie*. Then, after numerous mourners process in the video, a Buddhist *sizhu* ensemble performs *Tong bie*, the Fujian funeral song from *Minju* theater mentioned earlier[16].

Li told me that he immigrated to the United Sates in 1993, and that he wrote *Song bie* in 2003. He regards himself as a Chinese-American composer, and he published a volume of his compositions in Fuzhou in 2005 titled *Love to My Motherland: Composing selection of Li Jie, American well-known composer*[17]. An English translation of his biography is printed on the liner notes. Li was born in 1951 in Changle City, Fujian Province. He studied at the Fujian Arts Academy from 1980–1982. In 1990 he entered the China Music Institute to study composition. Li has composed over three-hundred works of music, including instrumental, choral, dance, and soundtrack music as well as Fujianese opera. More than eighty of his compositions have been published and performed internationally, including on CCTV of America.

As indicated in Zheng's *Hua Sheng* history, *Hua Sheng* performed at Yale University in 2006 for the arrival of the Chinese President Hu Jintao (2003–2013). Photograph 6 is a scene of this performance, conducted by Li Jie to the photo's right holding his trombone on his arm. Zou Bin is the first snare drummer from the right. Her good friend and colleague Elaine Wong is the second snare drummer from the left.

Photo 6. Hua Sheng Guan Yuetuan performing at Yale University for the arrival of then Chinese President Hu Jintao [credit: John Huang, 2006]

Zou adds a graceful touch to all of *Hua Sheng's* events. Several years ago an overseas Chinese newspaper published about her, defining her character and place in Chinatown and summarizing her role within the Fujianese community. The report translates as follows:

"The well-known Minjiang River is the perfect world, and New York is a big city. Here we have the *Hua Sheng* Wind Orchestra

headed by a woman. The woman's class is stunning, wonderful, and beautiful, representing the elegant image of Eastern women. From beautiful and happy Fuzhou, they will participate in the 'Happy Spring Festival' with male artists of the New York area. They perform large scale overseas Chinese activities and have been serving the Chinese community, making positive contributions to mainstream society and promoting expression and appreciation of the arts. In the future, with much innovation and vertical and horizontal development, they will work heart-to-heart with the overseas Chinese community and gather together in harmony with an Eastern character of national art. This is a quintessential benchmark that contributes to the development of Sino-US cultural and artistic exchanges."[18]

Photograph 7 of *Hua Sheng Guan Yuetuan* was shot by John Huang in 2013 and used to commemorate the closing of the above described event. It reads, the 2013 North American Chinese People's 9th Celebration of the Lantern Festival sponsored by the American Fujianese Association.

Conclusions

China made the Western military band tradition its own and reinterpreted the performance domain to reflect Chinese values, not only in bands' performances of national songs but also in bands' performances at traditional funerals.

China's modern military music developed greatly right after World War II with funeral dirges written by Luo Lang and Li Tongshu. The mourning of war martyrs is a Chinese value reminding the Chinese people of the atrocities of imperialist intervention in the country as witnessed in the War of Chinese People's Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. These values are maintained even in New York City honoring Chinese

Photograph 7. Hua Sheng Guan Yuetuan performing for the North American Chinese People's 9th Celebration of the Lantern Festival sponsored by the American Fujianese Spring Festival. Chinatown, New York [credit: John Huang, 2013]

elders who died in New York but lived or served during the Chinese wars of the twentieth-century.

The Fujianese brass bands of New York's Chinatown are comprised of professional Chinese musicians who learned and performed music in their youth in the People's Republic of China. In New York they formed bands and preserve the Chinese brass band tradition as a custom.

Fujianese brass bands in America such as *Hua Sheng Guan Yuetuan* are a transnational musical phenomenon, wherein new immigrants of New York maintain their premigration values, attitudes, and customs, changing the New York soundscape by their musical aesthetics, whether at Taoist funerals or holiday parades. The Chinese Voices Wind Orchestra make New York City a more colorful city by their sound and style.

NOTES

[1] Bickers, "The Greatest Cultural Asset East of the Suez" [2]; cf. Liao, Yen Jen Yvonne, *Western Music and Municipality in 1930s and 1940s Shanghai*. Doctoral Thesis, King's College London, 2016.

[2] Han, "Hede yuedui yanjiu (A Study of Robert Hart's Orchestra)" [3] cf. Keith Robinson, *Sir Robert Hart: The Musician* (Lulu.com: All Rights Reserved — Standard Copyright License, 2020) [5].

[3] Han, "Zhongguo xiandai junyue zhaoshi chutan" (The Beginnings of Modern Chinese Military Music)" [4]; cf. Kaminski, *ICONI* [1].

[4] Peter Cohn, dir., *Golden Venture* (2006; York, Pennsylvania: Digital Projects in partnership with Strand Capitol Theater), DVD; cf. https://www.petercohn.com/project/golden-venture/.

[5] Anbinder, p. 372-3 [9]; cf. Ephemeral New York, "What remains of an 1881 bank at Mulberry Bend." https://ephemeralnewyork.wordpress.com/2018/10/22/what-remains-of-an-1881-bank-at-mulberry-bend/ (seen June 22, 2021).

[6] Only names and business names that I requested and received the expressed permission of are mentioned in this article. I did not request use of names or permission from everyone or every band, so I do not name them.

[7] Kaminski, *Asante Ntahera Trumpets in Ghana: Culture, Tradition, and Sound Barrage* [25]; cf. Kaminski J.S. Sound Barrage: Threshold to Asante Sacred Experience through Music. *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music.* 2014, No. 45/2, pp. 345–371.

[8] Street Angels 馬路天使 (1937) with English subtitles. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bepkAly1F9E&t=410s.

[9] Frank R. Rossiter, *Charles Ives and His America* [24, p. 103]; cf. Charles Ives, *Essays before the Sonata*. New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1920, 124 p. See p. 50.

[10] 哀乐https://zh.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%93%80%E4%B9%90 (seen June 29, 2021).

[11] 哀乐 Chinese Funeral Tune. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLb-bVTfkEI&t=5s.

[12] The translations of Chinese webpages of songs were done by Xu Min Cheng, a Chinese tutor at Hunter College of the City University of New York and my research assistant since 2017. Readers can find sources of the translated information by searching for the titles on the web. Any date preceded by c. means that the web was not clear to whether the given year is the date of copyright or recording.

[13] The songs have lyrics written by the lyricist credited second as song writer. The lyrics of the songs are neither included nor translated in this article due the complexity of their length. The lyrics are not song with the brass bands.

[14] This information was gathered from a number of different Chinese informants, both in New York Chinatown and in Mainland China via WeChat.

[15] The March of the Volunteers 义勇军进行曲 (1934). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6icFnCSF2yA (November 16, 2006).

[16] New York Chinatown Funeral, recorded and posted by Shen Lin (August 19, 2006). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iO98YHcIgcE (seen July 2, 2021).

[17] Li Jie, *Love to My Motherland: Composing selections of Li Jie, American well-known composer*. (Fuzhou: Fujian Huayue Printing Co., Ltd., 2005).

[18] From a newspaper announcement kept by Zou Bin.

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