
HONG-YU GONG *More than a bridge builder*

For around thirty years, from the early 1980s to the present day, Jack Body has been the single most powerful force in the introduction of China's multi-faceted musical culture to New Zealand.

As far as I can now reconstruct the sequence, Jack came to 'discover' Chinese music through Chinese composers; he came to Chinese composers through a preoccupation with sounds. Jack's acquaintance with Chinese music started in the early 1980s, if not earlier, when, as a co-organiser of the Asia Pacific Festival and Composers' Conference, he invited Chinese composers from Taiwan (Hsu Tsang-Houei), the United States of America (Chou Wenchung) and the People's Republic of China (Qu Wei and Ye Xiaogang) to Wellington.

A most original composer, Jack's approach to Chinese music is intuitive rather than cerebral. He looked at China from three different perspectives: first, his fascination with Asian traditional music and the contemporary compositional scene, which led him to conduct extended fieldwork in China's south and north-west and to have frequent contact with Chinese composers of different generations and diaspora; second, his interest in ethnomusicology, which enabled him to accumulate the data that would engender creative outputs; and third, his love of documenting, which would add an archival dimension to his efforts.

Jack has all the attributes to enable him to achieve what he has achieved: an insatiable curiosity; an irrepressible urge to make friends; an extremely easy and approachable personality that puts strangers at ease; an inexhaustible fund of energy; and, above all, a passionate and unshakeable conviction that what he does is interesting and that we should all know about it.

In the three decades that followed the first Asia Pacific Festival and Composers' Conference, Jack has organised numerous Chinese music-related events and activities — ranging over the fields of composition, performing arts, organology and ethnomusicology. The Chinese composers he has brought to New Zealand over the years include not only the so-called 'new wave' composers (such as the aforementioned Ye Xiaogang, Tan Dun, Qu Xiaosong and He Xuntian, but also the older mavericks like Gao Weijie. He introduced the works of younger composers like Qin Wenchen and Yang Xiaozhong to the New Zealand public. As recently as March 2014, despite his illness, he organised the performance of a new concerto for piano and traditional instruments by Gao Ping, and *Shi Bian Wu Huas* (*Ten Changes and Five Variables*) by Ye Xiaogang's student, Zou Hang. To a certain extent, Jack was also responsible for launching the international careers of some of the Chinese composers mentioned. For instance, it was largely due to Jack's effort that the orchestral work *Xijiangyue* (*The Moon over the West River*) by Ye Xiaogang, who was then a new graduate from the Central Conservatory of Music and now a vice-president of the Conservatory, was premièred by the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra in 1984. We must also remember that when Jack organised a Composer-in-Residence programme for Tan Dun in 1988, the latter was yet to become a world celebrity as he is now.

Composers aside, Jack's fascination with Chinese music saw him bring Chinese ethnomusicologists, story-tellers, ballad singers, Peking opera troupes and instrumentalists to New Zealand. He also edited, authored, or co-authored a

booklet on Chinese music and produced Chinese music CDs. The work he has done has been unprecedented.

I am able to vouch for Jack's tremendous contributions to Sino-New Zealand musical exchange because I have been involved in some of the major projects he initiated between 1986 and 1997.

I met Jack in November 1986 when he arrived in China for the first time to record the folk music of minority tribes. As his guide and interpreter for three months I was fortunate enough to have worked closely with him from December 1986 to February 1987, at which time we shot a film *Big Nose and Body Music*. Jack helped open my eyes to different ways of thinking about my own society and instilled in me, apart from other things, a deep respect for cultures that were different from my own.

In 1988 Jack was essential in enabling me to come to New Zealand to work as his research assistant for the preparation of the recordings and translations of Chinese courtship dialogues from Guiyang. This project resulted in a publication entitled *Aspects of Chinese Music — The Art of Negotiation: Teahouse Courtship Dialogues from Guiyang and Transcriptions of Vocal Polyphony of the Dong, Buyi, Zhuang, Yi, Mulao, Yao and She Minority Nationalities of China* (Wellington: Asia Pacific Archive, 1991) and a CD, *Music of the Open Air*.¹ In these publications Jack has provided valuable data for the study of ethnic minorities whose music had hardly been studied by the Chinese themselves at the time.

As a creative composer, Jack has also benefitted from this intimate and extended engagement with Chinese music. A number of pieces appeared in the following years, in particular the first movement (*Long-ge*) of his internationally acclaimed *Three Transcriptions*.

Although Jack's next field trip to China was not until 1997, his interest in all aspects of China's musical tradition led him to organise the Tianjin Chinese Opera Troupe's New Zealand tour in 1992 and the residence of Professor Zhang Xingrong of the Yunnan Arts Institute at Victoria University of Wellington in 1994–95. As the Auckland co-ordinator of the Tianjin Opera tour, I witnessed the patience and humility Jack had shown towards these temperamental performers and the heavy financial sacrifices he had made to make the tour a success. As a translator and research assistant for Zhang Xingrong during his residency at Victoria University, I was immensely touched by Jack's single-minded dedication to documenting China's multi-musical traditions, as evidenced by the resultant recordings, *South of the Clouds: Instrumental Music of Yunnan*, and *Songs of the minority nationalities of Yunnan*. In my last involvement in Jack's major project in 1997, I worked once again as his interpreter and research assistant during his research trip to China's north-west for the preparation of his opera, *Alley*. I saw at close hand in Langzhou and Zigong how Jack put his illiterate interviewees at ease by treating them with utmost courtesy and kindness. Apart from the staging of *Alley* at the New Zealand International Festival of the Arts in 1998, Jack's energy and resourcefulness also saw him oversee the production (with Professor Du Yaxiong of the China Conservatory of Music) of *Shaonian: The Courtship Songs from Northwest China*.

Jack's fascination with China's musical culture is not confined to recording the



¹ Ode Records CD ODE 1379.

operatic traditions or music of the minority tribes. Like a long line of Westerners before him, Jack was fascinated by the timbre and infinite sonic possibilities of the *guguin*, the most celebrated classical instrument of China. In 1993, he arranged Professor Li Xiangting, the well-known *guguin* master from the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, to give a lecture and recital tour in New Zealand, and I was asked to be Li's interpreter and tour co-ordinator. During Li's time here, Jack with his usual resourcefulness and energy also arranged a recording to be made and a CD *Soul of China — Guguin Recital* produced.

In China, Jack is sometimes spoken of in the same breath as Rewi Alley, whom Jack admired so much as to have made him the subject of his opera. Compared to Alley, who devoted sixty years of his life to China, Jack's engagement with China is neither long nor exclusive, yet his work is equally appreciated in that country today. Apart from the articles published in China's leading musical journals praising his role in facilitating Sino-New Zealand musical exchanges, his name has also appeared in Chinese daily newspapers. As a composer, his works have been studied by graduate students at conservatories of music all over China.

HELEN REES *Friends from strangers*

I first learned of Jack Body and his interest in Asian music from my friend, colleague and mentor Professor Zhang Xingrong of the Yunnan Art Institute in Kunming, south-west China. In an unprecedentedly ambitious undertaking, Zhang and his wife Li Wei began using sound recording, videography and still photography to document the little-known traditional music of their home province of Yunnan back in 1984; by the early 1990s they had amassed a treasure trove of recordings from the numerous Tibeto-Burman, Miao-Yao, Tai and Mon-Khmer ethnic groups of the region. Impressed by a weighty tome of Zhang's transcriptions on one of his visits to China, Jack engineered an invitation for Zhang to spend several months in 1993 at Victoria University to edit publishable recordings from the audio tapes. This enterprise eventually resulted in the magnificent four-CD set *South of the Clouds: Instrumental Music of Yunnan*, issued by Ode in 2003, on which I worked as one of four translators and two editors (the other being Jack) of the detailed liner notes. Jack was also instrumental in connecting Zhang with Bernard Kleikamp of Pan Records in the Netherlands, as a result of which Pan too has issued numerous CDs of Zhang's unique field recordings. Jack may not speak more than a few words of Chinese, but he has rendered extraordinary service to the musical heritage of one of China's most ethnically diverse and musically rich provinces; he has also helped inspire Zhang to continue a career in field research that is now in its thirtieth year and has led to an international profile for the folk musicians he works with.

Thanks to our shared connection to Zhang and Li, Jack and I have become professional collaborators and good friends over the last twenty years, presenting together at conferences on our work on Yunnanese music, and sharing a memorable and freezing week in the winter of 2001 at his family's beach house in New Zealand as the four of us hammered out the difficult points in the liner notes for the Ode CD set. I've twice enjoyed the inimitable hospitality Jack and Yono extend to their house guests and was delighted to return the favour when Jack came to Los Angeles a few years ago. Jack's palpable enthusiasm for the sounds of Asia (and other parts of the

- GREER GARDEN is a musicologist. Until her recent retirement she was an associate professor and sometime acting or deputy director of the New Zealand School of Music.
- HELEN BOWATER is a composer, performer and teacher based on Waiheke Island, Auckland. Many of her compositions incorporate Asian elements.
- HELEN FISHER is a Wellington-based composer; many of her works explore her bicultural journey with Māori.
- HELEN REES works in the Department of Ethnomusicology at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music. She is the director of the World Musical Instrument Collection, which includes an extensive collection of Chinese instruments.
- HIM SAVY is a leading Cambodian singer and performer on traditional Khmer instruments who teaches at the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh.
- HIM SOPHY, regarded as Cambodia's leading composer, is a professor at the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh.
- HONG-YU GONG is a senior lecturer in language studies at Unitec Institute of Technology in Auckland. He specialises in the music of China.
- I WAYAN GDE YUDANE is a leading talent among the new generation of Balinese composers. He is known for his gamelan compositions, and has written award-winning concert, theatre and film music. He is also an accomplished gangsa player.
- IAN WEDDE is a poet, fiction writer, critic and art curator. He was Poet Laureate for New Zealand from 2011 to 2013.
- JACK C RICHARDS is a specialist in second and foreign language teaching, and the author of numerous books for English language teachers and students. He is also an active art collector and sponsors numerous activities in music and the arts.
- JACQUELINE FONTYN is a Belgian composer, pianist and music educator. In 1993 the King of Belgium granted her the title of baroness in recognition of her artistic contributions.
- JENNIFER LINDSAY has spent 25 years in Indonesia as a student, researcher, diplomat and programme officer, and now divides her time between Indonesia and Australia. A translator, she writes on performance, cultural policy and history, media and language in south-east Asia.
- JENNIFER SHENNAN, dance teacher and writer, has choreographed to Jack's music, notably *Sexus*, in 1972. With her husband Allan Thomas and daughters Beth and Nell, she has been a close family friend of Jack and his partner Yono for many years.
- JENNY MCLEOD is a composer, music theorist and poet. She was Professor of Music at Victoria University of Wellington in the 1970s – the youngest ever to be appointed to this role.
- JIAN LIU is a Chinese-American pianist who is currently head of piano studies at the New Zealand School of Music.
- JO HILDER is a player in and administrator of Gamelan Padhang Moncar.
- JOHN COUSINS is a composer and sonic artist who lives in Christchurch. He taught for many years at the School of Music at Canterbury University.
- JOHN ELMSLY is a New Zealand composer who was formerly head of composition at Auckland University. He has been president of the Composers' Association of New Zealand and served on the executive committee of the Asian Composers' League.
- JOHN PSATHAS is a composer whose work often explores his Greek heritage, collaboration, improvisation and transcription. He is a professor at the