

POLITICAL MEANINGS HIDDEN BEHIND ENCHANTING MELODIES: HOW CHINA DELIVERED IDEOLOGICAL MESSAGES IN THE SONG CYCLE “FOUR SEASONS OF OUR MOTHERLAND”

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Abstract: Music draws influence from its surroundings and thus, with its political and social setting, becomes a part of the dynamic relationship. The aim of this article is to investigate and introduce this particular feature in the context of Chinese culture and explain, with the help of Zheng Qiufeng’s song cycle “Four Seasons of Our Motherland”, how politics play a part next to folk music elements, enchanting melodies, and patriotic lyrics. The song cycle in question was chosen as an example of how politics can be subtly included in the musical plot. It is one of the very few Chinese song cycles, the most well-known one, and made unique by the inclusion of minority characteristics from different Chinese regions together with its distinctive ideological mission.

Keywords: Chinese songs, communist party, folk music, minorities, politics, Zheng Qiufeng

INTRODUCTION

Music draws direct influence from its surroundings and thus interacts with the political and social settings. Today, the complex nature of this tendency is becoming clearer, as current literature increasingly focuses on the effects of

China's soft power, nation-building, and values education in Chinese music. Sociologists have raised questions on how music should be examined in relation to its social context to illuminate its ideological role. Therefore, music also becomes a means to investigate and reveal the dynamics and tensions at the core of political power (Ho 2018). This paper seeks to investigate this particular feature in Chinese culture and explain, with the help of Zheng Qiufeng's song cycle "Four Seasons of Our Motherland" (hereafter "Four Seasons"), how politics play a part next to folk music elements, enchanting melodies, and patriotic lyrics.

Folk music is a tool China often reaches for when wanting to represent the music of the people to express the abundance of traditions and happy life across the country. At the international level as well, folk music has the potential to draw attention to borders and, beyond them, to the identity politics of linguistic and cultural minorities (Bohlman 2004: 133). The third song of the song cycle, "Autumn – Pamir, How Beautiful My Hometown", for example, has been influenced by the minority music of Xinjiang, a geographical location that has since become the source of many tensions in China and a sensitive political subject with the rest of the world. As long as 40 years ago, this border area was under particular observation to keep the most remote parts of the country as peaceful as the rest. China took this opportunity with the "Four Seasons" to display unity and peaceful coexistence of all the ethnic groups, especially at the event of the premiere – the anniversary of the country.

The "Four Seasons" was chosen as the subject of this analysis because it is one of the few well-known Chinese song cycles while also focusing on the inclusion of minority characteristics from different regions of China. This was done to show that China is a vast country with a strong sense of unity, and to display a meaningful place for the arts of ethnic minorities within a Han-based national cultural identity (Kraus 2004: 229). These ethnic characteristics include the use of particular musical scales, a special vocalised *ya diao*, distinctive harmonic devices, and unique rhythmic patterns. In addition to the folk music elements, the song cycle also has a strong connection to distinctive political meanings; however, this is only briefly alluded to in prior research (Yang & Zheng & Zhao 2009: 34; Zhu 2010: 2). Zheng Qiufeng had a longstanding connection to the Chinese military and to the Guangzhou Military Soldiers Ensemble; he is also a member of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC). This article points out how politics were subtly included in the musical plot and how the music influences the listener behind the scenes, trying to lure with appeal and attraction. Scholars from mainland China try to avoid the mention of politics when dealing with musical matters because China has established a certain approach to how to portray controversial historical events. Any material that might harm national unity, damage the reputation of the state, or provoke social unrest is

strictly prohibited. Authors would rather not complicate the publication process of their books and articles with possible censorship holdups. In addition, matters regarding the military are confidential and not disclosed to the general public, which makes research in this field even more scarce. These are the reasons for no research being carried out on the political associations of the song cycle in question. The most reliable accounts of the political matters relating to “Four Seasons” come directly from the composer and lyricist; other mainland authors merely repeat their words.

This research first started as a creative process of preparing the song cycle for performance with a non-native soprano, then became a doctoral research project, and has now evolved into a deeper cultural and political analysis of its meaning among Chinese vocal art music. Thus, the methodology of this study is based on the systematic analysis of musical features to determine the source of their origin and their political significance, and on the investigation of the interviews and historical facts relating to the creation of the song cycle. In addition, the article relies on conclusions drawn during years of work in the music departments of Chinese universities, the benefit of having a Chinese background and consulting other recent research on similar topics.

ART SONGS AND THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICS

As a true portrayal of China’s construction and reform process, Chinese art songs are the crystallised wisdom of Chinese vocal traditions and art in modern times. In the development process of a century, they have come to play a significant and unique role in promoting the expansion of Chinese culture and international influence. This relatively new genre, Chinese vocal art music, combines traditional Chinese songs with the canons of European art songs. Chinese art songs just celebrated the genre’s hundredth anniversary in 2020.¹ Western music spread to the rest of the world after the revolution of capitalism and industrialism in Europe, which reached as far as China. The influence of Western music was most strongly felt after the start of the twentieth century; its aesthetic attractions were enforced even further by the West’s political and economic domination of the world during that century (Kraus 1989). Therefore, Chinese music was “reformed” with the help of Western examples as a part of a quest for modernity and a superior outcome (Yang 2017: 9). With the passing of time, Western harmonies and forms have found a permanent place in combination with Chinese traditions. There are numerous treasures among Chinese art songs that would grace concert stages with beauty and diversity.

Over recent decades, China has proven itself a strong global economic and political power, a true force to be considered. The politics and social policies that China implements find fierce supporters and relentless opponents; music, on the other hand, can be approached with less caution and brave curiosity. Although the state has been attentively monitoring developments in music and art since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, it also often acts as the patron. One does not necessarily need to think that this devalues the outcome of the creation. Were the renaissance artists held back by their patronage? Is the Colosseum not magnificent despite being built under the rule of emperors? Indeed, recent studies have pointed out that Western bias toward China may result from a lack of understanding of Chinese culture (Kraus 2004; Lai 2012; Yueh 2013).

There were many benefits to commissioning a song cycle to celebrate the anniversary of the country: reinforcing the borders of China by claiming them in song and therefore in history, instilling patriotic emotions, mobilising the residents through musical ideas, bringing ethnic minority areas to attention, and emphasising the solidarity and unity of the whole country. So, "Four Seasons" can also be categorised as nationalist music which serves a nation-state in its competition with other nation-states as described by American ethnomusicologist and author Philip V. Bohlman (2004: 117–120).

Another function of the piece in question would have been to alleviate conflicting memories of the restrictions during the Cultural Revolution of 1966 to 1976. For ten years, musicians had to follow strict rules about which works were appropriate, abide by the list of suggested repertoire and *yangbanxi*.² Consequently, we can hear the overwhelming joy of a new awakening and fresh appeal in the first and last songs, "Spring" and "Winter". The music created at the end of the 1970s took a firm step away from the old restrictions and acted as a great wave of reform and opening up; it turned a new page in the creation of music (Liu 2010: 483).

Although the Cultural Revolution ended more than 40 years ago, the influence of the state is very much a current topic that has not changed considerably since the composition of the "Four Seasons". Themes of nationalist songs continue to praise the goodness of the CPC, Chinese socialism, the People's Liberation Army, the masses, and the motherland (Ho 2018: 109). In 2021, the whole country unfolded into a big celebration for the 100th anniversary of the CPC, which also meant that throughout China many patriotic songs and songs supporting the party were sung all year round, from small village concerts to schools and universities, and ultimately in the main concert halls of capital cities. Some of the most popular of these songs are "Without the Communist Party, There Would Be No New China", "I Love You China", and "Sing a Song

for the Party”.³ Thus, the tradition of singing political art songs has remained strong since the establishment of the PRC in 1949.

THE CREATION PROCESS AND OVERVIEW OF “FOUR SEASONS”

China is a nation that proudly exhibits love of the motherland and its support to the government and the sole ruling party, the Communist Party of China. These are also the two biggest influences accompanying the creation of the “Four Seasons”, which was commissioned by the Guangzhou Military Soldiers Ensemble⁴ for the 30th anniversary of the PRC in 1979. Both the composer Zheng Qiufeng and lyricist Qu Cong (Fig. 1) were working for the ensemble at the time (Wang 2009). Together, they chose the topic of the four seasons and decided to travel to different regions of China to gather inspiration and folk songs, and learn about the musical traditions of the many Chinese minorities.⁵ They visited Hainan Island in the very south of China to gather material for the spring, they chose Taiwan for the inspiration of summer, Xinjiang and the Tajikistan people for autumn, and China in general for the conclusion with winter.⁶ The four songs of the cycle also bear witness to the development of China, combining politics, art, and different regions.



Figure 1. Composer Zheng Qiufeng and lyricist Qu Cong in Guangzhou Military Soldiers Ensemble uniforms in 1984 (Shen 2019).⁷



Figure 2. Each song has a connection to a specific geographic location of China.

The four songs form a union in chronological order of the seasons as well as concerning the order of key signatures. “Spring” starts the song cycle in jubilant F major, then changing to C major for “Summer”; afterward, a surprising C minor for the harvest celebrations of “Autumn”, and finally, a modulation from C major to F major in sentimental “Winter”. The general spirit and character of the songs also offers variety: “Summer” and “Autumn” are energetic and can be considered dances; “Spring” and “Winter” have a lyric nature.

While all four songs have connections to specific regions in China (see Fig. 2), “Winter” combines the previous three song topics and reflects on China as a whole. In every song of the cycle, an underlying political meaning can be found hidden in the lyrics. This idea of political connections has been mentioned in an interview with the lyricist Qu Cong (Zhu 2010: 11) and has also been alluded to in books about Chinese vocal music (Yang & Zheng & Zhao 2009: 34). The lyrics of “Spring” do not focus on a specific area, but the song features the folk music elements of Hainan province, such as a minor third in the melody while the key signature is F major, and the choice of Hainan as the source points to the significance of the power struggle of the South China Sea. “Summer” is

closely affected by the history between Taiwan and the mainland; the lyrics speak of a seagull that is flying home from Taiwan. “Autumn” is both in lyrics and musical matters closely connected with the Tajikistan minority in Xinjiang province; the song uses a minor key and a 7/8-time signature to give the sense of harvest celebrations. “Winter” is an ode to the whole of China and Beijing in particular; it commemorates the beauty and the hardships the Chinese people have experienced. The lyrics mention natural elements that connect vast areas of China: the Kunlun Mountains and the Yellow River.

Although the commission itself is a clear sign of the political undertones, the lyrics are poetic in nature and without overly apparent political propaganda that might otherwise diminish the artistic value of the song cycle. Instead, they speak about the beauty and diversity of the vast country and its many minorities.

“SPRING – THE SPRING OF THE MOTHERLAND”

Yi a! Yi a! Yi a! Yi a!

Spring is coming! Spring is coming!

The ice and snow are melting! The Earth has awakened!

Yi a, the Earth has awakened!

The peach blossoms are sprouting; the swallows returned.

“Ding dong, ding dong, ding dong,” the mountain spring is singing;

“Ge ge, ge ge, ge ge,” the cuckoo is singing.

A, spring is coming! A, spring is coming! A! A! A!

The awakening of spring, and of the spring smile,

Birds are singing, the flowers smile.

Red sunshine is reflected on the mountain and river;

The motherland’s spring scenery is infinitely good!

Yi a! A! A!

The joyous melodies and animated lyrics of “Spring” imply that people are awaiting a fresh new beginning after the repression of the Cultural Revolution. The revolution was especially controlling over the arts, which meant all music had to be composed for the masses. During this period, there was a list of model works, including revolutionary songs and model operas. Ordinary people

together with intellectuals were expected to listen, watch, and draw inspiration from these performances (Liu 2010). The passion for a new life with freedom to live and create is expressed in the emotional message of “Spring” with a frequent appearance of exclamation marks which are used 17 times in “Spring”.

Yet another reason why Hainan Island is of great importance to China is its geographical and geopolitical location; it is the southernmost province of the PRC. The climate varies between subtropical and tropical; springs are warm and comfortable, making it the ideal setting for the first song. From a different point of view, Hainan Island is the home to the People’s Liberation Army Navy Hainan Submarine Base. It cannot be a coincidence that Zheng Qiufeng and Qu Cong, both members of the Guangzhou Military Soldiers Ensemble, chose this as a representative location and symbol of the south of China. In a recent interview about his other notable song, “I Love You China”, which was also composed in 1979, Zheng Qiufeng clarified: “We must grasp the characteristics of the times. At the time, the background was the turmoil of the 1980s. Of course, it would be impossible to simply write a folk song.”⁸ The region of the South China Sea is of high importance for China and many of its neighbouring countries due to massive oil and natural gas reserves along with it being the second most used sea lane in the world (Turcsányi 2017).

The melodies of “Spring” are inspired by the folk tunes of Hainan province. There are three officially recognised ethnic groups living on Hainan Island: the Han majority, the Li minority, and the Miao minority (Yang 1990). Throughout the song, a wordless vocalisation appears as a *yi a* call; this musical method is often used by the Miao minority. There are specific tunes in Miao minority music called *yi a* melodies (*ya diao*), which use wordless vocalisation (see Fig. 3), which is also how the vocal part of “Spring” starts. Every musical interpretation begins with getting into the spirit of the piece; therefore, it is important to notice that the lyrics mainly emphasise two ideas: the arrival of spring and the praise of the motherland. The arrival of spring is described by the words: “The ice and snow are melting! The Earth has awakened! The peach blossoms are sprouting; the swallows returned.” The praise of the motherland appears in the following lyrics: “Red sunshine is reflected on the mountain and river; the motherland’s spring scenery is infinitely good!”



Figure 3. Spring – The Spring of the Motherland, *yi a* melody in bars 23–28.

“SUMMER – THE SEAGULL IS FLYING HOME”

*The waves are rolling on the East China Sea in summer,
The motherland is across the sea overlooking the Taiwan province.
Ah, a brave white seagull is flying through the clouds,
It broke through stormy waters; it crossed the thunder and lightning.
The seagull is flying; it comes from the rich and fertile Taiwan,
from the beautiful Golden Gate.*

*The sky with white clouds above the motherland,
Flowers in full bloom are all over the mountains in May.
Ah, a brave white seagull is flying through the clouds,
It is flying towards home; it is flying towards the motherland.
The seagull is flying; it brings a hot heart from Taiwan.
Ah ah, the seagull is flying; it brings a hot heart from Taiwan.*

The political message in the lyrics of “Summer – The Seagull is Flying Home” must be the most obvious of all four songs. There is a yearning for a united China, a yearning for Taiwan to be reunited with the mainland. Most of Taiwan’s inhabitants are Han Chinese, the same as on mainland China. The separation from the mainland had been an issue for a long time. It began at the end of the nineteenth century when the Japanese won the Sino-Japanese War and established their rule over Taiwan. Later, in 1949, when the PRC was founded, the separation continued because of independent authority. Now the state promotes the “One-China policy” at every opportunity to assert that there is only one sovereign state with the name of China. Propagation of ideology is one of the main functions of the state, and it is endorsed with all the persuasive power that can be mastered. Music and the arts are the essential tools of this propaganda machine (Wong 2016 [2001]: 113).

The lyrics of “Summer” describe a brave seagull, which has broken through stormy waters, passed thunder and lightning, and flown back home to the mainland. The seagull is a metaphor for the Taiwanese people, and the lyrics wishfully foresee unity. In the charming waltz beat, a seagull is flying back to the mainland from the long-separated Taiwan. It is said in the lyrics that Taiwan is across the sea overlooking the motherland, and “It is flying towards home; it is flying towards the motherland. The seagull is flying; it brings a hot heart from Taiwan”.

“AUTUMN – PAMIR, HOW BEAUTIFUL MY HOMETOWN”

*The lark is singing in the sky,
Pamir, how beautiful my hometown, how beautiful my hometown!*

*The lark is singing in the sky,
Pamir, how beautiful my hometown!
The ranch is green, and the sheep are strong,
highland barley fragrance makes people drunk.
Karasu spring water is crystal clear; moon lake and red rose.
The sound of the eagle flute blowing, steeds are running fast on the grass.
Ah, the rawap⁹ is playing and singing the song,
The day of the harvest is very sweet!*

*The moon is so bright and clear,
Pamir, how beautiful my hometown!
The thick ice is flashing silver;
the breeze is blowing along a silent valley in the night.
In Taheman, the moon is round; there is the pine tree where lovers meet.
Water is like a delicious wine, mountains are like white jade.
Ah, Pamir autumn scenery is infinitely beautiful,
My heart has become intoxicated!*

“Autumn – Pamir, How Beautiful My Hometown” is the most famous piece of the song cycle, and it is often included in the concert repertoire. In addition to a pleasant, lively character and an engaging pulse, it has become a favourite of the authorities for political reasons. Over recent years, the Chinese government has been accused of several issues arising from the Xinjiang autonomous region. Thus, the CPC uses this song to show the world that they can keep order in Xinjiang. “Autumn” can also occasionally be heard on CCTV-4, one of six China Central Television channels that broadcast outside the PRC.¹⁰ The song depicts the joy of life and the prosperity that the Xinjiang people have achieved. It describes the vast Pamir Mountains and praises the beauty of the region – the well-being that is felt in China. The goal of unity and prosperity is as important as 40 years ago. The current president, Xi Jinping, began promoting a related slogan of the Chinese Dream shortly after rising to power. The meaning of the Chinese Dream is that of a rejuvenated Chinese nation, good fortune, the ability to dare to dream and work for one’s dreams. Another side of the Chinese Dream is achieving national rejuvenation by creating an ethnically

homogeneous country by influencing and encouraging the ethnic minorities to see themselves as one Chinese identity (Ho 2018).

There are also unique compositional qualities that make the song stand out from the others. Musicians value it due to its distinctive ethnic characteristics, charming Tajikistan modality with augmented seconds, and lively and unusual meter (7/8), common in south Tajik music (Nooshin 2009: 121). As well as the Pamir Mountains, the lyrics describe the Karasu spring, a Tajik eagle flute, and the town of Taheman. Notably, the song uses a C minor key to display the joyous event of harvest celebrations, which is unusual in Western practices. The mood is elevated; it is harvesting time, “Autumn” sounds like a dance (see Fig. 4).

The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 7/8 time signature. The lyrics are written below the notes. The middle and bottom staves are a piano accompaniment in treble and bass clefs respectively, also in the same key signature and time signature. The piano part features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. The score is numbered 30 at the beginning.

30

1. 云雀的唱着歌亮在天上月飞，
2. 十五的月亮在这般明媚。

Figure 4. The unique 7/8-time signature in “Autumn – Pamir, How Beautiful My Hometown”, bars 30–34.

“WINTER – AH! MY MOTHERLAND”

*Snow is floating all over the sky; plum blossoms are on branches.
A hero's monument is watching over the motherland; ah the landscape
is enchanting.
A dragon flew over the Kunlun Mountains,
The chimaeras swim along the Yellow River.
The pines from the south of Lingnan Mountains are standing in the wind,
Snow lotus is smiling at the sun by the fortress.
Ah, my motherland! The red pigment of plum is particularly charming.
Ah, my beloved motherland! The red pigment of plum is particularly
charming.*

The battle hymn, boundless snow, a red flag is waving at the top of a tall tower.

Good news come from eight directions; the snow is spreading it in four directions.

Ah, my motherland! The generation is romanticising their heroes.

Ah, my beloved motherland, the generation is romanticising their heroes.

Red sunshine is reflected on the mountain, the Divine Land is now more fascinating.

The landscape is splendid, the scenery of all four seasons is beautiful!

Red sunshine is reflected on the mountain,

The Divine Land is now more fascinating,

The landscape is splendid, the scenery of all four seasons is beautiful!

“Winter – Ah! My Motherland” is the peak of the song cycle. It is an ode to the whole country, expressing the beauty and the hardships that the Chinese people endured. The beauty can be seen in the “red pigment of plum” on a snowy backdrop, in the chimaeras swimming merrily, and even in the hardships of the people, which are visualised by the Monument of the People’s Heroes, a ten-story obelisk on Tiananmen Square erected in memory of the revolutionary martyrs and their sacrifices. It is important to note that the lyricist was susceptible to the apportioned social values because few in China can resist the pervasive influence of ideology (Ouyang 2012), hence the mention of the monument. Moreover, the song highlights many of the wonders found in China: the Yellow River, the chimaeras, Tiananmen Square, the Kunlun Mountains, lotus flowers, and the plums blossoming during wintertime. Tiananmen Square has a strong political significance; it is the location Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the PRC in 1949; therefore, it brings the focus on Beijing, the capital and political centre of the country. All of the symbols are politically charged, and the composer implies that the mistake of the revolution has been left behind and the country is prospering again. Ultimately, winter will pass, and a new promising spring will arrive. The theme during this last song of the song cycle becomes very patriotic: “The Divine Land is now more fascinating”, and “the scenery of all four seasons is beautiful”. “Winter” is like an ode and a summary of the full cycle, with the core message being that the mistake of the Cultural Revolution is in the past. As the all-enduring plum blossom, the Chinese people have persevered through the cold winters of history.

SUMMARY

“Four Seasons of Our Motherland” is a significant song cycle in the genre of Chinese vocal art music because it brings together a patriotic message, charming minority characteristics, compositional diversity, and the most important political issues of the era. Composer Zheng Qiufeng served in the military almost all his life. The message behind his compositions often followed the developments in China’s strategic priorities and focal points of the international environment. The song cycle also provides a unique framework for clues about the importance China places on domestic and global affairs.

Although the song cycle was commissioned for practical reasons to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the PRC, it also exhibits excellent artistic achievement: folk music elements, captivating vocal melodies, a carefully planned structure, poetic lyrics full of patriotic feelings. It is a charming combination of Western harmony and form together with Chinese melodies and scales. The lyrics are equally unique as they call us to visualise spectacular places and objects such as the Tiananmen Square, a dragon flying over the Kunlun Mountains, the symbolic all-enduring red plum blossom on the backdrop of a snowy landscape.

The “Four Seasons” was composed just after the complicated years of the Cultural Revolution, which created the necessity for attaching a deeper meaning to the plot of the composition. Qu Cong, the lyricist of the “Four Seasons”, has confirmed that there are underlying political meanings to each song of the cycle. For example, “Spring” emphasises the territorial supremacy in the South China Sea, “Summer” speaks of uniting Taiwan with the mainland, and “Autumn” highlights the importance of a stable border in Xinjiang. These topics arose due to the instabilities of the twentieth century: the battles for power on the South China Sea, a civil war between the Communist and Nationalist Party that determined Taiwan’s path, the uneven regional development and conflicts in Xinjiang. All of these questions remain unsolved and are being carefully observed by the world. Consequently, the song cycle continues its mission. This makes the “Four Seasons” a unique example of Chinese cultural politics, which in turn helps maintain the awareness and popularity of the pieces.

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NOTES

- ¹ The first Chinese art song is generally credited to Qing Zhu (born Liao Shangguo), who composed the song “The River Flows Eastwards” while studying in Germany in 1920. He used Western composing techniques to lyricize “Reminiscence of Red Cliffs” by the poet Su Shi (Chu & Petrus 2020: 122).
- ² During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the revolutionary model works / model dramas were called *yangbanxi*. The works combined elements of traditional Chinese dramas, particularly *jingxi* (Beijing opera or Peking opera), with modern Western drama to treat contemporary topics and feature proletarian protagonists.
- ³ “Without the Communist Party, There Would Be No New China” is a popular propaganda song that appeared in the middle of the twentieth century. The lyrics were changed to accommodate the new political order after the establishment of the PRC in 1949. “I Love You, China” is an extremely popular Chinese song for a soprano by Zheng Qiufeng. It was composed for the movie “Overseas Compatriots” in 1979. “Sing a Song for the Party” was created by Yao Xiaozhou and Zhu Jianer.
- ⁴ The Guangzhou Military Soldiers Ensemble was established in 1955 and stopped working in 2018. The ensemble consisted of singers, a dance troupe, lyricists, conductors (including Zheng Qiufeng), and an orchestra. Detailed information is not disclosed to the general public because matters regarding the army are confidential. However, some information is available in news articles.
- ⁵ There are 56 state-recognised ethnic groups (*minzu*) in the People’s Republic of China. The Han majority accounts for 91.5 percent of the total population, and the 55 ethnic minority groups make up 8.5 percent (Zang 2016).
- ⁶ In 2018, a TV programme about Zheng Qiufeng was aired on CCTV4 within the Chinese Culture – Chinese Showbiz – Salute to the Classics format. It is currently available for viewing on CCTV’s official YouTube channel CCTV中文国际. Zheng Qiufeng speaks about preparing to compose, travelling in China, and introduces the regional influences.
- ⁷ The photograph was published together with a biography and a complete collection of Zheng Qiufeng’s scores (Shen 2019).
- ⁸ Interview with Zheng Qiufeng from January 2018, available at https://www.sohu.com/a/218670772_787249, last accessed on 21 February 2023.
- ⁹ The *rawap* is one of the principal musical instruments of the Xinjiang Uyghurs. It is a shorter type of lute, plucked with a horn plectrum. Several different types are played by the Uyghurs. The number of strings varies from three to seven depending on the type of *rawap* (Harris 2008).
- ¹⁰ “Autumn – Pamir, How Beautiful My Hometown” in a programme about Chinese literature and art called “Chinese Showbiz – Autumn Nostalgia, Hometown Love”, sung 14:18–17:49, available at <https://tv.cctv.com/2019/09/25/VIDE6lZpj12WVY5M12Pzyfk190925.shtml>, last accessed on 21 February 2023.

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