

17 | Chinese Music Performance in Australia

NICHOLAS NG, LU LIU AND CATHERINE INGRAM

Introduction

Although performances of Chinese music have been part of the Australian soundscape since at least the 1850s, levels of Australian acquaintance with Chinese music have been dynamic. Of mid-nineteenth- to mid-twentieth-century Australia, Aline Scott-Maxwell notes that ‘many Australians had some familiarity with Chinese music, either from witnessing Chinese opera performances, street festivals or other Chinese musical activity or through the many generally uncomplimentary reports and comments about the music that appeared in colonial newspapers’.¹ So-called ‘jazz’ bands and charitable performances also provided frequent connections for Australian audiences with different aspects of the sounds of Chinese music during the early twentieth century. More recently, whilst Chinese music performances in Australia over the last five to ten years have vastly increased in number, diversity of genre and context when compared to the situation Yang Mu describes thirty years prior, the performance of Chinese music seems relatively unfamiliar to a large proportion of people in Australia.² Twenty-first-century staged performances of Chinese music and street performances including *kuaishan* (快闪 ‘flash mob’) or *jiapai* (街拍 ‘street shot’) have occasioned greater Chinese music appreciation, yet all three authors of this chapter have noted public reactions to live performances which suggest minimal exposure to Chinese music and instruments.³

Australian performances of sonic arts which display a Chinese origin or connection – as we understand ‘Chinese music’ – range across various genres including classical, folk, opera, popular and sacred music. The performers are and have been equally diverse, including immigrants, international students, visiting artists and cosmopolitans from mainland China, the Sinosphere and the population of ‘Chinese overseas’, as well as people born or permanently residing in Australia of both Chinese and non-Chinese heritage. Musicians with both Chinese and First Nations ancestry, such as Jimmy Chi and Ash Dargan, have also had important creative roles in bringing Chinese and Australian cultures together. The musical diversity of their performances encapsulates the often-overlooked heterogeneity of

the Chinese in Australia and in the greater diaspora.⁴ As Tan Chee-Beng observes, ‘Overall, the ethnic Chinese all over the world are really different communities, each shaped by different forces of change and by diverse responses.’⁵ The different migration histories and countries of origin of Australian-Chinese musicians diverge further in terms of language groups, cultural practices, religion, educational background and political persuasion. Yet the important distinctions between these groups and musical categories contrast with the many intersections between them and have led to a complex interweaving of cultural and musical expression. As Catherine Falk notes, ‘The interactions, musical and otherwise, between [I]ndigenous, white and Asian populations were a reality of life in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and musical scholarship needs to reflect the permeability between the lives of the three groups, rather than treating them as isolated entities.’⁶

The following overview of Australian-Chinese music focuses on contemporary practice of different genres and on ethnographic examples from our own experience, but as space and historical records allow, we also look back in time. Our discussion illustrates some of the main ways that music has served to enhance social connections within and beyond Australia’s Chinese community, including within an Australian sociocultural fabric that has increasingly acknowledged and valued cultural diversity and multiplicities of cultural identity. We observe how both continuity in musical transmission and the creation of space for new hybrid musical productions have been important in sustaining Chinese music performance into the twenty-first century. Condensing such a wide range of musical, ethnographic and historical material has inevitably required a focus on certain relevant and/or representative genres or examples with many gaps remaining; we hope the following stories and reflections encourage equally qualified researchers to share other perspectives in the future.

Australia’s Chinese Community

In 2022, it was recorded that Australia’s second-largest migrant group comprised people from mainland China,⁷ and the 2016 census found that nearly 900,000 people in Australia (3.7 per cent of the population) spoke Mandarin or Cantonese at home.⁸ Since the first recorded arrival of a Chinese carpenter, Mak O Pong, in Australia in 1818,⁹ people of Chinese ancestry have made crucially important contributions to

Australian music and life. Their work in the nineteenth century as indentured labourers, farmers, goldminers and cabinetmakers is well known,¹⁰ but less well known is that, according to the 1855 'Petition of Quang Chew', these immigrants also included 'people who make musical instruments'.¹¹ In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, other contributions in the areas of business, cuisine, the arts and health, among many others, as well as economic stimulus through migration, have become important.

Despite the many positive interactions between people of Chinese and non-Chinese heritage in Australia, anti-Chinese sentiment and violence has also been present and became particularly prominent in Australia's mid-nineteenth-century gold rushes, periods which saw the greatest expansion in Chinese migration to Australia (records suggest at least 20,000 and perhaps as many as 40,000 Chinese people lived in Victoria alone in 1857).¹² The White Australia Policy, the first government policy of the newly federated country in 1901, was based explicitly on anti-Chinese racism and was only fully repealed in the 1970s.¹³ Over the intervening decades, there have been further instances of racial tension.

Xiqu in Australia

Modern historians often presume the earliest *Xiqu* 戏曲 (Chinese opera) performances in Australia to have been Cantonese opera (*Yueju* 粤剧).¹⁴ This is based on numerous newspaper reports of performances from approximately 1858 onwards, especially those from the Victorian goldfields, where thirty troupes in the 1850s had increased to fifty by the early 1860s.¹⁵ Yet considering the collective of mutually unintelligible Chinese languages and dialects present in colonial times, Michael Williams suggests that 'it is most likely that the opera troupes of the Victorian goldfields sang in yet another language known as Southern Mandarin – a language with the highest cultural prestige'.¹⁶ The details of the musical elements in those performances are as-yet unknown. Doggett mentions instances of charitable performances in 1860s Ballarat which involved a chamber ensemble of eight regional operatic instruments,¹⁷ while Wang cites an 1861 review of an 1850s performance on a fretted Chinese instrument and suggests a possible 1872 performance by the Ah Goon company of a three-piece ensemble.¹⁸

Beyond the goldfields, nineteenth-century Chinese opera performances were also held in various locations in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney. This includes a tent performance in Melbourne's Chinatown to an audience of eighty or ninety, with performers accompanied by 'a monotonous gong and a wearisome one-stringed fiddle',¹⁹ and the 1893 appearance of the Boo Yu Tin troupe (comprising professional mainland Chinese and locally trained actors) in the NSW Protestant Hall on Castlereagh Street.²⁰ Although all Australian colonies had legislated anti-Chinese restrictions by 1888, the company was sponsored by two football teams for their debut at Brisbane's Theatre Royal in 1894.²¹

A vast number of operatic performances continued to take place well into the early twentieth century in northern Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania, where large communities of Chinese had established a way of living around tin mining, market gardening and running general stores.²² For example, the 'Chinese Opera Company' performed in Cairns Shire Hall in 1901 to the Cairns Chinese community, which made up a fifth of the population.²³ Figure 17.1 shows that Chinese opera performances followed the secondary migration of Chinese workers from the Victorian goldfields to Queensland. Here, Chinese gardeners from Irvinebank hold a plucked stringed instrument, the *yueqin*, and a bowed stringed instrument, the *erxian*, which were two of the five basic instruments (*wujiatou*) used in Cantonese and other forms of southern Chinese opera.



Figure 17.1 A portrait of three Chinese gardeners from Irvinebank, Queensland, 1908. Taken on 10 July 1908, available from <https://hdl.handle.net/10462/deriv/80145>, State Library of Queensland.

More intermittent performances continued into the twentieth century, including a Melbourne performance of Chinese opera by sailors from Hong Kong and Singapore during World War II and performances from among the 580 Chinese phosphate miners at Hatches Creek (Northern Territory), documented by English nurse Bridget Ristori (Figure 17.2).²⁴ The Chinese Seaman's Union rebranded as the Chinese Youth League and 'continued to arrange opera performances for an increasingly isolated Chinese community'.²⁵ Chinese opera returned in a significant way with the establishment of Melbourne's Gangzhou Society Cantonese Opera Group in 1961.²⁶

Today, *xiqu* remains popular. Cantonese opera is enjoyed by audiences of all ages; one recent high-profile performance sponsored by Willoughby City Council and the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Sydney, was the 2019 lunar new year performance of 'Piggy's Wedding' from the epic *Journey to the West*, produced by Vietnamese-Australian-Chinese performer Gabrielle Chan with celebrity host Claudia Chan Shaw. Beijing opera (*Jingju* 京劇), sung in Mandarin and first heard in a 1956 production sponsored by entrepreneur J. C. Williamson,²⁷ continues to be popular among older migrants and receives some government support. Associations of Shanghainese opera (*Yuèjù* 越劇), sung in the Wu language, rehearse in venues like Ashfield Town Hall, Sydney. Teochew opera (*Chaoju* 潮劇 in Mandarin), sung in a Southern Min variant, was brought to Australia in the 1980s by Chinese immigrants from Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and mainland China.²⁸ Recent Teochew opera performances,

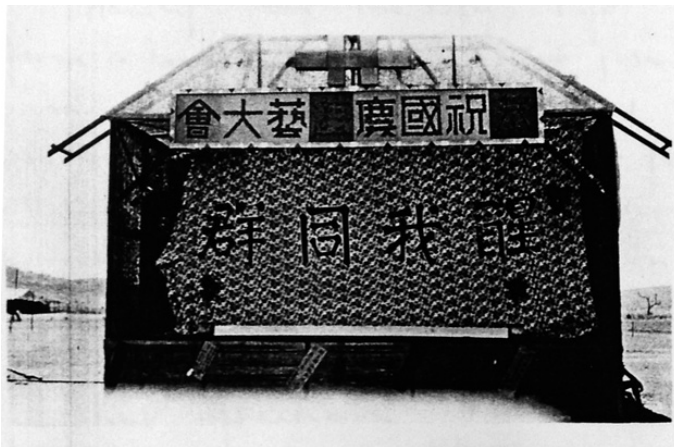


Figure 17.2 Chinese theatre in Hatches Creek, Northern Territory (1942).²⁹

and especially those held for lunar new year and the Moon festival, usually involve hiring overseas professionals as teachers and stars.³⁰

Ritual Music

Bendigo's annual Easter Procession is one of the most well-known Australian contexts where Chinese ritual music is performed today. Since the 1880s, it has mostly involved lion dancers, costumed figures (often from Chinese opera), Bendigo's Chinese dragon and an ensemble of percussionists.³¹ The music in the Chinese section of the parade is mentioned in various sources – for example, an 1892 report describes 'Chinamen vigorously playing the tom-tom, the shrill clang of which caused great amusement to the audience, while here and there to the rear of these conveyances were individuals blowing lustily in a wind instrument bearing a close resemblance to a clarinet, but which emitted sounds resembling those of the thrilling bag-pipes'.³² Similar percussion ensembles accompanying displays of acrobatics and martial arts, especially Chinese dragon and lion dances, are often involved in celebrations connected with the Chinese lunar calendar – including New Year, Moon Lantern, Dragon Boat and Mid-Autumn festivals – which are a fixture in many Australian urban areas. The Chinese Youth League, established in 1939, is among the oldest community groups with a continuous history of such performances across the country, while other more recent groups and lineages include Choy Lee Fut and the Prosperous Mountain Dragon and Lion Dance.³³ This Canberra-based troupe, established in 2007 (see Figure 17.3), is one of the youngest in Australia. Director David Wong draws on the rhythms and movements of Cantonese lion dancing from his home town of Kota Kinabalu (Malaysia).³⁴

Religious rituals involving members of the Australian-Chinese community have also featured different types of Chinese music – such as for various Chinese temples (formerly referred to as 'joss houses'³⁵) and for the Australian Catholic Chinese community. These ethnospecific centres of worship function as both stagnant spaces of cultural retention, where ideas of Chineseness and tradition are maintained, as well as hybrid spaces of creativity. Besides hosting performances of traditional music – for instance, ensembles of Chinese instruments and vocal music sung in Chinese languages – these places also facilitate the negotiation of cultural identities in the Australian context and connections with the wider non-Chinese community.³⁶



Figure 17.3 Prosperous Mountain Dragon and Lion Dance. Image courtesy of David Wong.

Sacred music from Australia's predominantly urban Buddhist and Daoist temples ranges from generations-old melodies and traditional Chinese instrumental pieces to modern songs and compositions. The prominent Fo Guang Shan order of Humanistic Buddhism established Nan Tien Temple (near Wollongong) in 1995. The temple maintains a liturgical practice of *fanbai* (chanted hymns and praises), often accompanied by *Dharma* instruments including *jiao* (handbells), *luogu* (bell and drum set), *ba* (small cymbals), *muyu* (wooden fish) and *qing* (temple bowl), as well as hosting Chinese cultural and musical performances. The lay community, known as Buddha's Light International Association, assists with the annual 'Sound of the Human World' global composition competition.³⁷ These songs, based on the words of the late Grand Master Hsingyun, are written in a variety of languages and musical styles.

The Australian Chinese Catholic Community was established in 1954 among a primarily Cantonese speaking subcommunity from Hong Kong. Since the 1970s, Chinese families from Indo-China, East Timor, Southeast

Asia and mainland China have also joined the community. The liturgical music performed includes an eclectic collection of Latin plainchant as well as traditional Wesleyan-inspired and contemporary hymns in soft ballad and pop style sung in Mandarin, Cantonese and English, accompanied by organ, keyboard and Western band instruments.³⁸ Song writing competitions are also held on a regular basis, with an interest in ‘reconciliation’ with Protestant groups.

Folk and Classical Music

The history of Chinese folk and classical music in Australia relies on sparse historical records and is difficult to piece together. Yet it is certain that despite the Chinese migration restriction acts of White Australia (1901–1973), Chinese musicians appeared in benefit concerts and other performance contexts. Sources from the 1920s describe Chinese instruments (often percussion) as ‘jazz bands’: ‘Mr Henry Foo’s Chinese jazz band, which has been playing at broadcasting station 2BL, Sydney, comprises six performers, who play a three-string violin, a two-string banjo, another two-string instrument, a trumpet (or something like it), a cymbal and a drum.’³⁹ The connection between early ideas of jazz and Chinese music seems to have arisen from early misunderstandings of jazz rather than ideas promoted by Chinese musicians. As Scott-Maxwell explains, ‘jazz’ in Australia was often associated with ‘oriental’ elements, while Chinese music was sometimes ‘confused with “jazz” since, as jazz historian Andrew Bisset puts it, Australians in the 1920s had only “hazy notions of what jazz was”’.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, this conflation helped to promote Chinese music. There is a report of Sun Moon Lee’s 1927 Chinese jazz act, which was described as ‘the real thing in jazz’ and ‘the real thing in Chinese’.⁴¹ The band was welcomed by the wider Chinese community, and they gave a ‘fund-raising performance in a “Chinese carnival” for the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital’.⁴²

Frank Thring’s Eftee Entertainers’ 1931 film of the ‘Melbourne Chinese Orchestra’ captures an ensemble of *suona*, *erxian*, *yueqin* and various percussion instruments at His Majesty’s Theatre.⁴³ The Chinn family (comprising Misses Eunice, Valda, Hazel Chinn and Mrs T. C. Chinn) were musically active through their ‘Oriental Concert’ at Brunswick Town Hall and other projects,⁴⁴ though it is unclear whether Chinese elements in their performances extended beyond the costumes. Alma Quon (or Quong) and the Joybelles, often performing jazz and swing music at the

Young Chinese League annual debutante balls, 'occasionally included a Chinese popular song played on Western instruments'.⁴⁵ They featured in the Chinese Exhibition and Bamboo Fair at Myer Mural Lounge (1941), attended by the Lord Mayor and the Chinese Consul-General. The programme included 'a pageant of famous Chinese women "enacted by members of the Chinese community to oriental music by Misses Lorna and Alma Quong"', in addition to a performance by a visiting Chinese soccer team who sang a 'national war song' and played Chinese instruments.⁴⁶

Since the 1980s, performances of folk and classical music have often been associated with Chinese community or cultural events, which may be funded privately or through government support. Such music is usually performed by conservatory-trained musicians who migrated post-1980s from mainland China and elsewhere, as well as various students of both Chinese and non-Chinese heritage. Some of these musicians work as educator-performers (tertiary and pre-tertiary) or as artists-in-residence, enabling them greater engagement with the wider Australian community. While such employment reflects a growing interest from more mainstream Australian organisations in programming and recognising Chinese artists, it is still not a regular occurrence.

Festival performances have also featured some of these musicians, particularly with the increasing appreciation of Chinese musical traditions catalysed by the 1980s 'festival movement' that 'greatly diversified the styles of music offered as Australian public folk music'.⁴⁷ Chinese folk and classical music has been heard at the National Folk Festival (2008, 2024), Woodford Folk Festival (2008–11), Floriade Festival (2008) and the Sydney Sacred Music Festival (2016–18). The recent inclusion of *erhu* and *zheng* workshops amid the Celtic fiddling sessions of the 'Stringmania' camps held annually in Victoria was a conscious act to further redefine 'Australian music' within a multicultural framework.⁴⁸ Anecdotal evidence suggests that social media and the digital landscape have assisted trained Chinese musicians in establishing extensive contacts outside the Chinese community in recent decades.

Many Chinese conservatory-trained musicians gave their first Australian performances in an adventitious mixture of formal and informal settings (as the following examples demonstrate), and were obliged to teach privately while finding employment in other industries. Seven months after arriving in Sydney, Lei Hu gave *yangqin* performances for restaurant dinners and at the former Tasmanian State Institute of Technology in a small ensemble.⁴⁹ Hu felt it a pity to relinquish her lifelong craft but found it necessary to teach privately

while working in aged care services. Lu Liu saw her own post-1999 career in Australia initially develop in a similar way – performing on *pipa* at private gatherings, casinos, Chinese functions, clubs, churches, schools, nursing homes, local council fairs, festivals and occasionally concert halls.⁵⁰ She started teaching privately in Sydney (2011) and established the Australian Pipa Association (2017–2023). Other Chinese instrumentalists have also released commercial recordings including *Conversations* (2012) featuring Shan Deng (piano) and Wei Deng (*pipa*).⁵¹ Notable studios include the Australia Dunhuang Arts Academy (Melbourne, since 2015), Meya Conservatory of Chinese Music (Sydney, since 2015), Sydney Guyun Guzheng Arts Academy (since 2015) and the School of Chinese Music and Arts (Adelaide, since 2005).

Amateur and professional Chinese instrumental ensembles are important contributors to the Chinese music scene in Australia and include Melbourne's thirty- to fifty-piece Chao Feng Chinese Orchestra (since 1982), perhaps the earliest ongoing amateur Chinese ensemble in Australia, Perth's Chung Wah Orchestra (since 2004) and Sydney's Xi Yangyang Chinese Orchestra (since 2014).⁵² Semi-professional groups include Melbourne's Australian Chinese Music Ensemble (since 1989), Canberra's Australian National University Classical Chinese Music Ensemble (since 2004) and the Silk Girls Ensemble in Brisbane. Amateur Chinese community choirs are also an important musical forum for many older Chinese-speaking Australians. A singing group (since 2008) auspiced by the Kingston Chinese Senior Citizens Club in Melbourne comprising Chinese-speakers from numerous countries mainly performs popular Chinese songs (1950s–1980s).⁵³ Sydney's Australian Yellow River Chorus (since 2000), led by Yanshen Huang, continues to perform Chinese and non-Chinese works.⁵⁴

Several tertiary music institutes maintain Chinese ensembles: Sydney Conservatorium (since 2016), Melbourne Conservatorium and the Australian National University School of Music (since 2004), Queensland Conservatorium (1970s). The Sydney and Melbourne ensembles hold at least two concerts annually, featuring traditional music and contemporary compositions. These ensembles focus on deepening student understanding of Chinese music through informed reading, listening, and practical performance in solo and ensemble contexts. Our research has shown that Chinese instrumental music teaching, especially within our Chinese Music Ensemble in Sydney (Figure 17.4), has had an observable impact on the perceptions, lives and intercultural awareness of a wide range of tertiary student learners, as well as their teachers.⁵⁵



Figure 17.4 Sydney Conservatorium of Music Chinese Music Ensemble (2023). Image courtesy of Xiaomeng Luo.

New Music with Chinese Connections

Today, Australia-based composers, songwriters and performers of Chinese and non-Chinese heritage are creating diverse new musical performances with Chinese connections. Their musical content often parallels developments in Chinese-speaking regions while demonstrating ways that elements of Chinese music performance have begun to assume some life of their own in Australia. Such music reveals how Australia's heterogeneous Chinese community is part of a transnational zone maintaining continual links between what Ien Ang describes as 'the local and the global, the here and the there, past and present'.⁵⁶ The following observations highlight some of the richness and diversity of these new creative and performative ventures in Australia.

Chinese musical idioms and features have been used by various Australian composers from the 1970s onwards. Composers of non-Chinese heritage include Corrina Bonshek, Anne Boyd, Bruce Crossman, John Huie, Larry Sitsky and Tony Wheeler, and prominent composers of Chinese heritage include Julian Yu, Liza Lim, Caroline Szeto and Caitlin

Yeo. A common thread between these composers is the element of hybridity and negotiations of 'Chineseness' through sound.

Notable works include Julian Yu's music for the 2008 Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony and major orchestral works,⁵⁷ where his engagement with Chinese music is more conceptual with the deliberate avoidance of 'so-called Chineseness'.⁵⁸ Liza Lim has worked extensively with instruments such as the *qin*.⁵⁹ *Moon Spirit Feasting* (2002), co-commissioned by the Adelaide and Melbourne international festivals, draws on Chinese folk legends, with a Chinese–English libretto and an ensemble which includes *erhu*. Nicholas Ng's *Harvest of Endurance* project (2010, 2017) brought eighteen composers together to set Mo Xiangyi's 50-metre-long *Harvest of Endurance* scroll to music. In the ABC Compass film *Divine Rhythms*, Ng performed in *The Inner Chamber*, an original work for a *huqin* (bowed fiddle) ensemble, cello and voice, in a subterranean de-commissioned artillery chamber at Sydney Olympic Park in honour of the Chinese Anzacs.⁶⁰

Other collaborative projects include *The Wide Alley: A Chinese-Western Jazz Ensemble* (2007), created by Clocked Out (Erik Griswold and Vanessa Tomlinson) with Sichuan composer Zou Xiangping and commissioned by Paul Grabowsky for the Queensland Music Festival 2007.⁶¹ Involving five Sichuan and five Australian musicians, it toured widely within and outside Australia. The theatre show *China* (2007–2010), featuring William Yang narrating his travels to China alongside Nicholas Ng performing on Chinese instruments, toured nationally and internationally through Performing Lines.⁶² Lu Liu was recorded on *pipa* for the 2009 film *Mao's Last Dancer*, for which composer Christopher Gordon utilised Chinese instruments textually and melodically in his score. Grenfell and Deng's collaboration on *Five Songs from the East* by Maria Grenfell (2012), for *pipa* and piano stands as a solid contribution to intercultural art music.⁶³ Lu Liu's 2019 *Road of Sonic Voyage* at Sydney Conservatorium with *pipa* virtuoso Professor Zhang Qiang (Central Conservatory of Music, China) included three world premiere performances of intercultural works featuring the *pipa*.

In recent decades, Chinese instruments have featured in non-traditional contexts and productions. Annette Shun Wah's CAAP (Contemporary Asian Australian Performance, formerly Performance 4a) has produced a series of stageplays drawing on Chinese musical elements including *The Serpent's Table* (2014) and *Double Delicious* (2020), with sound design and performance by Nicholas Ng.⁶⁴ The Institute for Australian and Chinese Arts and Culture has provided a flourishing live performance space for often under-represented Chinese musicians through its series of

art exhibition openings and in collaboration with various government and community organisations. The 2022 world premiere of Richard Mills' *The Butterfly Lovers* at the Melbourne Arts Centre (presented by Victorian Opera and Wild Rice Singapore), involved Liu (*pipa*) with Qiuming Dong (*zhudi*). Zheng player Mindy Meng Wang (born Lanzhou, active in Australia since 2011) appeared with Telenova at the 2022 Australian Performing Rights Association (APRA) Awards and with Tim Shiel (guitar/electronics) on numerous releases, including 'Body of Water (What Is Love)' (2021).⁶⁵ Wang's naming as a 2022 Melbourne Recital Centre Artist in Residence and 2022–2024 Sidney Myer Creative Fellow indicates new areas of recognition for Chinese music, while suggesting mainstream Australian interest may currently be focused more on collaborative cross-genre endeavours than traditional or virtuosic musical playing.

A series of international Chinese popular music stars (of Cantopop, Mandopop and other styles) have appeared in Australia since the 1980s, including Faye Wang (Wang Fei) at the Sydney Entertainment Centre (June 2000), Na Ying at the Star Event Centre (March 2016), Frances Yip (2019) also at the Star Event Centre and Jay Chou (Zhou Jielun) at Sydney Olympic Park (2020, 2023). Such music sometimes features traditional Chinese instruments and is reminiscent of the earlier touring Chinese opera and 'jazz' groups in their organisational structure.

Appealing more to mainstream audiences, songstress Jasmine Chen appeared in a Shanghai jazz programme presented by Annette Shun Wah and produced by the Melbourne Art Centre (2012).⁶⁶ Rainbow Chan has created her own subcultural following by engaging with Chinese cultural elements in projects such as *Lull* (2019), an ABC podcast on endangered Weitou folk songs and *In the Mood* (co-created with Marcus Whale and Eugene Choi; 2020), inspired by Wong Kar-Wai's film *In the Mood for Love* (2000) at Sydney Opera House.⁶⁷

Conclusion

Several interesting dimensions emerge from this condensed overview of Chinese music performances in Australia. One concerns the ways in which musical performances with Chinese connections have served to maintain different types of social cohesion or to articulate and explore social and cultural connections with ideas of Chineseness, rather than being used to shift political priorities. This is clear from certain contexts where Australians of Chinese descent have become a part of the broader

Australian social fabric – such as for the Bendigo Easter procession, in contemporary art music and in music education. In other instances, such as the performance of *xiqu* over the decades, it is possible that music played a part in bonding among individual Chinese Australian communities, and the mechanics and significance of its obvious maintenance within a difficult political context are worthy of further examination.

Another dimension that emerges as significant is familiar in diasporic contexts: the importance of avenues of musical transmission. Chinese musical performance in Australia owes its existence to practitioners with requisite skills, some of whom have gained their musical skills in Australia and others who have been invited from overseas to perform as required. To date, processes of transmission within the Australian context appear to have been most successful for genres which require relatively little formal training or Chinese language skills – such as certain types of ritual music. However, the last two decades of more intensive musical tuition on individual Chinese instruments seems to promise the possibility of important shifts in this area.

Finally, the creation of contemporary Australian-Chinese music is a newer dimension to the Chinese musical performance soundscape in Australia. It has emerged alongside a careful maintenance of long-standing musical traditions within Chinese Australian communities, resulting in the incorporation of a wide range of Chinese musical idioms into a distinctively Australian musical landscape. Furthermore, this seems to have occurred despite a relative decrease in most Australians' exposure to Chinese musics in more recent times. In some respects, the 1920s integration of Chinese percussion and other musical elements into Australian jazz could be viewed as a precursor to this process. Whilst the integration of Chinese musical features reappeared in the 1970s in new musical works by people in Australia without Chinese ancestry, Australians of Chinese heritage are now prominent creative artists in this domain. As both creators and performers, they are often controlling the new directions that this process follows, leading to an exciting richness and diversity that characterises contemporary Australian-Chinese music performances.

Notes

1. A. Scott-Maxwell, 'Australia and Asia: Tracing Musical Representations, Encounters and Connections', *Context*, 35–36 (2010/2011), 77–91.
2. M. Yang, 'Chinese Music in Australia', *CHIME Journal*, 4 (Autumn 1991), 66–71.

3. Except where indicated, Chinese terms are given in Modern Standard Chinese, or Mandarin, and romanised in Hanyu pinyin as here. With less space constraints, we would also provide Chinese terms in Cantonese and other Chinese dialects that were previously more widely spoken amongst Australia's Chinese community.
4. M. B. Steven, *Chinese Diasporas: A Social History of Global Migration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
5. C. Tan, *Chinese Overseas: Comparative Cultural Issues* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004).
6. C. Falk, 'Australia's Asian Songline', *Asian Currents* (21 April 2016), <https://asaa.asn.au/australias-asian-songline>, accessed 8 June 2023.
7. www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-statistics/statistics/country-profiles/profiles, accessed 8 June 2023.
8. <https://bit.ly/3WhZzFg>, accessed 8 June 2023.
9. D. Millar, 'The Chinese in Australia 1818–1918', *Agora*, 44(3) (2009), 24–28.
10. J. Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007).
11. As excerpted in Z. Wang, 'Chinese Music in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Victoria', *Australasian Music Research*, 2–3 (1997/1998), 31.
12. S. B. Miles, *Chinese Diasporas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 105; A. Doggett, '"Strains from Flowery Land": Responses to Chinese Musical Activity in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Ballarat', *Context*, 33 (2008), 107; Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie*.
13. National Archives of Australia, 'Immigration Restriction Act 1901', National Archives of Australia (2022), <https://bit.ly/42Eowvx>, accessed 14 October 2022.
14. M. Williams, 'Smoking Opium, Puffing Cigars, and Drinking Gingerbeer: Chinese Drama in Australia' in J. W. Davidson, M. Halliwell and S. Roche (eds.), *Opera, Emotion, and the Antipodes*, vol 1: *Historical Perspectives: Creating the Metropolis; Delineating the Other*, 1st ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2020), p. 167, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781003035909>.
15. For example, *Star* (20 January 1858); *Mount Alexander Mail* (1 October 1858). See R. Farrell, 'Foot Fascination in Performance in China and Australia in the Nineteenth Century', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 7(1) (2009), 20; H. Love, 'Chinese Theatre on the Victorian Goldfields, 1858–1870', *Australasian Drama Studies*, 3(2) (1985), 45–86; J. Lydon, *'Many Inventions': The Chinese in the Rocks, Sydney, 1890–1930* (Victoria: Monash University Department of History, 1999); Z. Wang, *Chinese Music in Australia, Victoria: 1850s to Mid 1990s* (Melbourne: Australia Asia Foundation, 1997).
16. Williams, 'Smoking Opium', p. 169; see also W. C. Ng, *The Rise of Cantonese Opera* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1080/01937774.2016.1242824>.

17. These include the *yueqin*, *sanzian*, quite possibly a *suona* and various percussion. See Doggett, 'Strains from Flowery Land', 115.
18. Wang, 'Chinese Music in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Victoria', 30–3.
19. D. Kennedy, *Kennedy's Colonial Travel: A Narrative of a Four Years' Tour through Australia, New Zealand, Canada, &c* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Publishing Company, 1876), p. 8.
20. *The Sydney Morning Herald* (1893), p. 6 cited in Williams, 'Smoking Opium', p. 176.
21. Williams, 'Smoking Opium', p. 179.
22. Williams, 'Smoking Opium', p. 175.
23. Williams, 'Smoking Opium', pp. 166–7, 188.
24. Wang, 'Chinese Music in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Victoria'; B. Ristori, *Patients in My Care* (Antwerp: Walter Beckers, 1962).
25. Williams, 'Smoking Opium', p. 197.
26. Z. Wang, 'The Gangzhou Yueju Quysishe ("Gangzhou Society Cantonese Opera Group") in Melbourne, Australia' in N. Ng (ed.), *Encounters: Musical Meetings between Australia and China* (Toowong: Australian Academic Press, 2013) pp. 3–19.
27. Scott-Maxwell, 'Australia and Asia', 83.
28. N. Ng, 'Engaging with a Genre in Decline: Teochew Opera in Western Sydney', *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 22(2–3) (2021), 162–83.
29. Ristori, *Patients in My Care*.
30. Teochew musicians refer to themselves as *Deung nang* 唐人 (*Tang ren*, 'Tang people') rather than *Hang nang* 汉人 (*Han ren*, 'Han people'), which suggests they maintain a localised and subcultural identity. See Ng, 'Engaging with a Genre in Decline', 164; A. R. Thrasher, *Sizhu Instrumental Music of South China: Ethos, Theory and Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 9.
31. T. Tsai, 'From Cantonese Religious Procession to Australian Cultural Heritage: The Changing Chinese Face of Bendigo's Easter Parade', *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 25(1) (2016), 86–106.
32. *Weekly Advertiser* (22 April 1892), cited in Wang, 'Chinese Music in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Victoria', 34–5. Wang provides a description of the *suona*, *dizi*, *ruan*, *erhu* and various percussion instruments likely dating from the 1880s (probably used in ritual music as well as opera) which are held in the collection of Bendigo's Golden Dragon Museum. He also includes an English translation of a rare Chinese-language historical description of a 1907 charity event likely involving similar music-making: 'Western people organized a party for the purpose of funding-raising for the hospital and some Chinese took part in the event. The lion dance was performed and music was played.'
33. See www.cyl.org.au, accessed 8 June 2023; <https://choyleefut.org>, accessed 8 June 2023.
34. See www.canberraliondance.com, accessed 8 June 2023.

35. For example, *Sydney Morning Herald* (10 January 1914), cited in Falk, 'Australia's Asian Songline'; a vivid description of a soundscape of Asian, Indigenous and white music-making for New Year celebrations at Roebuck Bay (near Broome) includes mention of 'Chinese music from the joss-house, with the pipes [presumably, double-reed *suona*] screeching merrily'.
36. N. Ng, 'Foreign Places, Hybrid Spaces', *Continuum*, 25(4) (2011), 529–46.
37. N. Ng, 'I Love the Starry-Sky at Night-Time: Singing and Signing in the Buddha's Light International Association, Sydney', *Musiké 5/6: Sacred Singing and Musical Spirituality*, 3(1) (2011), 19–54.
38. N. Ng, 'Domesticating the Foreign: Singing Salvation through Translation in the Australian Catholic Chinese Community' in A. Chan and A. Nelson (eds.), *Sounds in Translation* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2009), pp. 111–44.
39. *The Canberra Times* (28 October 1926), p. 12, cited in A. Scott-Maxwell, 'Early Jazz in Australia as Oriental Exotica', *Jazz Research Journal*, 8(1–2) (2014), 64.
40. Scott-Maxwell, 'Early Jazz', 52–3, citing Bisset, *Black Roots, White Flowers*, p. 18.
41. Scott-Maxwell, 'Early Jazz', 53, citing *The Brisbane Courier* (3 May 1927), 18.
42. Scott-Maxwell, 'Early Jazz', 67–8.
43. Available at <https://aso.gov.au/titles/historical/melbourne-chinese-orchestra/>, accessed 8 June 2023.
44. *The Sun* (2 March 1939), cited in Z. Wang, 'The Oriental Orchestra and the Chinn Family' in *Chinese Music in Australia, Victoria: 1850s to Mid 1990s* (Melbourne: Australia Asia Foundation, 2009), p. 50, accessed 20 June 2023.
45. 'Alma Quon and Her Joy Belles', Chinese-Australian Historical Images in Australia, www.chia.chinesemuseum.com.au/biogs/CH00844b.htm, accessed 8 June 2023.
46. *The Argus* (30 May 1941 and 26 June 1941), as quoted in A. Scott-Maxwell, 'Australia and Asia: Tracing Musical Representations, Encounters and Connections', *Context*, 35–36 (2010–2011), 84.
47. G. Smith and J. Brett, 'Nation, Authenticity and Social Difference in Australian Popular Music: Folk, Country, Multicultural', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 22(58) (1998), 5.
48. See www.nicholasng.com.au/stringmania-2018.html, accessed 8 June 2023.
49. L. Hu and L. Liu, personal communication, 21 April 2022.
50. L. Liu, 'The Chinese Pipa Solo Tradition: From Conservatory to Concert Hall and Beyond', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sydney (2019).
51. See www.masterperformers.com/shan-deng-wei-deng-conversations, accessed 8 June 2023.
52. Chung Wah Orchestra: <https://www.chungwah.org.au/en/chinese-orchestra/>, accessed 8 June 2023; Xi Yangyang Chinese Orchestra: www.miragenews.com/learn-to-lion-dance-at-sydney-lunar-festival/.

53. S. Li and J. Southcott, 'A Place for Singing: Active Music Engagement by Older Chinese Australians', *International Journal of Community Music*, 5(1) (2012), 59–78.
54. F. Chen, 'Australian Yellow River Chorus', Huaxing Arts Group Sydney (2019), see <https://huaxing.org.au/unitinfo.php?idw=10039>, accessed 8 June 2023.
55. C. Ingram, L. Liu and N. Ng, 'Falling Leaves and New Roots: Informed Practice within the Sydney Conservatorium of Music's Chinese Music Ensemble' in A. Reid, N. Peres Da Costa and J. Carrigan (eds.), *Creative Research in Music: Informed Practice, Innovation and Transcendence* (New York and London: Routledge, 2021), pp. 73–81.
56. I. Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West* (London: Routledge, 2001).
57. B. W. H. Wee, 'Chinese-Western Hybrid Music Development in Australia as Exemplified through the Life and Works of Julian Yu', unpublished Master's thesis, University of Melbourne (2011), pp. 73–4.
58. M. Greet, 'Against the Tide: Julian Yu and the "New Wave" of Chinese Music', *Context*, 17 (1999), 70.
59. L. Lim, 'A "Hidden Centre": Crossing Cultural Boundaries and Ecstatic Transformation', refereed keynote lecture, Inaugural Totally Huge New Music Festival (2005), p. 10, <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/csound/3>, accessed 14 October 2022.
60. These were young Australian-Chinese men and women who fought not only in the World Wars but also against the exclusionary social policies and attitudes of the day, which due to their non-European physical appearance often excluded them from serving in the Australian armed forces. See J. Clyne, R. Smith and I. Hodges, *Chinese Anzacs* (Canberra: Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2015), <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/chinese-anzacs-2015.pdf>, accessed 8 June 2023; W. Davies, *The Forgotten: The Chinese Labour Corps and the Chinese Anzacs in the Great War* (Melbourne: Wilkinson Publishing, 2020).
61. See www.erikgriswold.org/the-wide-alley, accessed 8 June 2023; <https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:266241>, accessed 8 June 2023.
62. T. Needham, 'China: William Yang', *Australian Stage* (20 March 2007), [www.australianstage.com.au/20070321227/reviews/sydney/china-\[-william-yang.html](http://www.australianstage.com.au/20070321227/reviews/sydney/china-[-william-yang.html), accessed 8 June 2023.
63. M. Grenfell and S. Deng, "'Recomposing" Unpublished Chinese Folk Songs into New Australian Compositions for Pipa and Piano', *Context*, 42 (2017), 37–52.
64. *The Serpent's Table*, <https://griffintheatre.com.au/whats-on/the-serpents-table/>, accessed 8 June 2023; *Double Delicious*, www.caap.org.au/productions/past-productions/double-delicious, accessed 8 June 2023.

65. Biography of Mindy Meng Wang, <http://mindymengwang.com/biography/>, accessed 8 June 2023; 'Body of Water (What is Love)', www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXpbBU3Kr_Y, accessed 8 June 2023.
66. www.annettework.com.au/blog/153, accessed 8 June 2023.
67. <https://stories.sydneyoperahouse.com/stage-direction-in-the-mood-for-love/>, accessed 8 June 2023.

Further Reading

- Fitzgerald, J., *Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007).
- Ingram, C., L. Liu and N. Ng, 'Falling Leaves and New Roots: Informed Practice within the Sydney Conservatorium of Music's Chinese Music Ensemble' in A. Reid, N. Peres Da Costa and J. Carrigan (eds.), *Creative Research in Music: Informed Practice, Innovation and Transcendence* (New York: Routledge, 2021), pp. 73–81.
- Liu, L., 'Innovative Compositional Practice: A Discussion of the Processes of Intercultural Collaboration Involving the Chinese Pipa', *Journal of the Society for Asian Humanities*, 54 (2023), 60–85.
- Miles, S. B., *Chinese Diasporas: A Social History of Global Migration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
- Ng, N., 'Engaging with a Genre in Decline: Teochew Opera in Western Sydney', *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology [The Value of Ethnographic Research on Music]*, 22 (2021), 162–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2021.1923794>.
- Ng, N., "'Sounds Chinese': Musical Meetings with China in Contemporary Australia' in N. Ng (ed.), *Encounters: Musical Meetings between Australia and China* (Toowong: Australian Academic Press, 2013), pp. 92–112.
- Wang, Z., *Chinese Music in Australia, Victoria: 1850s to Mid 1990s* (Melbourne: Australia Asia Foundation), 1997.