DAUGHTER OF BIRD AND EARTH

A DISSERTATION IN
Music Composition

Presented to the Faculty of the University of Missouri - Kansas City in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

by
YIGUO YAN

M.F.A., Brandeis University, 2014
B.M., Mannes School of Music, 2012

Kansas City, Missouri
2019
Copyright at 2019

Yiguo Yan

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
The single movement symphonic poem *Daughter of Bird and Earth* draws its inspiration from my own long poem in modern Chinese, *The Resurrection of Poems*, which narrates an imaginary woman’s life journey, both internally and externally, in an abstract poetic language.

Beginning with the low woodwinds and low strings that represent the “earth,” with a variety of imagery, I establish the heroine’s image from both her outer physical appearance and her inner spiritual character. This orchestral piece follows the biography of this imagined female character within a modern mythology. The juxtaposition of timbres, special effects, themes, gestures, and dynamics is audaciously sharp and dramatic. These features can be very obvious and easy to capture for the listener. This power and creativity reflect the many feminist-influenced artistic and social movements from the early modern era to our current time.

The musical language in this piece is poetic and textural. I used a chord, a designed scale, two traditional melodic themes, a short motif, a series of designed atonal chords, and 12 single repeated note to build continuing structures with dramatic expressions. The orchestration method is different from motivic or melodic development which has been used in classical symphonic music tradition in the past hundreds of years.
Program Notes:

*Daughter of Bird and Earth* took the narrative from a heroine’s legend from my long poem *The Resurrection of Poems* in modern Chinese. The long poem is roughly 400 lines, modeled T. S. Elliot’s *The Waste Land*. The reasons I chose T. S. Elliot’s poetic format to refer are: 1) I believed that to deeply integrate the Chinese language with foreign languages is a very positive way to push Chinese as one of the oldest languages in all human civilizations to develop and to find a way to keep it alive. 2) Many colorful and dramatic imageries presented in *The Waste Land* in an abstract way are naturally compatible with the artistic synesthesia — one of my major research topics in music composition I’m pursuing during my doctoral study in UMKC. “Artistic Synesthesia” means that a mature artist would naturally apply her instinct and skills to collect and combine the information through visual, language, auditory, feelings, emotions and atmospheres and so on and express all the information through one artistic media as a logically coherent unity. 3) During my past 11 years’ study in the US, I inevitably absorbed some essence from the American culture, and inspirations from some American contemporary writers. Such as T. S. Elliot, Henry Miller, Tony Morrison, Filipe Roth and Fitzgerald. Their literature works have a great impact on my music composition and aesthetic shaping. Therefore, as the last musical work to close my US study journey, I decided to write a piece that has obviously two cultural influences— American culture and Chinese culture.

Another important aspect of my compositions is a feminist influence. The most important three feminists and their works that influenced my music composition are: 1) Simone de Beauvoir’s *Independent Statement*, a rebellious statement she published at the age of 19 that declares she will never let her life succumb to other people. 2) Virginia Woolf’s novel *Orlando*, in which she created an imaginary character Orlando who lived for two centuries as a man and another two centuries as a woman. 3) A Chinese feminist scholar Li Yinhe who first study sex and gay love in the current Chinese modern history. The three feminists and their writings forged my very deep recognition of my gender, my voice and my being as a woman composer. The spiritual nutrition of this piece comes from the past classical music by many great male composers’ heroic symphonic traditions and the modern feminist spirit, which drives us towards the future.
雌鸟和大地的女儿
面朝太阳
努力逃亡
那金黄的巨轮
一刻不停
绞碎了悲情而壮烈的命运
绞碎了五千年来蛰伏而隐忍的巨龙
五脏如烟花爆裂
宣泄地喷射出万水千山
六腑如星河沉沦
狂暴地断裂成惊涛怒海
这深沉而莫测的民族啊
在轮回的悲剧中锻造历史
用炽热的鲜血
浇灌深紫色的大地
在地心深处的幽冥禁岭中
封存着华夏的血脉
豺狼虎豹的嘶喊
伴随着血脉
在摇篮中长眠
我们对未来一无所知
正如那从未被参透的历史
这个沧桑而悲恸的民族啊！
这个荣耀而屈辱的民族啊！
这个慈悲而残酷的民族啊！
华夏！
English Translation of a selected part of *The Resurrection of Poems*:
The Daughter of Bird and Earth
Facing the sun
Tirelessly escaping from her past
The giant golden wheel
Crushed her solemn and stirring fate
Crushed the giant dragon that has been hidden and endured for five thousand years
Its heart passionately sprays out into thousands rivers and mountains
As the fireworks burst
Its brains furiously breaks down into the million raging oceans
As the galaxy falls
This profound and unfathomable nation!
Forging its history in the transmigrated tragedies
Irrigating the dark purple land with the broiling blood
And guarding the nation’s root in the geocentric nether world
The screams of the brutal animals
Forever accompany it's deep sleep in the cradle
We will never know the future
As we’ve never known the history
This vicissitude and pessimistic nation!
This glory and humiliating nation!
This merciful and cruel nation!
The nation!
Visual Inspiration to *Daughter of Bird and Earth*:
(Selected photography works by Yiguo Yan)
The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the Conservatory of Music and Dance, have examined a dissertation titled “Daughter of Bird and Earth,” presented by Yiguo Yan, candidate for the Doctoral of Musical Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

Chen Yi, D.M.A., Committee Chair
Conservatory of Music and Dance

Zhou Long, D.M.A.
Conservatory of Music and Dance

Alison DeSimone, Ph.D.
Conservatory of Music and Dance

William Everett, Ph.D.
Conservatory of Music and Dance

Andrew Granade, Ph.D.
Conservatory of Music and Dance
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................... iii
PROGRAM NOTES ................................................................................................ iv
SELECTION FROM THE RESURRECTION OF POEMS IN CHINESE ........... v
SELECTION FROM THE RESURRECTION OF POEMS IN ENGLISH ........ vi
SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHY WORKS ............................................................ vii
APPROVAL PAGE ............................................................................................... ix
INSTRUMENTATION ............................................................................................. xi
MUSIC SCORE ...................................................................................................... 1
VITA ....................................................................................................................... 65
INSTRUMENTATION

Piccolo
2 Flutes
Oboe
English Horn in F
2 Clarinet in B Flats
Bassoon
ContraBassoon
4 French Horns in F
2 Trumpets in C
Tuba
Percussion I: Glockenspiel, Suspendier Cymbal
Percussion II: Vibraphone, Wind Chimes, Snare Drum
Percussion III: Tubular Bell, Tam-tam
Percussion IV: Crotales, Bass Drum
Timpani F - C
Harp
Celesta
Violin I (divided into two parts through the entire piece)
Violin II (divided into two parts through the entire piece)
Viola
Cello
ContraBass
Yiguo Yan is a native Chinese composer studying and working in US. Her music has been played in China, the USA, Italy, France and Austria under conductors Mahir Cetiz, Jeffery Means, Noah Sivan, and Zsolt Nagy.

Yan’s awards include the American Prize in a Professional Category in 2015, First Prize in the “Nancy Van de Vate International Composition Prize for Opera in 2009 (Austria), and First Prize in the Shanghai Chamber Music Composition Competition in 2006 (China). Her two chamber music compositions for Chinese traditional instruments have received awards from the Shanghai Spring International Music Festival and the Shanghai Conservatory “Xiang-Yin” Composition Competition for Chinese Instruments in 2007. Yiguo Yan has received fellowships from the Brevard Music Center in 2017 (US), the Fontainebleau Festival in 2011 (France), the Cortona New Music Sessions in 2013 (Italy), the Thailand International Composition Festival in 2016 (Thailand), and the Shanghai New Music Week in 2016 (China). She has been interviewed for the New York City ICN television station in 2015, the Johnson County Public Library in 2016 (Kansas City), the New Women Weekly Newspaper, and the China Music Weekly Newspaper in 2016. She has received commissions from NYU Zen Arts Concert in 2014 and the Johnson County Public Library’s “Listen Local” Project as a featured composer in 2016. Her music has been featured on the NPR weekly radio show “Music of our Mothers” in Maryland and its companion website in 2016.

Yan has received a Bachelor degree in Music Composition from Mannes School of Music in 2012, a Master Of Fine Arts degree in Music Composition and Theory from Brandeis University in 2014, and she started pursuing the Doctoral of Musical and Arts degree in UMKC in 2015.