

# **Resonance and Reflection: Revealing the Philosophical Significance of Bright Sheng's "My Other Song" from the Concept of I-Ching**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the philosophical significance and the illustration of I-Ching concepts that embedded in a solo piano works, "My Other Song," composed in 2007 by Bright Sheng, a Chinese-American composer and one of the representatives of China's modern "New Wave" of composers. The philosophy of I Ching has a history of more than a thousand years, and the theory of yin and yang was derived which has been used by contemporary Chinese composers to innovate contemporary compositional methods. For example, Zhao Xiaosheng forms different combinations of pitch-class arrangements in the melody by decoding the hexagrams corresponding to the 64 hexagrams of the I Ching, while at the same time applying mathematical logic to the serial music styles of the I Ching and tonal structures [1]. By deconstructing the I-Ching concept in the musical works from a compositional point of view, how contemporary Chinese composers utilize the I-Ching-derived yin and yang theories for innovation becomes more clearly apparent. It is interesting to examine what are the approaches through which the I Ching concepts are integrated for a more contemporary style of musical work such as "My Other Song" composed in 2007? This paper examines the philosophical significance of ancient Chinese philosophy and Confucianism, the basic concepts of the I Ching, and the theory of yin and yang with regard to the philosophical implications in "My Other Song". Through an analytical compositional perspective that encompasses pitch structure, tonality, intensity, theme, and musical gesture, it elucidates the relationship between these concepts and the yin-yang theory. The duality in the I Ching is both opposition and unity. The undulations of melody, variations of

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tonality, and contrasts of intensity in musical compositions all imply traditional Chinese philosophical significance. How specific philosophical ideas are incorporated into the procedures and methods of musical composition, as well as the influence and significance of these ideas on modern music will be demonstrated in this article.

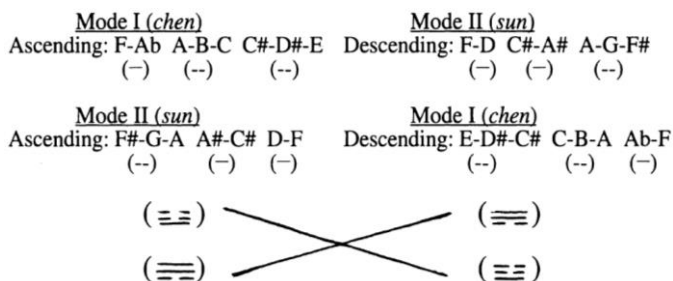
*Keywords: Bright sheng; my other song; compositional developments; musical analysis; yin and yang theory.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The first half of the twentieth century was a period in which Chinese musical culture continued to absorb more advanced musical theories, performance techniques, and compositional styles from abroad. For example, modern Western methods of vocational education were introduced into Chinese university curricula, resulting in "new" or "modern" Chinese music [2]. In addition, the May Fourth Movement, which broke out in 1919, led to the abandonment of "old traditional ideas" and the introduction of "new practicable and innovative ideas" by the people of China. This not only promoted political, economic, cultural and technological development, but also gradually introduced Western notation, musical instruments and music theory into China, promoting the development of "new music". After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, music education was no longer limited to the stereotypical imitation of Western theoretical knowledge, such as harmonic methods and original sources, and Chinese composers began to try to use their own culture in combination with the Western knowledge they had learned. This includes folk dances, folk songs, poems, calligraphy, philosophies, etc. After the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, the number of compositions of different genres continued to rise, with Chow Wen-chung, Bright Sheng, Tan Dun, Chen Yi and other "New Wave" (*xin chao*, means new style) [3] composers being among the most prominent [4]. Chow Wen-chung, in particular, serves as a teacher to the others, leading them to the United States to further their studies and learn about compositional concepts and innovation. As global cultural integration has progressed, there has been a notable tendency to incorporate Chinese philosophical concepts within a variety of musical compositions, encompassing solo, ensemble and orchestral works. This approach has been particularly prevalent among Chinese composers. Notable examples of the incorporation of Chinese philosophical concepts into Western music include the Taiji philosophy of Zhao Xiaosheng in his "Taiji Composition System", the Taoist I-Ching by Chen Yi, Bright Sheng and Zhou Long [5,6], and the use of calligraphic elements in Zhou Long's work [7]. Similarly, foreign composers such as Isang Yun from Korea [8] and Toru Takemitsu [9] from Japan were drawn to Chinese philosophical theories, incorporating yin and yang of Taoism into their own works. However, their interpretations and applications of Chinese Taoist elements differed. The philosophical concepts incorporated into Sheng's musical compositions were significantly influenced by Chou's work. This article analyzing Bright Sheng's "My Other Song" examines the composer's incorporation and exploration of the

concept of Yin and Yang through two compositional methods: Fang Xiaomin's five elements and Zhao Jiping's Taiji compositional system.

The utilization of these Chinese philosophical concepts, which encompass mathematical ideas, yin-yang concepts, the "Zhong Yong 中庸"(middle way) method of Confucian culture, and other related concepts, enables composers to explore a diverse range of structural elements, tonality, harmony, ornamental marks, and other aspects in their compositions. To illustrate, in her Piano Concerto (1993), Chen Yi deliberately eschewed a harmonious tone and instead embraced the "Zhong Yong" of Confucianism [10]. This exemplifies her selective use of Chinese aesthetics, wherein she employed a greater number of elements of contrast and change than elements of balance. She posited that the vertical form of the notes in the "Ba Ban" (eight beats) theme (Chinese folk tune) was excessively harmonious and thus incompatible with her aesthetic sensibilities. Consequently, she combined two additional tonal materials, a "twelve-tone" theme and a "Chen Yi" theme, allowing for greater variation in the musical texture, to create a harmonic language that was uniquely her own [11]. Another example comes from Bright Sheng's teacher, Chou Wen-chung, whose study of the I Ching dated back to the mid-20th century, and whose longtime dedication to the study of the I Ching in relation to music has led to his unique understanding of the intervallic patterns in the *Bagua* (eight trigrams) or 64 hexagrams. In *Bian Gua* (changing the mode), Chou designed different variable patterns based on the basic concept of the I Ching, and created the manipulation of intervallic patterns in composing *Pien* [12]. The figure below illustrates his creation of Modes I and II, which shows the transformation of the triad into this complementary combinatorial nature. The two modes are related in terms of mirroring: Ascending mode I is related to descending mode II and vice versa.



**Fig. 1. Chou's the transformation of the triad into this complementary combinatorial nature, source from Chang [12]**

Following his emigration to the United States in 1982, Sheng commenced a detailed study of the twelve-tone and counterpoint methods. He gained an understanding of the nuances of cross-cultural synthesis from Bartók and, at Columbia University, acquired the ability to apply philosophical concepts to musical compositions under the tutelage of Chou Wen-chung. In response to a question from a Wall Street Journal reporter regarding his self-perception as a cultural immigrant, Bright Sheng provided a detailed and nuanced answer. "I feel

100% Chinese and 100% American" [13]. This constitutes a felicitous response, which can be understood as a reflection of the traditional Chinese notion of "taking the best out of the worst." Despite experiencing the Cultural Revolution in China as a teenager for over seven years, Sheng remained motivated to study when assigned to Qinghai, a rural area of China. Conversely, the folk culture of the Qinghai-Tibet generation broadened his horizons, encompassing folk songs, traditional instrumental music, pentatonic melodies, and even Buddhist music. Additionally, traditional philosophical concepts engaged him profoundly. In 2001, he returned to the northwest of China, drawing upon childhood memories and a scientific approach to researching traditional Chinese culture and thought. He was able to experience the enduring charm of traditional culture and identify further possibilities for combining folk elements, philosophical concepts and Western compositional techniques in this region, which has historically been less prosperous. Following a period of reflection, he proceeded to compose a new piano solo work, entitled "My Other Songs", in 2007.

## 2. THE PRINCIPLE OF YIN YANG

The principle of yin and yang has its roots in the ancient Chinese philosophical tradition. The ancient Chinese believed that the universe began with nothingness (i.e., "void," "*Wuji*"), or absolute stillness. This was followed by the emergence of something, which they called the "whole," "ultimate being," or "*Taiji*." From this point onward, the universe developed in a series of stages, beginning with the two poles (yin-dark and yang-bright), then the "four phenomena" and the "eight trigrams," and finally everything in the universe. In the *Tao Te Ching*, Laozi, the founder of Taoism, posits that the Tao gives rise to one, which in turn gives rise to two (i.e., Yin and Yang), which in turn give rise to three, and so on, until everything is born. "All things are imbued with yin and embrace yang, and their intermingling influence brings harmony" [14]. The two poles of Yin and Yang bear resemblance to the magnetic poles around which phenomena oscillate at either end. All things are in a state of constant change and progression, moving towards one pole or the other. Yin is associated with the passive or feminine aspects of the universe, exemplified by qualities such as the Moon, night, weakness, darkness, and softness. Yang, on the other hand, represents the active and masculine forces, as evidenced by the Sun, day, strength, brightness, and hardness [15]. The *I Ching* is frequently designated as the *Book of Changes*. In a previous publication, Kwan [5] presented a detailed account of this book in his dissertation: "The book reflects a naturalistic understanding or interpretation of the objective world by prehistoric Chinese civilization which, upon recognition of predictable changes in nature (e.g., day-night, the seasons), came to conclude that the only 'constant' in the universe are 'changes'—specifically 'simple changes' revolving around the two polarities, the Yin and the Yang." In 1950, Wilhelm published a translation of the *I Ching* into a foreign language and included the following introduction [10]:

The eight trigrams are symbols standing for changing transitional states; they are images that are constantly undergoing change. Attention centers not on things in their state of being--as is chiefly the case in the Occident--

but upon their movements in change. The eight trigrams therefore are not representations of things as such but of their tendencies in movement.

*Zhou Yi* is one of the three historiographies in the *I Ching*, and in this context, it could be explained that Yang is represented by an uninterrupted line. When Yang ultimately becomes Yin, as Yin ultimately becomes Yang, the uninterrupted Yang line (—) will break into two parts, forming a Yin line (- -). This process is analogous to the Yin- Yang symbol.

### 3. THE REVEALING OF YIN YANG IN MUSICAL ANALYSIS

The principles of the yin-yang concept are of significant influence on several musical aspects. This contrasting yet reinforcing force bestowed upon the composer an unbound capacity for creativity, as elucidated by Kim [16] in his analysis of Isang Yun's "Monolog for bassoon" (1983). In this piece, the dynamics of yin and yang are depicted in a state of constant interplay, embodying a paradoxical yet harmonious relationship that aligns with the external tenets of Taoism. This concept of Taoist philosophy has been identified as an ideal basis for many works of art, philosophy and literature. In essence, the Yin-Yang concept elucidates that a longer duration signifies Yang and a shorter duration represents Yin. Furthermore, an increase in the number of bars denotes an increase in Yang, while a reduction in the number of bars corresponds to a reduction in Yin. A model of the yin-yang rhythm represents a structural form of musical duration. This consists of a combination of various notes of identical and different durations, which are combined in a complex and varied manner. As mentioned earlier, in accordance with the tenets of yin-yang rhythm, the long note duration is regarded as yang, whereas the short note duration is considered to be yin. This is combined with the principle of yin-yang model production, whereby the crotchet note is designated as yang and the quaver note is identified as yin.

The concept of yin and yang also plays an important role in the definition of structures. Park [17] posited that the concept of yin and yang represents an organic unity and growth. Fang [18] also provided a diversity of forms of expression for the different ways of presenting the concept of yin and yang in musical compositions, and those variations in different aspects such as intensity, tonality and sound effects are the opposites but unity of the *I Ching* theory, and these are the essence and significance in traditional Chinese philosophical thinking.

"In tonal music, the seventh chord is called "yin" due to its tension sound and arrangement, while the third chord is "yang". Similarly, the third chord is comprised of two opposing elements: the major third is yang, and the minor third is yin. In this infinite cycle, the dichotomy categorizes each group as either yin or yang. Accordingly, in terms of structural form, the ascending melody can be classified as yang, whereas the descending melody can be classified as yin; an increase in the number of tones in a chord can be seen to correspond to a yang, whereas a decrease in the number of tones can be

seen to correspond to a yin; a major key can be seen to correspond to a yang, whereas a minor key can be seen to correspond to a yin; the ascending key is yang and the descending key is yin; the higher number of scales is yang and the lower number is yin; the positive sequence of tones is yang and the negative is yin. Furthermore, The duration of notes can be classified as either long or short, and the former is associated with yang, while the latter is associated with yin; the odd number of beats is yang, and the even number of beats is yin; the fast speed is yang and the slow speed is yin; the high register is yang and the low register is yin; the strong register is yang, the weak register is yin; the polyphonic register is yang, the monophonic register is yin."

The structural patterns of yin and yang are frequently founded upon a multitude of musical elements, including melody, harmony, modulation, tonality, scale, series, rhythm, tempo, speed, register, intensity, timbre and texture. One notable example is that of Chou Wen-chung, who devised scale modes derived from the eight trigrams of the yin-yang theory [10]. These included the thunder mode and the sun mode, which he subsequently incorporated into his own musical compositions [7]. Apart from that, the eight elements represented by the Eight Trigrams, including Earth, Mountain, Rain, Wind, Thunder, Sun, Lake, and Heaven all have their corresponding symbols of the trigrams and binaries with their representative musical language symbols, as shown in the Fig. 2 below [19].

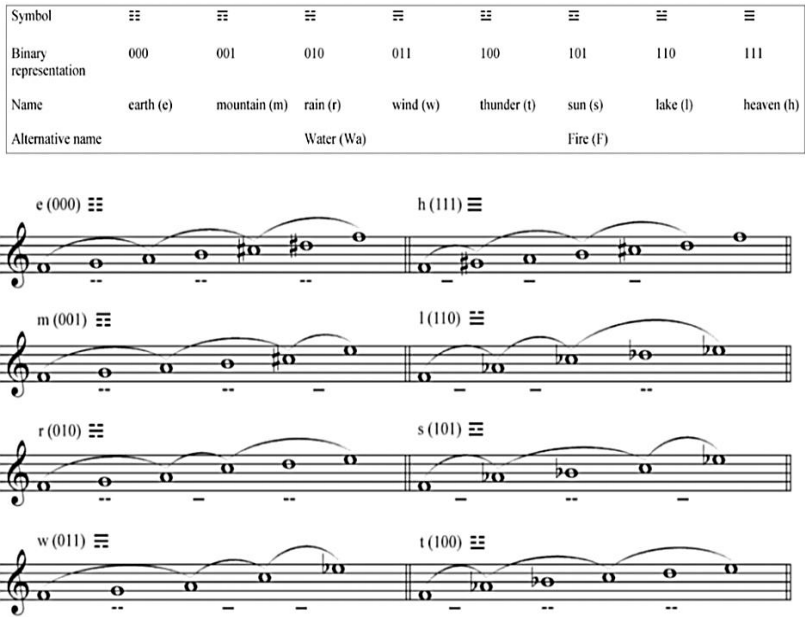
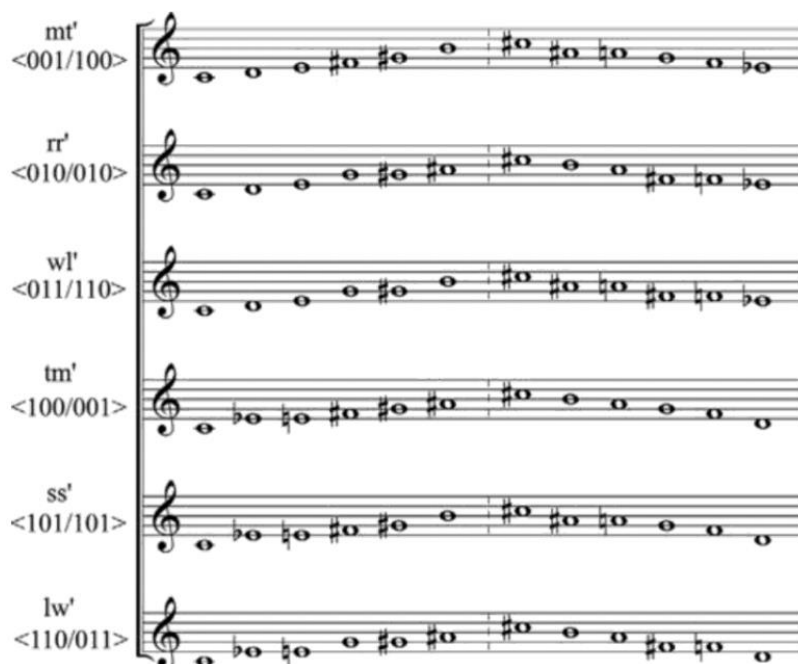


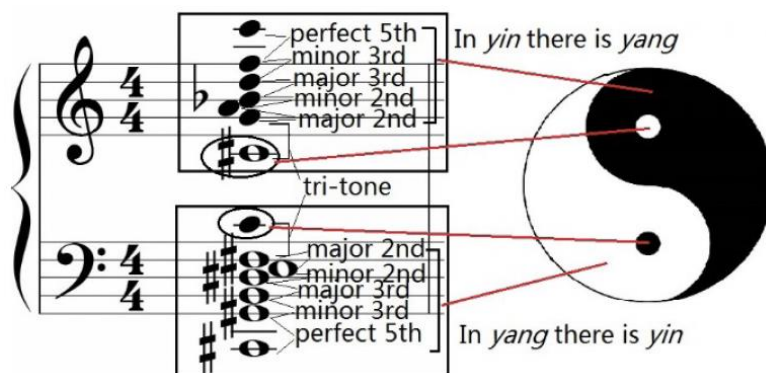
Fig. 2. Chou Wen Chung's eight modes corresponding eight trigrams, source from Lai [19]

In addition, there is a symmetry shown in the modal scales created by Chou in the work *Pien* (1966) [20]. As the Fig. 3 below demonstrates, the wind mode <011> is paired with the lake mode <110>: the first line of the first mode is the same as the last line of the second mode; the middle line of the first mode is the same as the middle line of the second mode; and the last line of the first mode is the same as the first line of the second mode [20].



**Fig. 3. A Symmetry in Chou's Yin-Yang Modals, [20]**

Chou expresses the application of temporary elevation marks to the twelve tones by way of ascending and descending order, and these pitch relationships are in turn used to indicate the presentation of different permutations of major and minor second and minor third degrees for the yin and yang lines. These not only highlight the diversity of the yin and yang modal scales, but also represent the different trigrams in which the yin and yang lines are represented. For example, inspired by the Taiji dichotomy diagram, Zhao created Taiji chords using a combination of perfect fifths, minor thirds, major thirds, minor seconds, major seconds, and tritones (Fig. 4). More importantly, he used the theory of 'yin within yang and yin within yang' from the Tai Chi diagram, in which the yin soprano part consists of yang tones labelled with white head note numbers and vice versa [1]. Based on these Taiji chords and the yin and yang lines of the Eight Trigrams, Zhao constructed a series of 64 pitch sets representing the 64 trigrams (Fig. 5), from which Zhao's solo piano work *Taiji* is organized as an instrumental work.



**Fig. 4. Tai Chi chord by Zhao Xiaosheng, (Xue, et al., 2017)**

Another composer who typically incorporates I-Ching philosophy into Western compositional techniques is Chung Yiu Kwong. Unlike other composers, Chung considers and applies Schenker's theory in terms of hierarchies and basic sequences while incorporating the I-Ching into his musical compositions [21]. For example, hexagram 27 is inversely related to 28, hexagram 9 is retrograde related to 10, hexagram 25 is interchangeably related to 34, hexagrams 5 and 6 possess the relations of retrograde and interchange, and hexagrams 63 and 64 contain the relations of inversion, retrograde and interchange.

The circular Taiji diagram of 64 trigrams of the I Ching, drawn by Shao Yong (1011–1077), inspired Zhao Xiao-sheng, who returned from the United States after studying there in the 1980s. During his studies in the United States in the 1980s, he identified parallels between the three fundamental elements of music (including pitch, harmony, and tonality) and natural phenomena (such as the sky, ground, wind, thunder, water, fire, and mountains). He sought to elucidate the seemingly implausible pitch colors and chords produced by the conjunction of yin and yang in terms of the *bagua*, and even the process of integrating the concepts of yin and yang with compositional concepts. This led to the creation of the Tai Chi compositional system [22]. Given that Taiji is characterized by the duality of yin and yang, it is essential to demonstrate an even-numbered increase when arranging a regular sequence of tones, including dyads, tetrachords, six, eight, ten, or twelve chords. This results in the formation of different trigram sets, such as Xie 4-23 [0, 2, 5, 7] and Yi 4-9 [0, 1, 6, 7] [21]. The distinction between Zhao's yin-yang set and the Western Allen Ford pitch-class set lies in the starting point. While Ford employs a fixed C as the starting note, Zhao's approach begins with a stationary C and increases by a single digit per semitone (as illustrated in Fig. 6) [10].

In 1987, Zhao composed a further solo piano piece, entitled "Taiji". This piece comprises 64 hexagrams of yin and yang, connected at the beginning and end and arranged in a systematic and regular sequence of different scales. These



collections of scales are composed of elements that can be understood as representing the yin and yang principles; they exhibit a symmetrical relationship to one another, which can be described as a "mirror image" [22]. To elaborate, the diverse modes, chords and intervals are integrated to progress from a state of simplicity to one of complexity, and subsequently back again. This resonates with the previously mentioned idea that the tonal scales, hierarchical structures, and other features of Chow's compositions are characterized by symmetry. This feature also highlights the aesthetics of symmetry in traditional Chinese philosophical thought and the law of repetition in the I Ching.

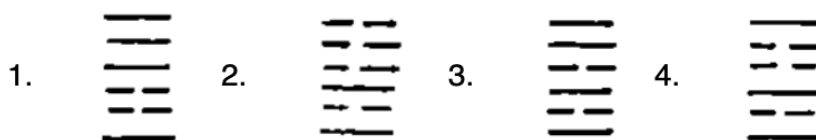


**Fig. 5. Pitch-classes in the 64 hexagrams by Zhao Xiaosheng, (Xue, et al., 2017)**

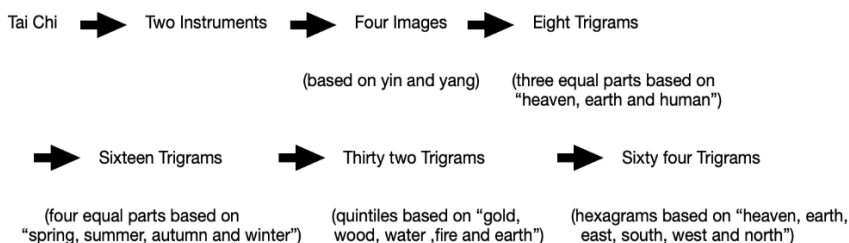
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
C	C#, D ♭	D	D#, E ♭	E	F	F#, G ♭	G	G#, A ♭	A	A#, B ♭	B

**Fig. 6. Zhao's theory of the yin-yang set**

Moreover, Fang [23] synthesized the tenets of yin-yang rhythm and structure through an analysis of the trigrams espoused in the yin-yang philosophy. This led to the creation and integration of a series of tabular diagrams based on the formula of the number series into his compositions. On the one hand, Fang designated the duration of the 64 notes based on each of the 64 distinct trigrams, employing lines to symbolize the yin-yang essence. This entailed the use of long lines to represent yang and short lines to represent yin, thereby creating a six-digit expression of yin-yang from the bottom to the top in a sequence. Fig. 7 provides several illustrative examples [10]. On the other hand, I Ching posits that Tai Chi possesses a set of categories, as depicted in Fig. 8 [10]. These categories are derived from the equation, and Fang [23] presents a summary of the different patterns of yin-yang rhythms derived from the various trigrams.



**Fig. 7. Six-digit expression of yin-yang from the bottom to the top in a sequence**



**Fig. 8. Process of Tai Chi based on the equation**

It should be noted that the duration is the fundamental structural unit which represents the yin-yang rhythm. In accordance with the yin-yang theory, the division is based on the semibreve (1, which may be considered to be analogous to the Tai Chi). Subsequently, the bisector method is employed to divide the semibreve sequentially, thus resulting in a series of individual notes and dotted notes. A table of note duration modes, based on Fang's (1994) formula for the yin-yang function of the Tai Chi model (yang as 1, yin as 0), is presented below. It illustrates some of the note durations. In his work "Structures, Livre II (1956)," Boulez employed this method, which comprises 12 structures in the Taiji pattern

(Fig. 9), which included "Fu, Ming Yi, Tai, Zhen, Gui Mei, Feng, Da Zhuang, Lin, Sui, Jie, Jiji, Xu" [23].

Da Zhuang    -- Crotchet	Xu    -- Dotted Crotchet	Dui    -- Double Dotted Crotchet
Tai    -- Quaver	Gui Mei    -- Dotted Quaver	Feng    -- Double Dotted Quaver
Lin    -- Semiquaver	Fu    -- Demisemiquaver	Ming Yi    -- Dotted Semiquaver
Zhen    -- Quaver+Demisemiquaver	Sui    -- Crotchet+Demisemiquaver	Jie    -- Crotchet+ Quaver
Ji Ji    -- Crotchet+ Dotted Semiquaver		

**Fig. 9. Note Duration mode table**

The interconversion of tone patterns in combination with compositional techniques can be divided into five principal categories (Fang, 1994), which may be defined as follows:

1. Order
2. Inversion
3. Transaction
4. Interaction
5. Rebirth

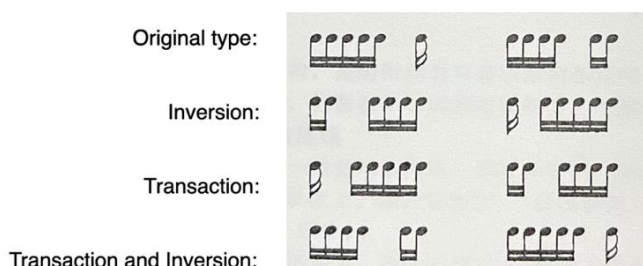
The Order method involves reversing the sequence of tones, while the inversion method entails modifying the yin and yang of notes within a structure or altering the order of their occurrence. The transaction method alters the position of yin and yang notes within a structure. The interaction method, meanwhile, involves modifying the position or adjusting the order of internal and external monophonic patterns, thereby forming a new structure. Finally, the rebirth method entails reversing the yin and yang of notes in the opposite direction.

In his thesis, Professor Fang Xiaomin [23] not only elucidated the theoretical underpinnings of this compositional technique, but also drew parallels between this and Western compositional theory, underscoring its relevance to this field of study:

In serial music, composers make extensive use of rhythmic "inversions and reversals" in their works. Furthermore, they make extensive use of "inversions" and "reversals" of rhythms. They systematically alter the arrangement of tonal forms, as well as the irreversible rhythms of the 'order' method, and transform them in symmetrical and asymmetrical, variable and invariable, precise and imprecise, equal and unequal in proportion, expanded and reduced in "yin and yang." The rhythms have been systematically altered in form and structure to achieve a universal rhythm form.

If looking at one of the characteristics of the I Ching, reversal or inversion, some Western serialist composers are also found to be utilizing yin and yang rhythms

and structures in their compositions, such as Babbit's Three Compositions for Piano (1947). In Fig. 10, the rhythm in inversion and transaction were used [10].



**Fig. 10. Babbit's method in yin-yang concept**

With regard to how Chinese composers have applied I-Ching theories in conjunction with their musical compositions, a number of the works by the Chinese composer Zhao Xiaosheng are representative of such products of the combination of yin and yang philosophy. To cite one example, the solo piano piece "Taiji" (1987) draws inspiration from the 64 trigrams of the Yin-Yang theory. This has resulted in the creation of a corresponding arrangement of the 64 tone sets [24]. The work's incorporation of numerous reflections and recreations imbues it with a Chinese element, while simultaneously incorporating features of the Western sonata structure [10].

Given that the theory of yin and yang is applicable to aspects such as duration, rhythm, and structure, it can also be observed in scales and modes. To illustrate, Fang's Five Elements of Composition mentions the San Cai (three equivalents of heaven, earth, and human) mode, wherein he classifies and categorizes the Chinese pentatonic, hexatonic, and heptatonic modes and applies them to the transformation of various scales in the composition process, according to the changing forms of the five yin-yang elements [10]. Furthermore, the structural length of music is typically delineated in terms of time and the number of bars. When the latter is integrated with the principle of yin-yang pattern development, it can be expressed as the following isometric series:  $2^n+1$  [25]. Fig. 11 depicts a partial Taiji structure length diagram based on Tang's yin-yang theory and mathematical formulae, calculated for a number of bars within 20 [10].

1 Kun	000000	6 Ming Yi	101000	11 Jie	010100	16 Da Zhuang	111100
2 Fu	100000	7 Sheng	011000	12 Gui Mei	110100	17 Bi	000010
3 Shi	010000	8 Tai	111000	13 Xiao Guo	001110	18 Tun	100010
4 Lin	110000	9 Yu	000010	14 Feng	101100	19 Kan	010010
5 Qian	001000	10 Zhen	100100	15 Heng	011100	20 Jié	110010

**Fig. 11. Taiji structure length table**

The enumeration of the subsections is presented in a left-to-right sequence, accompanied by the nomenclature of the 64 trigrams and the yin-yang expressions, wherein the value of yin is designated as 0 and that of yang as 1. To illustrate, the no. 8 *Tai* depicted here comprises eight bars within a phrase. The Yin and Yang of the Eight Trigrams are illustrated with three lines, with the 64 Trigrams represented by six lines. Ni [26] posits that 111000 represents a state of balance achieved through the neutralization of yin and yang. The "balance" that appears here, along with the "symmetry" and "inversion" that have been mentioned several times before, are important concepts in the I-Ching philosophy, and one of the most prominent features of these musical compositions involving yin and yang.

#### **4. INTERPRETATION OF BRIGHT SHENG'S "MY OTHER SONGS" IN THE YIN-YANG CONTEXT**

The following analysis is based on the previously outlined methodology and considers the musical elements of tempo, structure, bar length, tonality, melody, dynamics, and register. The musical work entitled "My Other Song", composed by Sheng, comprises four movements. The first and fourth movements are characterized by a slow tempo and are classified as belonging to the yin, whereas the remaining movements are fast-paced and are categorized as belonging to the yang. The illustration in Fig. 7 depicts the bar number. In accordance with the table of the yin-yang structural length pattern, the yin-yang notation in musical structure can be marked (Fig. 12) [10]. In terms of structure, the initial, third and fourth movements adopt an A-B-A1 or A-B-C format, representing a monomorphic form (Yin) of monopoly. Additionally, the second movement follows an A-B-A1-B1 (Li Yin, 1010) pattern, exemplifying a polymorphic form (Yang) of monopoly. With the exception of the A section, which is comprised of an odd number of bars, the total number of bars within the entire movement is nevertheless still odd, reflecting the Yin quality associated with this structural pattern.

From the standpoint of melody in the initial section of "My Other Song," the melodic line commences with a solitary line at the outset of the A section and subsequently becomes diatonic through the introduction of a parallel melody at bar 11. At this juncture, the melodic line is in parallel and moving in a similar direction. The melody does not undergo a reversal of direction until bar 25, when it changes from a yang to a yin progression, thereby announcing the arrival of the second movement in which these two opposing forces are interchanged (Fig. 13) [10]. Furthermore, the register of these bars extends beyond the five-octave range, encompassing the full range from the highest to the lowest register.

The rhythmic structure is closely aligned with the yin-yang concept, encompassing a multitude of distinctive compositional techniques and pioneering concepts. In accordance with the yin-yang rhythmic structure table, there are two distinct rhythmic structures in measure 21, which can be expressed as a Kan-Tai-Yin rhythm (01000) in the left hand and a Kun-Shao-Yin rhythm (00010) in the right hand. Similarly, the same yin-yang compositional method, namely

inversion, is employed by the composer in this bar, as observed in Babbit's example above.

Movement I			
<b>A</b> (mm. 1-17) (4+6) + 7 (Lin + Ming Yi ) + Sheng Zhen + Sheng	<b>B</b> (mm. 18-29) (2+6) + 4 (Fu + Ming Yi ) + Lin Tai + Lin	<b>A1</b> (mm. 30-43) (4 + 6) + 4 (Lin + Ming Yi ) + Lin Zhen + Lin	
Movement II			
<b>A</b> (mm 1-8) 8 Tai 泰	<b>B</b> (mm 9-43) (6+5) + (8+8) + 8 (Ming Yi + Qian ) + (Tai + Tai ) + Tai Jie + Da Zhuang + Tai	<b>A1</b> (mm 44-52) 9 Yu	<b>B1</b> (mm 53-73) 11+(8+2) Jie + (Qian + Fu ) Jie + Zhen
Movement III			
<b>A</b> (mm. 1-61) (5+20+7+19+17) Qian + Jie + Sheng + Kan. + Bi	<b>B</b> (mm. 62-79) (8+10) Tai + Zhen	<b>C</b> (mm. 80-97) (11+7) Jie + Sheng	
Movement IV			
<b>A</b> (mm. 1- 26) (4+6+8+8) Lin + Ming Yi + Tai + Tai	<b>B</b> (mm. 27- 60) 6+4+(11+(5+8)) Ming Yi + Lin +(Jie +(Qian +Tai )) Ming Yi + Lin +Jie +Xiao Guo	<b>A1</b> (mm. 61- 94) (2+11)+8+(4+9) (Fu + Jie )+ Tai . + (Lin + Yu ) Xiao Guo . + Tai . + Xiao Guo	

**Fig. 12. Yin-yang structure of Sheng's "My Other Song"**



**Fig. 13. "My Other Song," bars 19–28**

In terms of tonality, the piece commences in the key of C $\flat$ . It is, however, worthy of note that the fourth note, F, is augmented by a semitone in comparison to the preceding measure. Chang [27] observed that Bright Sheng was profoundly influenced by Ravel and Ligeti in terms of the integration of parallel and triadic harmonic styles, with an emphasis on overlapping sound layers and distinctive timbres. An exemplary presentation can be observed in measures 20–29, as illustrated in Fig. 8. In this passage, two distinct melodic lines are performed by each hand in a contrapuntal juxtaposition. It was observed that, when analyzed in a longitudinal manner, the tones appeared to be randomly distributed. However, when the transverse flute is employed, the two melodic lines display an intriguing compatibility, characterized by a certain degree of contradiction and complementarity.

Prior to the advent of the F-sharp, two lines were merged to create a hexatonic scale, the C Gong (added Qing Yue, the fourth note) scale (C–D–E–F–G–A–C). However, the advent of the ascending F marked a significant shift in the evolution of the complete seven-tone scale. The conflicting yet compatible relationship between the two lines led to a new dimension in the scale's development. In Fang's San Cai (Heaven, Earth, Human) composition method, there are modes in which all the tones in the scale are major (Human) and minor (Earth) second. These are known as 'di ren modes' and include the Chinese heptatonic, medieval heptatonic, and Western major and minor modes [10]. Additionally, the modes in which the tones in the scale are all augmented second or minor third (heaven), major (human), and minor (earth) second are designated as tian di ren modes. These include the Chinese hexatonic and the Gypsy major and minor modes [18]. In Bright Sheng's arrangement, the tian di ren mode is transformed into the di ren mode, and the C Gong hexatonic mode is then moved by a perfect fifth to form G Zhi Yayue for the left hand. This is based on the Ren Zhong method of yin-yang composition, with the modal structure remaining the same but the position of the tonic dominant changing. Subsequently, it is elevated by a major second to create A Yu Yayue for the right hand, based on the turn regeneration method. From the vantage point of musical texture, a more straightforward texture is depicted, shifting from a parallel octave in the A section to a parallel fourth and fifth interval in the B section. The scales inherent to each mode are illustrated in Fig. 14 [10].

The yin-yang concepts espoused by Zhao are evident not only in the second movement, but also in the third. In this context, the pitch-set concept is expressed through quintets in one pedal that serve as rhythmic motivation, which may be interpreted as E $\flat$  to F to A $\flat$  to B $\flat$ , F to G to B $\flat$  to C, as well as other possible combinations. Furthermore, the relationships between intervals could be described in terms of a pitch-class set, as exemplified by the series of pitches B $\flat$ –C–E $\flat$ –F, A $\flat$ –B $\flat$ –D $\flat$ –E $\flat$ , and so forth, which correspond to the pitch-class set Xie 4-23 [0, 2, 5, 7]. The concept of the twelve-tone scale was also employed in the third movement. The third movement represents the pinnacle of chromatic relationship stacking and arrangement, showcasing a complete absence of fixed tonality and a kaleidoscope of musical textures. The continuous alternation and juxtaposition of chromatic scales result in a striking and contemporary acoustic

effect, encompassing a vast range of the tonal spectrum. The distinctive composition style of the composer is evident in this movement, firstly through the juxtaposition of accented pairs with the ongoing octave, and secondly through the juxtaposition of two octaves at a distance of one third or fourth, which serves to create a greater chromatic effect. Additionally, the employment of distinctive phrasing by Sheng serves to disrupt the prevailing long tones, accelerate the harmonic rhythm and engender a more propulsive forward motion. A significant proportion of the dissonant notes that are harmonized in the composer's distinctive arrangement reflect the root theory of yin and yang. As such, yin is considered to be the extreme of yang, and yang is regarded as the extreme of yin.

The image displays three musical staves, each representing a traditional Chinese pentatonic scale. Each staff includes a title, a musical notation with notes on a five-line staff, and a corresponding sequence of Chinese characters below it.

- Chinese traditional pentatonic scales** (Title for the first staff):
  - Notes: C4, D4, E4, G4, A4
  - Characters: Gong Shang Jue Zhi YU
- C Gong Yayue** (Title for the second staff):
  - Notes: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4
  - Characters: Gong Shang Jue Bianzhi Zhi Yu Biangong Gong
- A Yu Yayue** (Title for the third staff):
  - Notes: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4
  - Characters: Yu Biangong Gong Shang Jue Bianzhi Zhi Yu.
- G Zhi Yayue** (Title for the fourth staff):
  - Notes: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4
  - Characters: Zhi Yu Biangong Gong Shang Jue Bianzhi Zhi

**Fig. 14. Traditional Chinese pentatonic scales**

The fourth movement marks a return to calm from the preceding stress and intensity, with the quotation of a Buddhist chant, "Ode to Namo Amitabha." The movement commences with the concept of "harmony at the end of dissonance," which was introduced in the previous movement. In the left hand, D is used, while in the right hand, D $\flat$  is played a semitone lower. Subsequently, the melody of the Buddha's hymn is incorporated into the movement in a woven pattern. In this movement, the pitch-class set is repeated in Xie 4-23 [0,2,5,7] (D $\flat$ -E $\flat$ -F-A $\flat$ ) and Sheng 4-9 [0, 1, 6, 7] [21], for instance, A $\flat$ -D-E $\flat$ -A and D $\sharp$ -G $\sharp$ -A-D. This repetition of the difference in fifths and the constant use of the four-note series serves to demonstrate the composer's integration of traditional Chinese philosophies, whereby the essence is absorbed, and the composer's own understanding and compositional techniques are added. The result is a unique musical signature that fuses and sublimates two different cultures, bearing the composer's label.



## 5. CONCLUSION

Bright Sheng's compositional style is heavily influenced by Chou Wen-chung in terms of the intersection of philosophical concepts and musical compositions. In addition, Chinese traditional culture, Sheng's Chinese and Western educational background, and the Chinese social environment also influenced Sheng's concept in his composition. In Sheng's works on the I Ching and other philosophical concepts, the concepts of "complementary yin and yang", "moderately balance", "ebb and flow, alternation of yin and yang" and "return to equilibrium" are often reflected in the construction of sections and measures, the arrangement of melodic lines, as well as variations in rhythm and tonality. The compositional method employed by the composer is similar to that used by Babbitt in most of the bars, namely the yin-yang method, the inversion method and the Fang rotational regeneration method. In the domain of harmony, the composer also departs from the conventional harmonic intervals and incorporates a multitude of discordant elements with the objective of evoking the notion that "the yin pole produces the yang, the yang pole produces the yin". It is evident that Sheng's "My Other Song" is founded upon the traditional Chinese philosophical concept of the I Ching, manifesting in its tempo, structure, tonality, melody, and rhythm.

It is not unexpected that philosophical reflections and concepts are employed in musical compositions. The concept of "solidity at the bottom" was linked by Xue and Loo in 2019 to the long-standing practice of pianists in developing finger dexterity and strength. It was found that the pedagogical theory between Tai Chi and piano playing exhibits similarities, with the foundation of footwork paralleling the flexibility, strength, and key resistance of the fingers. This forms the initial foundation to the next stage of circular movement. Moreover, Everett [7] has broadened the scope of the non-traditional approach to the analysis of contemporary musical compositions by drawing upon the principles of traditional Chinese thought, specifically the art of calligraphy, and situating it within the context of the works of the celebrated composer Chou Wen-Chong. He discovered that, despite the pitch and rhythmic structure appearing to adhere to Western polyphonic techniques and sharing similarities with the works of other modernist composers, closer examination of Chou's meticulous notations within the score and an understanding of the concept of calligraphy in itself can attest to the distinctiveness of his approach, which is based on principles derived from calligraphy. It can thus be concluded from these analyses and research findings that, on the one hand, the traditional Chinese philosophy of yin and yang can be seen as a synthesis of thousands of years of Chinese philosophical thought or as the outcome of an interaction between multiple ideas. On the other hand, these complex philosophical concepts, which appear to transcend the physical reality, can be understood as the fundamental principles underlying the formation of all phenomena in the universe. In accordance with the two complementary concepts of yin and yang, namely solidity and emptiness, the corresponding examples pertaining to the various domains are illustrated as deriving from the action of yin and yang. It can be demonstrated that all phenomena can be unified with yin and yang, and that this unification can be exemplified in a multitude of ways.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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