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Lin Yaoji: The Legend of Violin Education in China

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Lin Yaoji—The Legend of Violin Education in China

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by
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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Chapter 1 Lin Yaoji's Legendary Life..... | 4 |
| Chapter 2 Lin Yaoji's Teaching Methods..... | 24 |
| Chapter 3 Success and Limitations..... | 59 |
| Conclusion..... | 72 |
| Work Cited..... | 75 |

Introduction

The violin in its present form emerged in early 16th-century northern Italy. After several centuries, it has gradually become well known in the world and has been crowned as the queen of classical music.

In recent decades, a large number of violin students have appeared in China. Among them are the winners of international violin competitions, violinists who work in the world's top orchestras, and violin professors who hold positions in famous conservatories. For instance, Hu Kun, who was born in China just before the Cultural Revolution, won the fifth prize of the Sibelius International Violin Competition in 1980. As the first Chinese citizen to win a prize at a major international violin competition, he is a professor of violin at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Xue Wei, who won the silver medal at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Competition, the Sonata prize and Orchestra and Audience prize at the Carl Flesch International Violin Competition, is now a violin professor at the Central Conservatory of Music in China. Chai Liang, who won the first National Violin Competition for Arts Institutions in China, the second prize at Yehudi Menuhin International Violin Competition in England, and the third Japan International Music Competition, currently serves as chairman of the String Department at the China Central Conservatory of Music. Several of the outstanding violinists mentioned above have studied with the same teacher, Lin Yaoji, who is known as the legendary “godfather” of violin education in China.

The main purpose of this paper is to present Lin Yaoji, the leading figure of Chinese violin education to readers, and do an analysis of his successful teaching methods for Chinese

students. There are three chapters in this paper: Lin's biography, an interpretation of his teaching methods, and an analysis of his success.

In the first chapter, Lin's life experience will be fully revealed. As a person who set a significant milestone in Chinese violin education, Lin Yaoji should not only have amazing achievements in teaching that are highly recognized, but also his personality, which is supposed to be affected by his growing environment and his educational background, must have an essential impact on his success. But so far, no books have been published in English. In this chapter, his legendary life will be fully documented for the first time ever. Thus, this chapter is basically an objective collection of some articles about him and people's memoirs of him. Furthermore, it provides useful information for the analysis of his teaching methods, his success and his limitations in subsequent chapters.

After viewing Lin's life, the readers will have a thorough understanding of his teaching methods in the second chapter. The teaching methods with distinctive Chinese characteristics are presented in three categories: philosophical teaching ideas, verbal formulas and artistic cultivation. Among them, his most influential formulas, which should be regarded as the cornerstone of Chinese violin education, will be explained out of China and be presented to people all over the world in English, in order to contribute to the exchange of the violin education between China and other countries.

The last chapter is an analysis of Lin's success and his limitations. This chapter will mainly analyze from a historical perspective, which corresponds to his life as described in the first chapter. This period of history not only affected Lin's life, but also played a vital role in the development of China in recent decades. In addition, the analysis of his teaching methods will

also be inserted in this chapter. On the basis of the second chapter, the advantages and disadvantages of his teaching methods will be further discussed. At the end of this chapter, the author will combine a series of factors, such as political, cultural and historical aspects, to make a summary of current violin education in China.

Through these three chapters, the author hopes that readers can have a comprehensive understanding of Lin Yaoji and a preliminary understanding of violin education in China.

Chapter 1

Lin Yaoji's Legendary Life

Lin's Music Dream

Lin Yaoji was born in Taishan, 80 miles from the city of Guangzhou, on May 19th, 1937. His great-grandfather emigrated to the United States in the nineteenth century. His grandfather, Lin Dejian, used to run a laundry in Detroit, and soon after, he turned to running a restaurant called "Taishan Restaurant". Because of his great-grandfather, Lin Yaoji's father, Lin Quanbin (1905-1972), was born in Taishan County, Guangdong Province as a Chinese-American citizen. When little Quanbin was eight years old, he went to Detroit, Michigan united with, his father and brothers. He studied architecture and accounting in college, and worked in the "Taishan Restaurant" during his spare time. Due to the impact of the Great Depression, "Taishan Restaurant" could not continue to operate. In 1930, Lin Dejian sold the restaurant and returned to Guangzhou with his family. Soon after returning home, Lin Quanbin met Lin Yaoji's mother, Zhao Weixiao, and married to her. Lin Yaoji's parents were both American Chinese and believed in Christianity. They met at a Baptist Church and had two children after marriage. One is a daughter, Lin Aijie, born in 1935. The other one is Lin Yaoji, born two years later.

Because of the family background, Western culture had greatly affected Lin Yaoji. His father Lin Quanbin, who was an overseas businessman, always brought back a lot of American household goods from Detroit, as well as a lot of books and records. Lin Quanbin was also

accustomed to speaking English at home. Love terms like "darling" often hanged on his lips. Because of his father's influence, Lin Yaoji was invaded by western culture from an early age.

Lin Yaoji's love for music was also closely related to his family. Because his mother was a very devout Christian, he often participated in "Baptist" church activities with his family. Religious music not only had a great impact on him, but also provided him with the opportunity to sing. Since then, Lin Yaoji's love for music had been running through his life. His love for music also came from his father's influence on him. Besides being a businessman, Lin Quanbin was also a music and fine arts lover. His love for Cantonese music and Lingnan paintings also increased Lin Yaoji's love for arts and music¹.

Because Lin grew up in such an artistic family, he had many dreams of being an artist. Among all these dreams, being a musician was his greatest dream at that time. The most influential factor which attracted Lin's longing for music was two early Hollywood films. One is *The Magic Bow*, a 1946 British musical film based on the life and loves of the Italian violinist and composer Niccolò Paganini, and the other one is *The Great Waltz*, a 1938 American biographical film based very loosely on the life of Johann Strauss II. Lin was deeply impressed by the violin playing of Master Yehudi Menuhin portrait in the movie as Paganini, and the theme song "One day when we are young" sung by the heroine in the movie *The Great Waltz*. These two movies brightened up the thirteen-year-old boy's passion for classical music².

¹ *Guangdong Musical Instrument Associate*, Guangdong Musical Instrument Associate, 2014, chinamusicindustry.com.cn/showworld.asp?id=2446.

² Xuejun Song, "Opening Up a New World for Chinese Violin Education - Professor Lin Yaoji [开辟中国小提琴教育的新天地——记林耀基教授]," *Art Education* [艺术教育], no.8 (1998), 17.

A “Chopsticks” violinist

On February 11th, 1951, Lin had his first violin lesson with Wen Zhanmei, one of the most prominent violin teachers in Guangzhou, who studied with Ma Sicong, a legendary violinist and the first president of the Central Conservatory of Music.

“I came to have my first lesson with teacher Wen without letting my parents know”, Lin said in an interview to the *Little Performer* magazine³. After recognizing Lin’s bold action, his mother immediately went to see teacher Wen and paid the tuition for her son. After that, Lin would always like to play the violin for Wen even if it was not during his lesson time⁴.

One of the reasons why Lin always wanted to play the violin in Wen’s home because he did not have a violin. His parents were not supportive to his decision of learning the violin so they did not buy him one. They were not optimistic about his future career as a musician because they thought his undisciplined restless character was not suitable for learning an instrument that needs a big amount of time on practicing. So without owning a violin, Lin came up with an idea to practice on a pair of chopsticks. After realizing Lin’s strong passion for the violin, his parents finally supported his decision, and his uncle brought a Japanese-made violin for him from Hong Kong. Lin finally had his first violin⁵.

³ Zi, Ling, “the Fifth Selection of the "Interviews With Lin Yaoji" - Ma Sicong has Influenced My Life [《林耀基访谈》 摘选之五——马思聪影响了我的一生],” *Little Performer* [小演奏家], no.9 (2009), 35.

⁴ Ibid., 35.

⁵ Zi, Ling, 35.

The Wall Has Ears

Even though Lin was considered a “late bloomer”, his amazing talent allowed him to make progress faster than ordinary students. Within four months studying under Wen Zhanmei, Lin was already able to play repertoires such as “Meditation” and “Traumerei”⁶. This little genius was then discovered by Ma Sicong, the legendary violinist and the president of the Central Conservatory of Music, in an extremely coincidental situation during the time when Ma stayed in Wen’s home for auditions in Guangzhou test site.

It was an afternoon in midsummer in 1952, Ma stayed in Wen’s home for an audition trip in Guangzhou. Lin, wearing slippers and shorts, went to Wen’s home with several violin students for lessons. Before class began, the teacher routinely asked the children to play the music they had learned in the previous classes⁷. The first one to pick up the violin was Lin, and he played Beethoven’s most famous violin sonata No. 5 “Spring”⁸. Unexpectedly, next to the classroom, Ma Sicong was taking a nap in a cane chair. The sound of the violin woke him up, then he immediately listened. His eyes were still closed while his ears were listening intently to the music in the living room⁹.

⁶ Shimin Zhao, “Turn Decay Into Magic - Lin Yaoji’s Impression [化腐朽为神奇—林耀基印象],” *Qin Tong* [琴童], no.7 (2004), 43.

⁷ Yonglie Ye, *Ma Si Cong Zhuan* [马思聪传], (Guangxi People's Publishing House [广西人民出版社], 2006), 149.

⁸ Shimin Zhao, 35.

⁹ Zi Ling, 35.

When all the children had finished their lessons, Ma came to the living room and asked the name of the first child who played the violin, and wrote it down on his notebook. Although he did not see the child's appearance, he heard the child's talent from the sound of his playing. After returning to Tianjin, he sent Lin Yaoji a notice of admissions to the youth class in the Central Conservatory of Music¹⁰.

Lin learned later that Wen actually asked Mr. Ma before the lessons that day, “Since you are resting here today, do you want me to cancel the children's lessons? I don't want to bother your rest.” However, Ma humorously answered, “I just came here to hear them play the violin. If you don't let them in, what am I still doing here?” Lin often said that in fact he could make some contribution to the violin world in China was due to Mr. Ma, who was the real “Bole”¹¹ to discover him¹².

An “atypical” student

After entering the youth class in the Central Conservatory of Music, Lin continued his restless character, and was not affected by dogma of the school at all.

When Lin Yaoji recalled that period of time, he also felt that he was too undisciplined. He was a Christian, so he sometime used to go to church to pray as an excuse to skip classes. He went to eat Russian food in Kiessling restaurant, visit auction houses and antique shops. Once a

¹⁰ Yonglie Ye, 149.

¹¹ Bole, a real judge of talent.

¹² Shimin Zhao, 35.

teacher blamed him for doing so, he answered that the party's policy was the freedom of religious belief. At the time of exams, he often reviewed his classmates' notes in order to reluctantly get a passing score¹³.

According to Hu Shixi, Lin's wife and schoolmate, Lin was definitely not the best example of a hardworking student. When they fell in love, the school specifically told her to keep distance from this restless student in order not to lose her own reputation as a good student¹⁴.

As a student who frequently skipped classes, there was one famous story that needs to be mentioned. One day, Lin thought he had never been to Shanghai so he decided to skip classes to visit. Since he has no money, he sold his violin, and then spent all fifty yuan in Shanghai that came from selling the instrument. After returning from Shanghai with no instrument to play, Ma Sicong had to lend him a violin for several years¹⁵.

Lin's unrestrained freedom finally got the school's attention in 1956, the famous Russian violinist David Oistrakh came to Beijing and Tianjin for performance, but as a student in Tianjin, he could not wait any longer to see this extraordinary musician so he went to Beijing without getting a permission from the school. When he returned to Tianjin, the school demanded him to write a self-criticism. After this incidence, Lin became much more timid. According to Lin's

¹³ Shimin Zhao, 43.

¹⁴ Yinlai Chen, "Our Uncle Lin - The Memory of Violin Educator Lin Yaoji [我们的林伯伯—忆小提琴教育家林耀基]," *Music Lover* [音乐爱好者], no.1 (2016), 58.

¹⁵ Yaoji Lin and Ning Zhang, "My Teacher Ma Sicong [我的恩师马思聪]," *People's Music* [人民音乐], no.5 (2007), 44.

friend Zhao Shimin's memoir, this incidence was the cause of Lin's nervousness on stage. This "stage fright" problem also forced Lin to give up performing, only to concentrate on teaching¹⁶.

Since that, he had also focused on the studies of string quartet and even organized his own quartet group. They had browsed all the library's scores and performed in many places outside of the school¹⁷. Because he did not go to school for over half a year performing outside the school, the school suspended him as a punishment. Luckily enough, he escaped the culprit of Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957 because of that and was again re-admitted to the Central Conservatory of Music¹⁸.

Starting from scratch in the Soviet Union

His turning point finally came in 1960, when he went to study in the Soviet Union. For participating the 2nd Tchaikovsky violin competition in 1962, the Central Conservatory of Music organized a national qualifier competition two years earlier in order to filter out a group of students to represent the school and participate in the competition in Moscow. Other contestants were notified half a year earlier than Lin about this because the leaders of the school were not very impressed with Lin's restless character. They had always tried to against him, but fortunately, Mr. Ma had always defended him. Even though Lin was not good enough for the solo competition, he insisted practicing and devoted himself in chamber music with his quartet

¹⁶ Shimin Zhao, 43.

¹⁷ Ibid., 43.

¹⁸ Yaoji Lin, "After Forty Years, The Dream finally Comes True [四十年后终于圆梦了—陈曦获奖感怀]," *People's Music* [人民音乐], no.4 (2003), 15.

group. The day before the qualifier competition, the jury allowed him to participate in the solo competition. So on this morning he played in the chamber music selection, and participated in the solo session in the afternoon. However, although he paid more attention on the chamber music, his Schumann quartet was not selected to participate in the Tchaikovsky competition but he himself was selected as a solo competitor¹⁹.

Lin and another violin competitor, Sheng Zhongguo, were selected to go to the Soviet Union in 1960 to prepare for the competition in two years. In preparation for the competition, Sheng Zhongguo was assigned to study with Leonid Kogan, and Lin was assigned to study with Yuri Yankelevich²⁰. Professor Yankelevich felt that although Lin was very talented, he was too late to study violin performance and recommended he be transferred to violin pedagogy. At the time, the Soviet Union was a violin power, and China was still quite weak in this aspect. Comparing the students of these two countries, the performance ability and research level of Chinese students were much weaker than those of the Soviet Union. Violin was indeed a young subject in China, compared with Europe, where classical music had already developed for hundreds of years.²¹. The teacher thought that Lin's basic skills were too poor and that he was not prepared enough for the competition. Then Lin was advised not to participate in this competition

¹⁹ Yaoji Lin and Ning Zhang, 44.

²⁰ Shimin Zhao, 43.

²¹ Xiaolong Liu, "Looking Up at the Sky, Overlooking the Earth, and Integrating the Nature's Wildest Pole – A Final Interview with Professor Lin Yaoji [仰望天空俯视大地融入自然神游八极——对林耀基教授的最后访谈]," *People's Music* [人民音乐], no.7 (2009), 81.

because Lin had no chance of advancing compared with other students who had prepared two years in advance²².

In *The legendary "godfather" of the Chinese violin world*, a documentary filmed by *Music Life* in China Central Television, Lin Yaoji talked about his time in Russia, which he regarded as a struggle in his life. When he learned that his age was no longer suitable for the competition, he went through a long ideological struggle. He was not afraid to start from scratch, but when he needed to play open strings in front of many people in the teacher's class, he felt very self-conscious. Even though he was the hope of China and was sent to the Soviet Union to study, he felt helpless and lonely. According to his wife's description, after he went to the Soviet Union, he would write a thin letter to her every week, and only wrote three or four lines of letters to his parents, which shows that he saw her as his spiritual sustenance. On one of the days in 1961, she received an unprecedented letter, which mentioned his disappointment. He described how he cried in the snow in Moscow after a class, and from that day on his goals changed. He devoted all his energy to studying how to teach and was determined to cultivate people who could make great contributions to the Chinese violin teaching²³.

During his studies in the Soviet Union, he watched many live performances and master classes. He said that he really began to lay the groundwork and focused in depth on violin teaching methods. Lin's teacher was very strict and meticulous. According to Lin's memory, teachers there regularly carried out teaching discussions, collected wisdom to jointly form a

²² Yaoji Lin, 14.

²³ “The legendary "godfather" of the Chinese violin world [中国小提琴界的传奇“教父”林耀基先生纪念专辑]” 27 episode of *Music Life* (CCTV, 2004-2018).

violin teaching system. Everyone studied the various violin schools in the violin history and summed up a whole set of scientific training methods. Although the students trained in the Soviet Union were very good in pitch and technique, Lin realized that compared with the West, they did not pay enough attention to chamber music and lacked individuality in music. In spite of this, he still felt very lucky that he encountered the strictest and best period of violin teaching in the Soviet Union²⁴.

During the Hard Times: the Enlightenment of Philosophy

Besides Yuri Yankelevich, David Oistrakh, another world-famous violinist, also gave Lin a great inspiration in violin teaching, especially of the philosophical violin pedagogy.

In 1957, when David Oistrakh came to China to listen to the performances of Chinese violin students, he pointed out frankly: “Your basic posture has not been resolved. If you do not solve this problem, you cannot be regarded as great violinist even after twenty years.” His view was a great shock to Lin Yaoji. Lin realized the physical conditions and behaviors of Asian players were very different from those of the Westerners. “We in the East should not copy every violin school, and we can’t be slaves of these schools. If we want to be better, we must proceed from reality and take the merits of each faction for our own use²⁵.”

After two years of studies in the Soviet Union, Lin returned to China in September, 1962. And immediately he was caught up with the heavy storm of the Great Leap Forward. Recalling

²⁴ Xiaolong Liu, 82.

²⁵ Xuejun Song, 17.

that period of life, he did not seem to complain too much, but only said that it was a national disaster, but not a loss to him alone²⁶.

Under very strict political influence, he started to teach the violin by using Chinese songs instead of Western classical music works. Because of the inability to pursue normal teaching, he had more time to sort out his own teaching methods, to incorporate Chinese literary works and Chinese philosophy²⁷. Specific explanations and analysis of his teaching methods will be presented in the second chapter.

During the Cultural Revolution, when Lin was sent down to the rural areas outside of Beijing, he carefully observed things that happened around him, even he was not allowed to play the violin. His experience of life and nature were then influenced in his future violin teaching²⁸.

Since the founding of May Seventh Art University in 1971, Lin had the opportunity to teach the violin to farmers and workers, and most of them had no professional background. Even though he mainly taught revolutionary songs and model operas, he felt very fortunate because he could finally legally play the violin. He recalled that “Although I had been in fear and trepidation in those years, I refused to sink to degradation because I was always looking for opportunities.

²⁶ Zi Ling, “The Ninth Selection of the “Interviews With Lin Yaoji” - Hu Kun, a milestone in my teaching career [《林耀基访谈》 摘选之九——胡坤,是我教学生涯的里程碑],” *Little Performer* [小演奏家], no.1 (2010), 30.

²⁷ Xuejin Song, “Standing Outside of Violin to Look At Violin - the Memory of Professor Lin Yaoji [站在小提琴之外 TO LOOK AT VIOLIN 看小提琴——记中央音乐学院小提琴教授林耀基],” no.8 (2002), 41.

²⁸ Xiaolong Liu, 82.

Sometimes I had to bear humiliation and sometimes I had to be forced to smile, but I didn't pass up every chance to play the violin, because I love teaching violin²⁹.”

According to his student Chen Yinlai's memories of that period, students were mostly sent to work in farms and were brainwashed every semester, but they were fortunate to be able to work and study with the teachers outside of campus. She remembered one year when students went to work in an oil refinery construction outside Beijing, Lin went with them to the site. In order to perform frequently for workers there, girls had to form a small chorus in addition to playing instrumental pieces. When they were rehearsing, Lin would volunteer to teach them, "I had a great interest in girls' choruses." Standing in front of the girls, he swung his arms, and sometimes he had a rich facial expression³⁰.

In that particular era, teachers and students often had to participate in many political activities together, in addition to attending classes. As a result, he was very close to the students of this generation. To his students, he was both a teacher and a friend, and his naughty sense of humor could also be fully utilized. With Lin's rigorous and humorous teaching, a generation of violin stars were born. Lin Yaoji gradually became known as a Mining Master of violinist in China.

The Mining Master

²⁹ Zi Ling, "The Ninth Selection of the "Interviews With Lin Yaoji" - Hu Kun, a milestone in my teaching career [《林耀基访谈》 摘选之九——胡坤,是我教学生涯的里程碑],” *Little Performer* [小演奏家], no.1 (2010), 30.

³⁰ Yinlai Chen, 58.

Even though Lin had many titles in his life, the only thing that was repeatedly emphasized by the people around him was: the mining master. He was really good at discovering talented students and cultivating them in his unique ways. During the cultural revolution in 1973, a little “wenyibing³¹”, Hu Kun from Sichuan had his first meeting with Lin. After a while, the talent demonstrated by this little soldier surprised Lin. He found Hu Kun very hard-working and self-disciplined, giving Lin great confidence. When the Cultural Revolution was just over, Lin tried "Nature Teaching Method" and "Mao Zedong Thought Teaching Method" on him. Hu was still making rapid progress while the country was not yet open to communicate with Western countries in terms of the violin performance³².

In November of 1980, Lin personally took Hu Kun to the 4th Sibelius International Violin Competition. It was not only a competition for Hu to participate in, but also an examination of Lin's teaching ability. This was the first time Lin had gone to watch a competition outside of Russia, and he had admitted that he was more stressed than his student. In an interview with CCTV Music Life, when the host Dong Qing asked him about the experience of accompanying his students to participate in competitions, he said in that November, Finland was under heavy snowfall. He and Hu Kun both walked from the hotel to the concert hall where the competition was taking place. In order to prevent Hu's hands from frozen in the snow, Lin helped Hu Kun to

³¹ *Wenyibing*, military personnel who specialize in literary or artistic pursuits

³² Zi Ling, “The Ninth Selection of the "Interviews With Lin Yaoji" - Hu Kun, a milestone in my teaching career [《林耀基访谈》摘选之九——胡坤,是我教学生涯的里程碑],” *Little Performer* [小演奏家], no.1 (2010), 31.

hold his violin. After being notified that Hu had won a prize, Lin was so overjoyed that his blood pressure went too high so he had to spend a month and a half in Beijing 301 Hospital³³.

Lin was not only concerned with his students' violin studies, but also cared about their life. Many students remember him and think him was not only a teacher but also a father. His students are familiar with his "cruiser", a bike that accompanied Lin for many years. In those years when he was teaching, he often rode back and forth on the bike around campus. While he was riding his bike near practice rooms, he would always stop to listen to the students practicing. His early students not only see him with the "cruiser," but often had the privilege of riding it and being taken by him for a breakfast. Some students said wittily that if someone wanted a free breakfast, he or she should get up in the morning to let Lin hear him or her practicing. The "cruiser" was also a safe haven for many students. One of Lin's students, Xue Wei, still remembers that when he had just moved from Shanghai to Beijing, he often sat on the "cruiser", taking advantage of the teacher's stout waist. The guard of the practice building said that when Lin's cruiser stopped at the door, it would usually take a long time for him to come out of the practice building. Sometimes Lin clearly had something to do next, but he often forgot the time after answering a student's question, sometimes musically and sometimes technically. This is a microcosm of his violin teaching career³⁴.

³³ "The legendary "godfather" of the Chinese violin world [中国小提琴界的传奇“教父”林耀基先生纪念专辑]" 27 episode of *Music Life* (CCTV, 2004-2018)

³⁴ Zi Ling and Huasheng Li, "Spring Farewell, and The Longing [春天的告别 延绵的思念——林耀基先生纪念专辑]," *Little Performer* [小演奏家], no.10 (2009), 27.

Even though many people said Lin was a master miner, Lin felt himself more like a decorator. He pointed out that the real mining masters should be violin teachers teaching at the grassroots level. Such teachers include Shao Guanglu in Anhui, one of Lin's students, Tang Yun, was Shao's earliest discovery and cultivation. For another example, Wang Guan, a teacher from the Shenyang Conservatory of Music, sent Lin a lot of potential students, such as Chai Liang and Chen Xi. Lin was grateful to these teachers who were teaching at the grass-roots level, thinking that it was their earliest exploration and development of these students. He felt that the media's declaration for him as a mining master was inaccurate³⁵.

Although he refused to accept the media's praise for his "mining", he compared his violin teaching work over the years to a decoration project. His students came from all over the country and they all had their own characteristics. Although they were all good materials, they were not necessarily very strong at basic skills. This is like painting a house. It is necessary to scrape off the layer of the original wall surface so that new paint can be applied again, then new colors can be attached to the wall. Furthermore, the decoration of each house has some "hidden" project. For instance, the water pipes are supposed to be hidden, and one may not be able to see them directly, but they are there. And these "hidden" projects are what he called the basic skills in violin teaching. He thought that the basic skill training of the violin was very important. This is like the concealed work in the decoration. You cannot cut corners because it is a hidden part. On the contrary, the more hidden it is, the more reliable it must be. Because each house is different,

³⁵ Zi Ling, "The Eighth Selection of the "Interviews With Lin Yaoji" - I Am Not A Mining Master But A Decorater [《林耀基访谈》摘选之八——我不是探矿大师，更像个装修工],” *Little Performer* [小演奏家], no. 12 (2009), 34.

it is necessary to conduct field trips and make different renovation plans. This is why students should be taught in accordance with their aptitude³⁶.

Within a few years Lin's students started making their marks in the international violin arena following Hu Kun's way. From 1980 onwards, they frequently won awards in international competitions, winning as many as 44 items (11 gold medals).

Among them:

- 1985 Guo Zheng won the second prize in the junior group of Menuhin International Violin Competition
- 1986 Xue Wei won the second place in the 8th Tchaikovsky Violin Competition, and seven days later, he won the first prize of the British Karl Flesch International Violin Competition.
- 1991 Li Chuanyun won the gold medal of the fifth Wieniawski International Youth Violin Competition Junior League in Poland.

The outstanding performance of Lin's students in major international violin competitions has created excitement of the Western classical music community in China. It also boosted Chinese violin music education³⁷. Numerous students have gone on to successful solo careers, and many more jointed acclaimed orchestras and universities around the world³⁸.

³⁶ Ibid., 34.

³⁷ Xuejun Song, 18.

³⁸ "About Lin Yao Ji," *Lin Yao Ji Music Foundation of China*, <http://www.linyaoji.com/linyaoji.php> (accessed 23 April, 2018)

Lin Yaoji became one of the most respected violin teachers in the world. He was often invited to the United States, South Korea and European countries to hold masterclasses and regularly went to Hong Kong regularly to give lectures. He also served as a judge for over a dozen major international violin competitions, including the 8th Tchaikovsky International Violin Competition (1986) and the 5th Wieniawski International Violin Competition (1991). In order to honor Lin Yaoji's outstanding contribution to the Chinese violin field, China awarded him the title of Expert who has made special contributions at the national level. In 1989, he also won the State-level Outstanding Teaching Achievement Award. In 1993 Lin Yaoji was elected as a member of the CPPCC National Committee³⁹.

In His Later Years

In the morning of March 16 in 2009, professor Wu Zuqiang received a telephone call from De'an Wang, to an unexpected news of Lin Yaoji's passing. After hanging up the phone, and because of the news came too sudden, Professor Wu could not speak for a long time. Professor Wu and Lin were classmates for a long time and were also working together for nearly half a century. About a decade ago, when Wu was still living in the college's Baojia Street school dormitory, he and Lin were neighbors for many years upstairs and downstairs. According to his recollection, the classrooms in the conservatory were tiny, but Lin's home was quite large, so many times students were invited to go to his home for lessons. Especially when the day was hot,

³⁹ Xuejun, Song, 18.

the air in the room was not good, and the sound of the piano was difficult to evoke a good resonance⁴⁰.

This sudden bad news was also received by Lin's two other friends. They are Li Guanghua and Fang Chengguo, directors of the Central Conservatory's Folk Music Department. Every day at 6:30 in the morning, three of them would appear in a restaurant in the dormitory community with Lin. They usually brought their own tea, ordered a few simple snacks, and discussed the news. Even though this habit of drinking morning tea had been maintained for more than two decades, their topic was always chatter. On the morning of March 16th, Lin did not go downstairs as originally planned. Instead, Professor Fang Chengguo did not wait until Lin was downstairs, but received a phone call from Hu Shixi for help. When he went upstairs to see Lin, his body was still warm, but his breath and pulse were not there. After the doctor tried to save him for more than an hour, the doctor finally declared Lin deceased. In an interview with a reporter later, Li Guanghua said that he had only phoned Lin the previous night and they talked about their two students who had collaborated and trained to play the violin and the *Pipa*⁴¹ together and their successful duet performance of a famous Chinese piece "Sunshine in the Skies of Tashikuergan". They were very happy because they had been committed to exploring the issue of better integration of Western music with traditional Chinese music. But he did not think it was the last call with Lin⁴². Suddenly, everyone learned quickly that he had died of illness and was

⁴⁰ Zuqiang Wu, "In Deep Memory of Professor Lin Yaoji," *People's Music*, no.7 (2009), 85.

⁴¹ *Pipa*, is a four-stringed Chinese musical instrument, belonging to the plucked category of instruments.

⁴² Zi Ling and Huasheng Li, 29.

unwilling to believe that this great man who has rewritten the history of Chinese violin education has gone without warning.

On June 10, 2010, a special concert was held at the National Center for Performing Arts in Beijing to commemorate the first anniversary of the great violin teacher's passing. The participants were mostly violin elites who were active in the international arena and former students of Lin Yaoji, such as Sheng Zhongguo, Chai Liang, Li Chuan Yun, Chen Yun, Yang Xiaoyu, Gao Sen, Liu Yu, Zhang Jingzhi, Tang Yun etc. In the audience, besides some of the oldest professors at the Central Conservatory of Music and some kids who followed their parents, Li Lanqing and other national and local government officials also attended the concert. Whenever they face each other, they can't help but nod and shake hands or hug, but most of them were not very courteous, but they all said, "Come for Lin Yaoji"⁴³.

In the reception, Lin Yaoji's daughter, Lin Wei, announced that a Lin Yaoji memorial foundation was formally established in Hong Kong. One of the founders of the foundation, the chairman of the Yip Children's Education Foundation from Hong Kong was also a lifetime friend of Lin Yaoji. Dr Ye Huikang made speeches on behalf of several other sponsors. Lin Wei also introduced Li Chuanyun as the initiator and sponsor of this fund. Lin Wei said that the establishment of the foundation aims to commemorate Lin Yaoji's outstanding achievements, but also to continue Lin Yogi's legacy and to train more Chinese violin talents⁴⁴. This foundation aspires to continue broaden Lin's legacy and commit to identifying and nurturing young,

⁴³ Zuqiang, Wu, 85.

⁴⁴ Zi Ling and Fengtao Gong, "Lin Yaoji Violin Education Foundation was established in Hong Kong [林耀基小提琴教育基金会 在香港成立]," *Little Performer* [小演奏家], no.7 (2009), 57.

emerging music talents in Hong Kong and Mainland China, offer the best opportunities possible for the full realization of their potentials⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ “History” *Lin Yao Ji Music Foundation of China*, <http://www.linyaoji.com/foundation.php> (accessed 23 April, 2018)

Chapter 2

Lin Yaoji's Violin Teaching Methods**The Writer Yang Baozhi**

Even though Lin Yaoji had cultivated so many violinists who have got great prestige internationally, the written document of his teaching methods is limited. Perhaps because Lin spent most of his time on training his students, the most reliable description of his teaching methods was not written by himself, but by his old friend, Yang Baozhi.

In 1951, Yang Baozhi was back to Guangzhou from Hong Kong to continue his high school education, and he was assigned as a violin player in an amateur orchestra by violin teacher He Andong. During the time he spent there, he had his first meet with Lin Yaoji, a handsome boy studied at middle school who had no idea about playing the violin. After noticing this little boy's passion for violin, Yang then recommended Lin to his current violin teacher, Wen Zhanmei. Then after one year, they were both selected as musical talents by Ma Sicong to study with Mr. Ma in the Central Conservatory of Music, although Yang was in the undergraduate program, and Lin was in the junior class⁴⁶.

Yang was not only an important guide and a close friend on Lin's music journey, but also a witness and a recorder of Lin's way of teaching. In 1957, Yang was accused as a rightist and was assigned to Chongqing, which began their five-year separation. After two years studies in

⁴⁶ Baozhi, Yang. "Violin Education with Chinese Characteristics [走中国特色小提琴教育之路]," *Journal of Central Conservatory of Music* [中央音乐学院学报], no. 2 (2009), 113.

Soviet, Lin came back to China mostly because of the increasing tension between China and the Soviet Union. At the same time in the summer of 1962, Yang was taken off his “rightist” hat and restored his freedom. They finally met again in Beijing and spent hours on academic exchange. Lin specifically talked to Yang about his experience in the Soviet Union and his unique ideas on violin teaching as well as the differences and similarities from his teachers’. In the 80s, with Lin’s recommendation, Yang was able to return to teaching in his alma mater, then he gradually became the person who officially wrote about Lin’s teaching method⁴⁷. In general, Lin’s teaching methods can be divided into three categories, philosophical teaching ideas, verbal formulas and artistic cultivation.

⁴⁷ Baozhi, Yang. “Violin Education with Chinese Characteristics [走中国特色小提琴教育之路],” *Journal of Central Conservatory of Music* [中央音乐学院学报], no. 2 (2009), 115.

Philosophical Teaching Ideas

Lin's distinct dialectics

Throughout Lin's teaching methods, the most important aspect is the philosophical thought: unity of opposites, which is the central category of dialectics originated from Ancient Greek. However, the idea Lin used is not completely the same as ordinary Western meaning, but it is more like a combination of Western philosophical thought and Chinese philosophical thought of the dialectics.

To illustrate, the first step is to know the similarity and the difference between the Western and the Chinese philosophical thoughts of the dialectics. Western dialectics has gone through four periods in terms of ancient Greece, Kant, Hegel and Marx. The idea defines a situation in which the existence or identity of a thing (or situation) depends on the co-existence of at least two conditions that are opposite to, yet dependent on as well as presuppose each other, within a field of tension⁴⁸. The Western philosophy of dialectics is more like a way of thinking based on a concept or logic in the form of rationality. According Marxism dialectics, based on its dialectical logic, the essence is critical and revolutionary. As he states,

In its rational form it [the dialectic] is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors because it includes in its comprehension and affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less

⁴⁸ McGill, V. J., & Parry, W. T., The unity of opposites: a dialectical principle. *Science & Society*, (1938), 418-444.

than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary⁴⁹.

As a revolutionist, Marx urgently needed a critical thinking mode that differs from mainstream to reveal the unreasonable of the realistic society in Russia, in order to demonstrate the possibility of social revolution. Therefore, it can be seen that, in the context of the current political and historical situation, the dialectics was utilized as a critical and logical thinking by Marx, to achieve a political goal. Thus, Marxism dialectics is limited to a theoretical thinking.

Though Western dialectics has been based on the human rational thinking and logic, to form the perception of a subject with the concept of duality, the basis of Chinese dialectics is from life experience and subjective intuition. Chinese ancient philosophers were adopted at deriving fresh propositions from life narratives, and evaluating propositions through moral or value judgments, in order to adjusting various relationships in life and establishing standards and norms⁵⁰. Ancient Chinese philosophical writings such as Lao Tzu⁵¹, Chuang Tzu⁵², I Ching⁵³,

⁴⁹ Marx, Karl. *Capital a critical analysis of capitalist production volume I*. Foreign Languages Publishing House (1887), 2016.

⁵⁰ Kang, Liu. "Subjectivity, Marxism, and culture theory in China." *Social Text* 31/32 (1992), 114-140.

⁵¹ Lao Tzu, was an ancient Chinese philosopher and writer. He is the reputed author of the *Tao Te Ching*, the founder of philosophical Taoism, and a deity in religious Taoism and traditional Chinese religions.

⁵² Chuang Tzu, is an ancient Chinese text from the late Warring States period (476–221 BC) which contains stories and anecdotes that exemplify the carefree nature of the ideal Daoist sage.

⁵³ The *I Ching*, is an ancient Chinese divination text and the oldest of the Chinese classics.

often regard "Yin and Yang⁵⁴", "the Doctrine of the Mean⁵⁵", and other propositions are as concentrated embodiments of dialectics. Similar to Western dialectics, Chinese one also advocated the interdependence. But it is more practical and not confined to a form of dialogue or thinking, but regards everything in nature as a dialectical object.

After viewing these two dialectics, it is necessary to discuss the reason why Lin combines these two concepts, which may be related to his educational background and the historical environment of the time. Lin's exposure to Western dialectics can be achieved in three ways: from his teacher Ma Sicong, from his teacher Yuri Yankelevich, or from Mao Zedong.

From a historical point of view, the first of these three people who could impart Marxist thought to Lin was Ma Sicong, because the introduction of Marxist-Leninist into China, is not originally from Russia, but possibly from France or Japan. Before the October Revolution⁵⁶, the Russian dictatorship was backward, so Chinese students who studied in Russia were accounted for a minority; after the revolution, because of Beiyang government's hatred against the Soviet regime, regarding the socialist thought as "radicalism", there were still a few ventured to the Soviet Union. Thus, since most of those Chinese students who studied abroad in Russia did not come back to China, there was no way for them to bring Marxism back to their home country.

⁵⁴ *Yin* and *yang*, describes how seemingly opposite or contrary forces may actually be complementary, interconnected, and interdependent in the natural world, and how they may give rise to each other as they interrelate to one another.

⁵⁵ The *Doctrine of the Mean* or *Zhongyong* is both a doctrine of Confucianism and also the title of one of the Four Books of Confucian philosophy.

⁵⁶ October Revolution, was a revolution in Russia led by the Bolsheviks and Vladimir Lenin that was instrumental in the larger Russian Revolution of 1917. It took place with an armed insurrection in Petrograd on 7 November, 1917.

Rather, the introduction of Marxism into China is actually through two channels: one by Chinese students from Japan, and one by Chinese student from France. The intellectuals, who had the initial communist thought staying in Japan and France, firstly brought Marxism back to China⁵⁷. Thus, Lin probably get the ideas of Marxist dialectics from Ma Sicong, who had studied in France.

In addition to Ma Sicong, two other people, Yuri Yankelevich and Mao Zedong, may influenced Lin in terms of Marxist dialectics as well. During Lin's two years of study in the Soviet Union, he probably was influenced by Marxism through his teacher, Yuri Yankelevich. Or perhaps after returning to China in 1962, he had influenced by Marxism, like everyone else in China, from Mao Zedong Thought.

However, Lin's philosophical ideas are not confined to dialogue and logic in the western sense, but integrates the emphasis on nature and practice in Chinese dialectics. In Lin's teaching methods summarized by Yang, there are three dialectical relationships relating to violin performance: the relationship between dynamic state and static state, the relationship between force and relaxation, and the relationship between time and space. In explaining these three opposing relations while playing the violin, he uses a large number of examples in natural, such as natural landscapes, daily necessities, or physical phenomena, to illustrate the relevance and transformation of the two opposing relations.

Three Philosophical Relationships

⁵⁷ "Most Viewed." A Hard Rain Is Falling as Acid Erodes Beauty. Accessed December 07, 2018. http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/05/content_22108908.htm.

1. The Relationship Between Dynamic State and Static State

In Yang's narrative, the relationship between movement and stillness in violin playing can be reflected in two aspects: performing technique and musical interpretation. To illustrate, he usually provides a lot of evidences which are based on real things in life, such as winds, mountains, sea waves, and even trains and bicycles.

On the technical part, he focuses on several basic techniques: trill⁵⁸, vibrato⁵⁹, and bowing⁶⁰. When the violinist is playing trill, a finger on the left hand should be active and flexible on the string, while the rest of the fingers should be kept quiet and stable as well as not being affected by the movement of the active finger resulting in poor intonation⁶¹. This is like when the clouds are tumbling, the mountains and woods are relatively quiet and stationary. When the car is flying, the road is relatively quiet and static. When a person is riding a bicycle, the car is still for the man's legs⁶².

Another basic technique for the left hand is vibrato. When the fingers rub back and forth on the string, regardless of the amplitude and frequency of the vibrato, the basic intonation can

⁵⁸ *Trill*, (or shake, as it was known from the 16th until the 19th century) is a musical ornament consisting of a rapid alternation between two adjacent notes, usually a semitone or tone apart, which can be identified with the context of the *trill* (compare mordent and tremolo).

⁵⁹ *Vibrato*, (Italian, from past participle of "vibrare", to vibrate) is a musical effect consisting of a regular, pulsating change of pitch. ... *Vibrato* is typically characterised in terms of two factors: the amount of pitch variation ("extent of *vibrato*") and the speed with which the pitch is varied ("rate of *vibrato*").

⁶⁰ A bow, is a stick which is strung with hair. It is used to pull across the strings of a string instrument such as a violin, viola, cello or double bass.

⁶¹ Intonation, in music, is a musician's realization of pitch accuracy, or the pitch accuracy of a musical instrument.

⁶² Baozhi, Yang. *The Essentials of Lin Yaoji's Violin Teaching Method* [林耀基小提琴教学法精要]. People's Music Publishing House [人民音乐出版社], 2004, 3.

not be changed, that is, the finger in the kneading must be back to the original position each time, in order to ensure the same intonation and the overall harmony. Lin used to see his hand like a tree, and see the nerve system as the wind. When kneading the string, the slight quiver of the finger could be the wind blows the leaves; when using the wrist to rub strings, it is like the wind blows the branches, and with the arm to rub strings, is like the wind blows the whole trunk⁶³.

The most basic and important technique for the right hand is the bowing. Lin taught the students three important tips upon this technique: “straight, flat, and steady⁶⁴”, which means that the bow should always be parallel with the bridge⁶⁵, to ensure that the bow moves through a straight line, and steadily walks on the string. To illustrate these tips, Lin used the bicycle example again. If the road is straight and flat, and the cyclist's upper body tries not to sway, he is likely to ride fast and vice versa.

To further extend the dynamic relationship of the performing skills to musician interpretation, is the balance between emotion and reason. Lin advocated the balance between “cool head” and “fiery heart⁶⁶” on the stage⁶⁷. People often say that music is a mobile architecture, but its flow must depend on some stable factors, such as clean and clear

⁶³ Baozhi, Yang, 4.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁵ A bridge, is a device that supports the strings on a stringed musical instrument and transmits the vibration of those strings to another structural component of the instrument—typically a soundboard, such as the top of a guitar or violin—which transfers the sound to the surrounding air.

⁶⁶ Fiery heart, refers to true feelings, passion, emotional ups and downs, performance desires.

⁶⁷ Baozhi, Yang. *The Essentials of Lin Yaoji's Violin Teaching Method* [林耀基小提琴教学法精要]. People's Music Publishing House [人民音乐出版社], 2004, 5.

articulation⁶⁸, good intonation, stable rhythm and so on. Lin regarded the “emotion” in music as the flowing river, while "reason" (the stabilizing factor in the performance) is like the riverbank. Only combining the emotion with the reason, the river can be determined its flow, the two sides of the vivid scenery can be revealed. So the two are indispensable in violin playing.

2. The Relationship Between Force and Relaxation

In this part, Lin advocated "never use the extra force" or "constantly remove the excess force⁶⁹." He thinks that in performing, relaxation and force are alternating and interdependent with each other. This alternating form, in layman terms, can be repeated in three steps: Prepare, Launch, and Glide. Take *Martele*⁷⁰ as an example, the point when the bow is placed on the string to prepare for an action is the condensation of the weight. When the force condenses, the hands should relax immediately. Then the hands should horizontally force the bow to burst out a great acceleration and relax immediately, in order to make the bow natural gliding state⁷¹.

Lin used several examples in the daily life to explain the theory. The first one is kicking the football. The first step of soccer game is to put the ball on the ground, and after thinking carefully about the goal of a foot, kick the ball out. When the ball itself is gliding in the air, the foot of the kick immediately gets relaxed. The principle of playing table tennis is similar. No

⁶⁸ Articulation, refers to the musical direction performance technique which affects the transition or continuity on a single note or between multiple notes or sounds.

⁶⁹ Baozhi, Yang, 7.

⁷⁰ *Martele*, literally "hammered," is a bowstroke, used when playing bowed string instruments. The effect is usually produced by holding the bow against the string with pressure, then releasing it explosively to produce a sharp, biting attack with a rest between strokes.

⁷¹ Baozhi, Yang. *The Essentials of Lin Yaoji's Violin Teaching Method* [林耀基小提琴教学法精要]. People's Music Publishing House [人民音乐出版社], 2004, 8.

matter what moves the ball takes, the athlete can only play a bit, then he has to immediately relax the muscles preparing for the next ball. So does the bow do, when the hand pushes only once, the bow itself starts to run. The instruction of rolling dumplings is the same: After the dough has been rubbed well, it should be divided into a group of small doughs on the table, which is similar to the preparation action before bow gliding. Then when the small dough is rolled, it spreads out into a pancake-shape, which is like the bow glide, after the bow starts gliding, the pressure on the string is scattered⁷².

3. The Relationship Between Time and Space

Playing the violin is the art of time expression through the movement of both hands in a certain range of space on the violin. Because of the structure of the violin itself, violin performance has four objective requirements: change in strings, change in hand position, change in bow direction and change in fingerings. Lin's emphasis in teaching is to "reduce space, and fight for time⁷³", meaning to reduce the extraneous action which is not related to articulation. Regardless of the left or right hand, taking the extra road (space) in motion leads to a reduction in the time which takes to make music, leading to incoherent music.

To illustrate, there are several obvious places when playing the violin that are in line with his theory. For instance, when performer is changing the strings while playing, the smaller the fan area the bow creates, the better the sound is, that is because the performer saved the time for

⁷² Ibid., 9.

⁷³ Baozhi, Yang. *The Essentials of Lin Yaoji's Violin Teaching Method* [林耀基小提琴教学法精要]. People's Music Publishing House [人民音乐出版社], 2004, 10.

bow to take the extra way to prepare for a better tone. Also, when changing the fingerings, the player should put more attention on the lateral action, if there are too many vertical movements, it will increase the space and waste the time, then there will be no more time to prepare for more accurate intonation.

However, as Yang summed up, Lin's slogan of “reduce space, and fight for time” is not absolute. For some very fast passages, for example, Lin advised his students to practice high-lift fingers to enhance the independence of each finger in order to achieve clearer articulation. Another example, in some need to emphasize the effect of accent, often requires to increase the fan area that the bow makes to reach the effect.

Specific Case, Specific Treatment

After viewing Lin’s philosophical idea of the unity of opposites through several pairs of relationships, there is another big point in terms of Lin’s teaching essence, which cannot be overlooked, that is, specific treatment to specific case. Even though he repeatedly stressed the standards and systems of basic techniques, his teaching method is not rigid or sticking to convention. On the contrary, he is good at summing up various strategies for some specific problems, such as intonation and performing gesture.

Violin’s Temperament

Differs from piano with fixed pitches, pitches on violin are all artificial, which means even the same note could have different pitches determining by different players and what kind of violins they play, and on top of that, even the same note is supposed to be slightly changed in

order to achieve a pleasant tone to fit in different phrases. Because of various demands for intonation, Lin came up with his own way to determine the temperament, which he called as “Overall Balanced Temperament⁷⁴”.

He divided the OBT into four different parts in order to fulfill different requirements for the intonation under four circumstances:

1) When the melody is the most important thing to focus on in a passage, performer should use Pythagorean tuning⁷⁵ to tune the pitches.

2) If a passage is dominated by chords⁷⁶ or broken chords, then the performer should use Just intonation⁷⁷.

3) If the violin’s pitches are octaves higher (or lower) to the piano’s part, then the performer should use piano’s equal temperament⁷⁸.

⁷⁴ Baozhi, Yang. *The Essentials of Lin Yaoji's Violin Teaching Method* [林耀基小提琴教学法精要]. People’s Music Publishing House [人民音乐出版社], 2004, 12.

⁷⁵ Pythagorean tuning is a system of musical tuning in which the frequency ratios of all intervals are based on the ratio 3:2. This ratio, also known as the "pure" perfect fifth, is chosen because it is one of the most consonant and easiest to tune by ear and because of importance attributed to the integer 3.

⁷⁶ A chord, in music, is any harmonic set of pitches consisting of two or more notes that are heard as if sounding simultaneously.

⁷⁷ Just intonation, in music, system of tuning in which the correct size of all the intervals of the scale is calculated by different additions and subtractions of pure natural thirds and fifths (the intervals that occur between the fourth and fifth, and second and third tones, respectively, of the natural harmonic series).

⁷⁸ An equal temperament, is a musical temperament, or a system of tuning, in which the frequency interval between every pair of adjacent notes has the same ratio. In other words, the ratios of the frequencies of any adjacent pair of notes is the same, and, as pitch is perceived roughly as the logarithm of frequency, equal perceived "distance" from every note to its nearest neighbor.

4) When the piano plays chords and the violin plays the third⁷⁹ or the fifth⁸⁰ of the chords, the intonation should be based on the root⁸¹ of the equal temperament and adjust the pitches more subtly with its corresponding relationships to the two other tuning systems.

Even though Lin divides the system of intonation in such a detailed way, music is not entirely a product of rationality, and it is always accompanied with sensibility and uncertainty in performance. Everyone's aesthetic is different, thus everyone's definition of the beauty of intonation is different. While performing on the stage, the original transcript has been self-resaping and re-definition by players, and at the same time, audiences are supposed to have different standards and feedbacks of the performances given by different players. In a word, even if the standard of music can be specified very precisely, music is not able to be completely rationally defined as good or bad.

Stability and Instability in Hand Position

Hand position in performance has always been an inconclusive problem. Some teachers think that there is a need for a standard hand type, while others think that the hand type is changeable, in order to fulfill with different technical requirements. In response to this problem, Lin proposes that the stability and variability of the hand shape are mutually restrictive⁸².

⁷⁹ A third is a musical interval encompassing three staff positions.

⁸⁰ The fifth factor of a chord is the note or pitch that is the fifth scale degree, counting the root or tonal center.

⁸¹ The Root of any chord will be the note which corresponds to the letter name of the chord. If a chord is in root position, the root will always be the lowest note in that chord.

⁸² Baozhi, Yang, 13.

1)left hand thumb position

The position of the left thumb can be different according to each person's own hand type condition, and the general principle is how to benefit the third and fourth fingers' relaxation in order to move freely. Lin objects that the thumb has a fixed position because he thinks that the thumb should be relaxed when the other four fingers are very stable.

2) Right hand position

Similar to the position theory of the left thumb, the right hand needs to be principled and flexible at the same time. In practice, the principle of the right hand must be adhered to “flat, straight, and stable”, while the size of the finger movement is flexible, all the flexibility must be conducive to sound quality, the development of skills and the physiological conditions that vary from person to person.

Personality and Commonality in Music Expression

In addition to the external posture problem, Lin has a set of own standards for the internal music expressional issue. In this book, Yang mentioned that in the the 1950s, Chinese classical music education is more than copying foreign experts teaching methods, from pose problems to music expression. However, Lin believes that no matter which country's experts' teaching methods, the most important thing China should learn from is commonality—something with intrinsic regularity⁸³.

⁸³ Baozhi, Yang, 15.

Although in the 90 's, China entered the information age, with the development of television video and other media, students' learning method is not limited to studying with teachers in class, but can listen to the masters' recordings and even watch the videos on the internet, Lin believes that students should not completely imitate the master's performance, but only as a reference (p. 15). To illustrate, He wants students to find their own personality, but not blindly imitating the characteristics of others. In his opinion, the most important thing to learn music is to fully understand and appreciate the composer, so that they can sum up their own understanding after they thoroughly study the transcripts, which is the ultimate goal that the performers should achieve—the embodiment of the personality. But just imitating other people's study achievements, from his perspective, is a vulgar level study attitude, which is also unfavorable to their artistic growths.

Therefore, he proposes that the real personality needs to be built on the basis of science and artistry, otherwise it is not called personality, but called Caprice(任性?). During the Fifth National Youth Violin competition, after listening to a very talented player's performance, Lin said to Yang: "The bourgeois fanaticism should be directed to the path of the proletariat." Yang thinks that Lin was quoting this allusion to express that the contestant is too capricious in scientific and artistic. However, his view could be partial. Everyone's view of music is different, so it is inappropriate to deny one's artistic value because of its outstanding individuality. Different growth environment and educational background will inevitably make different people have different understanding of the same music, so even in the matter of principle, everyone's definition of the principle will also differ. Especially in the big competition platform, the

contestants must come from different regions, so different growth environment will also create a different music aesthetic talent. Even though Lin made an indelible contribution to China's violin education, he also set up an unshakable educational system and aesthetic standards; while standardizing the educational system, it inevitably erased other possibility for artistic innovations.

Conform to Nature

In Lin's educational system, nature is an indispensable element. In the three philosophical relationships he summed up, nature is the foundation and the ultimate embodiment of his philosophical thought. He believes that the method of natural law is generally a good practice in accordance with the rules of performance.

He combines his observations of nature and daily life with violin performance, in order to summarize the teaching system. His emphasis on relaxation, for example, is based on the consideration of gravity. He thinks relaxation should be conformed to the gravity of the earth. Also, his theory of the Relationship between force and relaxation can also be found in the evidence of nature: the heart, as the most important organ in the human body, has worked for decades without replacing it⁸⁴. There are many examples in nature that are used by Lin in his teaching method, which is regarded as one of the essences of his teaching method. As his education law can be passed down, there is another factor that cannot be ignored: his formulas.

⁸⁴ Baozhi, Yang, 17.

Verbal Formulas

Four Characteristics

Lin's teaching method originally came from Lin's creation of "Lin's formulas", which according to Yang's memoir were verbal formulas summed up from critical violin performing gists created to mainly solve students' technical problems.

Lin's use of formulas represents a unique feature of Chinese culture. Since the Yuan dynasty, in China's vocal music, instrumental music, and traditional Chinese opera education, artistic proverb or formula has been used by Chinese heirloom and disciple. In fact, the tradition of using formulas in teaching is not only in music and art, but also in other fields. For example, learning multiplication, students need to memorize the Chinese multiplication table⁸⁵, learning the abacus, students need to use Zhuan arithmetic calculation, learning Traditional Chinese medicine, students need the TangTouGeJue⁸⁶, and learning martial arts, students will scramble for martial arts cheats. Since ancient times, the formula has been an indispensable and effective method in Chinese education.

Lin feels that while teaching western instruments in China as a Chinese teacher, it is not very applicable to completely copy foreign experience and system. In order to conquer this

⁸⁵ The Chinese multiplication table is the first requisite for using the Rod calculus for carrying out multiplication, division, the extraction of square roots, and the solving of equations based on place value decimal notation. It was known in China as early as the Spring and Autumn period, and survived through the age of the abacus; pupils in elementary school today still must memorize it. The Chinese multiplication table consists of eighty-one terms.

⁸⁶ TangTouGeJue, recipes in rhymes, ancient medical works. All in one roll. Qing Dynasty efficiency essays. Published in 1694. The book clip Traditional Chinese Medicine prescriptions more than 300 parties. It is summed up in the form of seven words mnemonics.

situation, the formula, with its Chinese characteristics, can precisely summarize the nature of things in popular and understandable language for kids, so that Chinese students can learn effectively in their familiar system⁸⁷.

Over the years, he has extracted some key performance essentials in poetic language and summed them up as systematic formulas for remembering. These formulas have four characteristics:

1) Concise

The Formula excludes a lot of secondary content and reasonably extracts the most important content. Although it is inevitable to drain off some of the secondary content while summarizing, the most important things are clearly displayed, in order to help students divide the primary and secondary contents, and greatly save time for students to practice, as well as easier to remember comparing to lengthy textbooks.

2) interesting

For young beginners, the formula gives these practicing essentials external rhymes and rhythms, which increases their interest in learning the violin, and helps them to understand and remember more easily. For example, while reciting tang poetry and singing nursery rhymes, children will be more willing to learn something while playing.

3) emotional rather rational

Compared to other rigid learning methods and regulations, the formula creates a relaxed learning atmosphere, so that students can learn technical difficulties with their own feelings to understand

⁸⁷ Baozhi, Yang, 21.

some of the natural metaphors in the formula. This is much more effective than simply reading a book about how to improve techniques.

4) performative

The formula only provides a general guide, so this can avoid a lot of tedious and lengthy rules. Different from the traditional method of imparting knowledge and skill, the formula can inspire the students' independent creativity, so that they can learn the core knowledge point and have their own understanding and discovery at the same time.

With these four characteristics, according to Yang, Lin's formula can be divided into five categories: general requirements, left hand techniques, right hand techniques, two hands cooperation, and scientific methods of practicing.

General Requirements

1) 两“预”两“要” two preliminaries and two requirements

内心歌唱预先听, 两手动作预先量;

Sing the right melody in one's mind before playing, put
one's hands in the right position before playing;

多余动作要去掉, 紧张因素要清扫⁸⁸.

One needs to remove the extra force, one needs to take
the tension away.

As the first part in the formula set, this one is the most basic and most important one. The first half of it emphasizes the importance to sing the music in the mind before starting perform it, and

⁸⁸ Baozhi, Yang, 22.

calculate the position and the running trajectory of two hands. Thus, the brain needs to start working before the body actually moves. The latter part can be related to one of Lin's four philosophical relationships, the relationship between force and relaxation, and it mainly emphasizes to constantly remove the excess force, in order to relatively easily complete the performance. These two parts compose the necessary preparations for the performer before actually playing the violin.

2) 一个基本要求 one basic requirement

内心歌唱率两手, 两手顺从跟着走;

The inner song from the heart drives the hands, and the
hands obey the rhythm of the heart.

基本要求匀准美, 胆大心细精益求精⁸⁹.

The basic requirement is to perform evenly, precisely and
beautifully, as well as boldly and cautiously to strive for
excellence.

Similar to the previous one, the inner song is not only required before actual playing, it is also the key to the whole performance. In addition, the most important and most well-known three words that run through Lin's teaching method are: 匀(*yun* even), 准(*zhun* precise), and 美(*mei* beautiful). To illustrate, the first character *yun* covers several aspects of violin playing: speed, rhythm, timbre, and strength. Because it is considered a classical aesthetic concept, Lin regards it as the basis of daily practice. Only by learning to be even, can we have a good foundation to achieve the uneven beauty that some particular passages pursue. The second word,

⁸⁹ Baozhi, Yang, 25.

zhun, mainly refers to the accuracy of pitch and rhythm. Secondly, it can also refer to the accuracy of the beats and the choice of contact points⁹⁰. The last character, *mei*, only refers to the beauty of articulation. Because it is a basic requirement, it does not mean the beauty at the artistic level, but the beauty that occurs when the noise ratio is controlled within a certain range. In addition to these three basic requirements, boldness and carefulness are also necessary and indispensable in practicing. As a stage performing art, playing violin should certainly not be timid, but rather be courageous and careful. During Lin's teaching sessions, he had always advocated the students to concentrate on practicing at a very slow speed, and recorders and metronomes can then be used to help students keep improving.

3) 演奏心态 performing attitude

东西南北中, 四面八方通;

East, west, south, north and the center, all directions are
interlinked;

脚踏地球中, 顶天立地松;

Being on the earth, the sky is above the head, the ground is
beneath the foot, and the whole body is relaxed;

情爱我心中, 箭发自弦中;

Love is in my heart, and it is sent out by the bow like an
arrow;

祝君更成功, 展翅游太空⁹¹.

I hope you will be more successful, spread your wings and
travel in space.

⁹⁰ Contact point, the point where the bow places on strings.

⁹¹ Baozhi, Yang, 28.

The first sentence of this formula is a metaphor of Lin's idea: to learn from all who are worthy of learning from, and to summarize the lessons of success and failure. So studying from a single perspective is not feasible, and musicians need to enrich their experience more comprehensively. The second part indicates a pursuit of relaxation. It reflects the close connection between human and nature, as if all things are one, nothing to fear, and the whole body is relaxed. The third part points out that the performer needs love in his heart, and to shoot the bow like Cupid's arrow into the hearts of the audience. The last part "flying in space" refers to the need for a performer to have a rich imagination, just like the boundless freedom of flying in the universe.

Left hand techniques

1) 换指口诀 Changes in fingers

指根发力到指尖, 手指关节不发篙;

When forcing the string, start from the root of the fingers until the fingertips, and do not relax the joints.

指头轮休存耐力, 手指独立实又坚⁹².

Fingers need to be rested to conserve strength, and each finger needs to be solid and independent.

The first part intends to emphasize that the initial point of the force is the third joint of the finger rather than the palm, so the joint must be solid. The second part refers to the combination of force and relaxation between fingers, which confirms Lin's philosophical theory of relaxation and force.

⁹² Baozhi, Yang, 31.

2) 换弦口诀 Changes in strings for left hand

换弦靠手肘, 琴颈为中心;

Rely on the elbow when changing the strings, and set violin's
neck as the center.

四指成一线, 肘带腕指跟⁹³.

The four fingers seem to be joined by a line, and the
movement of wrist and fingers follows the movement of the
elbow.

This formula is mainly about the most important core knowledge in Lin's teaching system: rudder-style action. With the neck as the center, the elbow is drawn in a semicircle like a rudder when changing strings. This action not only makes the movement of strings more natural and convenient, but also avoids the intonation problem when changing strings (Without this action, pitches on lower strings tend to be high, and pitches on higher strings tend to be low).

3) 换把口诀 changes in hand positions

下臂带动腕指跟, 腕指配合要认真;

The lower arm drives the wrist and fingers to move, while the
wrist and fingers need to be very closely guided by the lower
arm ;

先行指头最重要, 按的不准白费心⁹⁴.

the finger that is on the string for the original position needs to
move forward, or the intonation is not prepared to be perfect;

⁹³ Baozhi, Yang, 32.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 32.

Similar to changing strings, the starting point of the force is not from the fingers, but from the lower arm. During the movement, the most important thing is to move the original finger which is on the string before the changing. When this finger reaches the new position, press down the new finger if it is needed for the new note, so that the performer can be more confident in the intonation.

4) 揉弦口诀 formula for vibrato

如坐摇椅如乘轿, 又似扇子手中摇;

Doing vibrato is like a man sitting in a rocking chair or a sedan chair as well as swinging a fan in one's hand.

君能识得此中味, 宽窄快慢自可调⁹⁵.

The performer needs to taste the music carefully, so as to adjust the amplitude and speed of the vibrato.

Lin cites three examples to describe the vibrato, such as sitting on rocking chairs, sitting on sedan chair, and swinging the fans. And on top of that it is necessary to truly taste the music in order to make the most appropriate adjustment in the amplitude and speed while vibrating the fingers.

Right hand techniques

1) 运弓的基本要领 basic essential of bow movement

一要直, 二要平, 三要稳⁹⁶.

Straight, flat, and steady.

⁹⁵ Baozhi, Yang, 33.

⁹⁶ Baozhi, Yang, 33.

‘Straight’ means that the bow and the bridge remain parallel (the bow and the string are at a 90 degree angle). ‘Flat’ indicates that the bow should move smoothly on seven planes that are created by four strings. ‘Steady’ refers to relative stability of the bow when it is moving.

2) 利用“重量”发音的原理 the principle of using weight to articulate

手放弓上，弓放弦上，重量多少？一加一等于二；

Put your hand on the bow and put the bow on the string, so how
much weight is there altogether?

One plus one equals two.

弓被抓紧，弓弦分家，重量多少？一减一等于零⁹⁷。

Grasp the bow in the hand, so bow and string split, then how
much is the weight?

One minus one equals zero.

This formula makes a very interesting contrast between correct and wrong actions. This makes it easier for the performer to get the essence: natural gravity, which goes back to Lin's emphasis on the close relationship between nature and music.

3) 右臂动作协调的要领 Coordination of the right arm

肩肘腕指环扣环，整体动作不零散；

The shoulder, elbow, wrist and fingers are tied up, and they form a
whole that cannot be scattered;

上臂下臂联合动，大刀阔斧声音宽⁹⁸。

⁹⁷ Baozhi, Yang, 34.

⁹⁸ Baozhi, Yang, 35.

The upper arm and the lower arm are joined together, like a machete, making a vigorous sound.

Similar to the holistic nature emphasized in the left hand techniques, all parts of the right hand are tied up as one. The idea of wholeness and coordination is throughout Lin's teaching method.

4) 不同弓速演奏的要领 performing at different bow speed

快弓如顺风, 慢弓似逆风, 不快不慢像和风⁹⁹.

Fast bowing is like a favorable wind, slow bowing is like a headwind, and moderate bowing is like a gentle breeze.

This formula likens different bow speeds to different wind speeds. This visualizes the operation of the right hand with a symbolic approach. To illustrate, the size and intensity of the wind allows the performer to find the feelings of playing the violin by embodying a natural process.

5) 右手换弦的要领 changes in strings for right hand

平面均匀要走好, 欲换先往下弦靠;

It is important to evenly change the angle while changing the planes, and before changing the planes, it is necessary to move ahead in order to get closer to the next string;

平稳过渡下条弦, 天衣无缝艺更高¹⁰⁰.

The bow needs to smoothly do the transition to the next string, and be as seamless as possible.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 35.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 35.

In Lin's teaching method, there has always been an emphasis on 'yu', preparation, such as singing in the mind before doing the actual performance. So when doing the transition in strings, the bow should move to the next plane ahead of playing the next note in order to be more prepared for it, which can also link every note together.

6) 短弓，快弓，跳弓口诀 formulas for Tremolo¹⁰¹, and Sautillé¹⁰²

手动弓静拉短弓, 上下弓匀拉快弓;

When playing tremolo, the hand is dynamic, the bow is static, and the bow should be moved evenly in order to create a good sound;

中弓最轻自动跳, 弓不离弦出跳弓¹⁰³.

When playing Sautillé, put the middle of the bow gently on the string, quickly move up and down, and the bow will naturally jump up.

7) 重音和顿弓的奏法 formulas for Marcato¹⁰⁴ and Martele¹⁰⁵

先松后冲, 冲后放松;

¹⁰¹ *Tremolo*, a wavering effect in a musical tone, typically produced by rapid reiteration of a note, or sometimes by rapid repeated variation in the pitch of a note or by sounding two notes of slightly different pitches to produce prominent overtones.

¹⁰² Sautillé, A bowing technique used for fast notes on string instruments. Although the term means 'bounce', it is the wood of the bow rather than the hair that bounces - the hair usually remains in contact with the string.

¹⁰³ Baozhi, Yang, 36.

¹⁰⁴ *Marcato*, is a musical instruction indicating a note, chord, or passage is to be played louder or more forcefully than the surrounding music.

¹⁰⁵ *Martelé* (French; Italian *martellato*), literally "hammered," is a bowstroke, used when playing bowed string instruments. The effect is usually produced by holding the bow against the string with pressure, then releasing it explosively to produce a sharp, biting attack with a rest between stroke.

Loosen the bow on the string first, then pull it out quickly and
then relax it again;

声有余辉,近似撞钟¹⁰⁶.

Sounds resonate with echoes, just like ringing a bell.

As Yang mentions, Lin uses a dish called caramelized apple as a metaphor when interpreting the *Martele*. Once they went out to dinner and ordered this dish, Lin said, 'It's like holding an apple with chopsticks and pulling out the silk. The contact point of bow is like the tip of a chopstick, which requires a very concentrated force to achieve its effect' (p. 37). This indicates the trait of Lin's teaching method of using life examples in teaching.

Two hands cooperation

双手配合 two hands cooperation

左手一把抓, 右手分开拉;

The left hand should clutch the neck of the violin as a whole,
while the right hand should be separated from the left hand.

两手相配合, 紧密不分家¹⁰⁷.

But the two hands have to cooperate with each other, tightly
together like a family.

The 'clutch' used here refers to the fingers on the left hand pressing down on the string at the same time before the next new note. Therefore, the two hands coordination here will be

¹⁰⁶ Baozhi, Yang, 37.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 38.

particularly important. The right hand can only pull the bow when the fingers of the left hand are all ready.

2) 三点相通 connection between three points

三点相通声音通, 点点相连显神通;

If three points are connected, the sound will be transparent and as
mighty as Monkey King¹⁰⁸;

三点合成一颗珠, 串起珠子闹天宫¹⁰⁹.

Combine the three points together into a string of beads, and you
will be able to take it to make the heavenly Palace.

The three points respectively refers to the forcing point of the bow from the right hand, the intonation point on the string from the left hand, and the contact point of the string and the bow. The positions of these three points are constantly changing and interacting with each other. For example, the force of the fingers on the right hand should be changed with the change of the contact point; when using the tip of the bow, the index finger needs to put more pressure on the bow, conversely, when pulling the bow to the frog¹¹⁰, the pinky finger needs to withstand the weight of bow force. Thus, the thumb of the right hand is equivalent to a fulcrum, and constitutes

¹⁰⁸ Sun Wukong, also known as the Monkey King, is a figure who features in body of legends, which can be traced back to the period of the Song dynasty. He appears as a main character in the 16th century Chinese classical novel *Journey to the West* (西游记). Sun Wukong is also found in many later stories and adaptations. In the novel, he is a monkey born from a stone who acquires supernatural powers through Taoist practices. After rebelling against heaven and being imprisoned under a mountain by the Buddha, he later accompanies the monk Tang Sanzang on a journey to retrieve Buddhist sutras from "the West".

¹⁰⁹ Baozhi, Yang, 38.

¹¹⁰ The bow frog is the end part of a stringed musical instrument's bow that encloses the mechanism responsible for tightening and holding the bow hair ribbon.

a lever¹¹¹ relationship with the index finger and the pinky finger. On the other hand, the intonation point (the position of the left finger) will inevitably affect the location of the contact point; the higher the left hand position, the closer the contact point should be close to the bridge. In conclusion, only these three points of the coordination is done, the tone will be good.

3) “四换” 线不断 constant line within ‘four changes’

‘换’字不断气, 脑子不断线;

‘Change’ the pitch without interrupting the breath, and let the brain keep thinking;

‘Change’ word easy conspicuous, ‘time’ and ‘space’! Seriously study ‘change’ word, so that Qin technology has become constantly and adhesion.

左手珠一串, 弓子来穿线.

The left hand seems to have a string of beads, while the right hand is using the bow to thread them.

‘换’字易冒尖, ‘时间’与‘空间’!

‘Changing’ is easy to be conspicuous, especially on the ‘time’ and ‘space’!

认真攻‘换’字, 不断又粘连¹¹².

Seriously study how to ‘change’, so that your playing can be constant and adhesive.

The word ‘change’ refers to four changes relatively in terms of hand positions, strings, fingers and bowings. When these four cases are encountered, there is often a discontinuity in time and

¹¹¹ Law of the lever. The lever is a movable bar that pivots on a fulcrum attached to a fixed point. The lever operates by applying forces at different distances from the fulcrum, or a pivot. ... The use of velocity in the static analysis of a lever is an application of the principle of virtual work.

¹¹² Baozhi, Yang, 39.

space. For example, in the change of hand positions, the original phrase is tend to be interrupted, then there is a discontinuity in time. Also, in the change of strings, the right hand can easily take extra road (bigger semicircular, occurs when changing strings by right hand) due to space problem, resulting in conspicuous sound, that is, sound which does not meet the requirements of *yun*, *zhun* and *mei*.

Scientific Methods of Practicing

1) 用心思考找规律 Thinking carefully and finding patterns

提琴规律经常找,

Always look for the law of violin performance,

用心思考不能少,

Always think more when practicing,

科学指导练琴好¹¹³.

With scientific guidance, you can be better.

Lin divides the practice into two stages: initial stage and performing stage. In the first stage, the player needs to pay attention to technical stuff, which requires one's mind to be extremely calm. In the second stage, he can start doing performing exercises: thinking about the overall structure of the piece first, and playing the music without stop. Even though little mistakes are unavoidable, it is very important to maintain the integrity of the music. This is the law that Lin advocates for practicing the violin.

2) 慢练 slow speed exercise

¹¹³ Baozhi, Yang, 40.

慢即是快, 要建设不要破坏¹¹⁴.

Slow is fast, to build but not destroy.

In practice, it is much better to practice slowly than to practice fast. Lin likens practicing to building a road. Although this is a long process which may take several years to complete, once it has been built, it is much faster to drive a car on the road than walking by feet. Conversely, if the player spend a lot of time repeating errors for hundreds of times, it is not going to be correct at all, but rather consolidating the errors, which is considered the destruction. Back to technical issues, Lin divides the destruction into three parts: stiff right hand, imprecise left hand and non-vertical bowings. Also, for constructing, in addition to the use of recorder and metronome for assisting the practice, mirror is another tool to help with doing ‘three parallels’: strings parallel to the ground, strings parallel to the mirror and the bow parallel to the bridge.

3) 重视基本功 emphasis on basic skills

不在乎区区小技, 只在乎能够驾驭¹¹⁵.

Do not care about specific techniques, do care about the overall
integrity.

Lin argues that basic skills are much more important than difficult techniques. To illustrate, techniques like staccato¹¹⁶ and left hand pizzicato¹¹⁷, are like fishes and prawns, people will definitely not die without eating them for a few years, but basic skills are like the air, the sun and

¹¹⁴ Baozhi, Yang, 41.

¹¹⁵ Baozhi, Yang, 43.

¹¹⁶ *Staccato* ([stak'ka:to]; Italian for "detached") is a form of musical articulation. In modern notation, it signifies a note of shortened duration, separated from the note that may follow by silence.

¹¹⁷ *Pizzicato*, is a method of playing by plucking the strings with the fingers, rather than using the bow.

the water, and people will certainly die from losing them for even one minute. So as long as one has good basic skills, even if he cannot play difficult techniques perfectly, it will not hinder him to become a good artist at the end.

Artistic Cultivation

Artistic Views Upon Practicing

Comparing to the specific methodology in terms of technical problems, Lin does not give much concrete advise on how to develop musicality for musicians. In the last chapter of Lin's teaching method, Yang lists some abstract ways to help with enhancing artistry.

Observing real life

Similar to Lin's emphasis on nature in terms of the performing skills, he encourages his students to observe the nature in order to have the sense of the emotions in music¹¹⁸. To illustrate, besides actual notes, music terms are another essential factors that can determine the characters of the music, so students can associate the music terms with the observations in real life, such as natural landscapes or daily issues that can effect one's emotion.

Comprehensive Understanding of The Music

In order to fully understand a piece, Lin recommends the students to study different works by different composers in different eras, so that they can recognize the position of one music by comparing it with others in the music history¹¹⁹. For practicing, especial the listening of recordings, he indicates that it is not enough to only listen to students' favorite recordings, but also they need to listen to music that relates to the pacific piece, such as music played by other

¹¹⁸ Baozhi, Yang, 49.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 50.

cellists, pianists, orchestras, or chamber groups that are composed by same composer or whom in the same era.

Chinese Characteristics

Even though violin is a western instrument, Lin suggests to add Chinese characteristics while performing. He pointed out that students must learn the essence of the national culture, and represent it to the world through violin¹²⁰. Yang lists several violinists to support Lin's idea, like David Oistrakh, a renowned Soviet classical violinist and violist, regardless of his fabulous performances of works by Beethoven, Brahms, Debussy and other foreign composers, the most internationally influential works he played are composed by Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich and composers that are raised in Russia, his own country. There are many examples such as Jascha Heifetz and Niccolò Paganini, these examples are used by Yang to motivate students to perform well in their own national works as a top priority¹²¹. Thus, Lin's goal is not only to teach students with fantastic violinistic techniques, but also to enable these students relying on the cultural heritage of China to stand out on the international stage, and as a music medium, to pass Chinese culture to the world, in order to let China gain a place in the international music field.

¹²⁰ Baozhi, Yang, 52.

¹²¹ Ibid., 52.

Chapter 3

Success and Limitation

In the first chapter, Lin's life experience is presented in a biographical way, which shows a gifted boy rushed out of the inward-looking China, found his music dream as a violin teacher in Russia, came back to his homeland, and became memorized as a contemporary influential violin educator at the end. In the second part, Lin's teaching method, which transforms him from a violinist to an outstanding violin professor, is analyzed systematically into three parts: philosophical concepts, technical formulas, and artistic cultivation.

As for the last chapter, the inference of Lin's success will be presented by analyzing the historical background. The limitations of his teaching method will be discussed as well. Lin's success was, most likely, caused by a mix of the historical environment of his time, his own educational background and the Soviet Union's music influence in the development of China.

From the 1950s to the early 1960s, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was involved in a comprehensive program of technology transferring to China, which included three parts: transferring industrial technology by aiding the construction of industrial projects; developing Chinese capacity in science and technology through various forms of cooperation; and helping China adjust and construct technology colleges, as well as recruiting a large number of Chinese students to study in the USSR¹²². The Soviet Union's assistance penetrated into

¹²² Zhang, Baichun, Jiuchun Zhang, and Fang Yao. "Technology transfer from the Soviet Union to the People's Republic of China: 1949-1966." *Comparative Technology Transfer and Society* 4.2 (2006), 105.

various fields in China. For instance, China's heavy industry development in the Northeast, like trains, cars and ships, were built with Soviet's aid. In the middle of China, the building of Wuhan Yangtze River Bridge and Nanjing Yangtze River Bridge also got the help from the Soviet Union. In the literary field, according to many students' memoirs during that period, one of the most fashionable literary works was *How the Steel Was Tempered*¹²³, written by the Soviet writer Nikolai Ostrovsky. Then, in the artistic field, Russian songs like Red Berries in Blossoms and Katyusha could be heard easily in China, as it echoed in the loudspeakers on the road. Therefore, it can be seen that at that time, the influence from the Soviet Union had not only remained in the military and technology, but also imperceptibly immersed into the field of art.

The development of the Western music in China, in addition to the influence of the Soviet Union, was promoted by the Chinese internal policy towards arts. After Mao presented "Hundred Flowers¹²⁴" in his speech before a closed session of Party leaders on May 2, 1956, the Chinese government started to show the eagerness of demonstrating the progress it had made in various fields, including music. Since 1956, conservatories started to be built up quickly across China, such as in Shenyang, Chengdu and Xian¹²⁵. In 1958, China sent at least 12 art troupes with 580 artists to twenty countries, and then in 1960, it sent 200 delegations to 48 countries. Some well-

¹²³ Ostrovsky, Nikolay, and R. Prokof'eva. *How the steel was tempered*. Progress Publishers, 1976.

¹²⁴ The Hundred Flowers Campaign, also termed the Hundred Flowers Movement, was a period in 1956 in the People's Republic of China[1] during which the Communist Party of China (CPC) encouraged its citizens to openly express their opinions of the communist regime.

¹²⁵ Melvin, Sheila, and Jindong Cai. *Rhapsody in Red: How Western Classical Music Became Chinese*. Algora Publishing (2004), 209.

known individual artists like Fu Cong and Liu Shikun were also sent to participate in international competitions¹²⁶.

Thus for Lin, as one of the beneficiaries of the historical environment and political decision-making at that time, it was predictable for him to be chosen to study in the Soviet Union in order to absorb advanced Western classical music and its techniques. Although Lin did not follow the path to be a violinist as his colleagues, like Sheng Zhongguo, did, he listened to the advice from his teacher Yuri Yankelevich and found his own life goal in the Soviet Union: to be a violin educator. Lin's decision at that time was viewed as very practical due to his limited performing talent and relatively elder age. Nevertheless, if being analyzed nowadays, his decision was actually wise and vital, because living a life as a violinist would be far less influential than being a violin educator under the contemporary condition of the Western classical music in the Chinese society.

However, in 1962, only two years later, Lin left the Soviet Union and ended his studying with Yuri Yankelevich. No detailed information could be found to explain why he returned back to China. From a historical point of view, one of the possible reasons can be inferred as the Sino-Soviet split¹²⁷. Starting with leadership conflicts in terms of ideological problems, Mao seemed to be overly confident about China's overall economy and technology, so he replaced the development model that inherited from the late Iosif Stalin with a development strategy

¹²⁶ Melvin, Sheila, and Jindong Cai, 212.

¹²⁷ The Sino-Soviet split (1956–1966) was the breaking of political relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), caused by doctrinal divergences arising from each of the two powers' different interpretation of Marxism–Leninism as influenced by the national interests of each country during the Cold War.

resembling earlier Soviet policies that had already been discredited in USSR¹²⁸. This replacement led to many crucial problems such as security disputes, economic disagreements, and sudden withdrawal of Soviet specialists in China. The development of the Western music in China was also impacted by this nationalized change, which caused a great loss of long-term teachers or advisors from either Western or Eastern Europe in conservatories, orchestras and music schools in China¹²⁹.

Thus, under the condition of continued rigidity of the Soviet Union and China, Lin had to return to China, but China was very different from that of two years ago, and people's views on Western music had changed dramatically under the decisions made by political leaders.

After Lin returned to China under the political pressure, unsurprisingly, his ambition of being a violin educator was not immediately put into action because of the political and economic turmoil of the moment. During his time in the Soviet Union, China was expectedly undergoing the Great Chinese Famine¹³⁰, caused by a combination of adverse weather conditions, social pressure, economic mismanagement, and radical changes in agriculture imposed by government regulations. Between 1959 and 1962, upwards of 36 million people starved to death, so in this situation where food and clothing were problematic, western music, a new thing that was not well known and loved by the public, had no room for development.

¹²⁸ Lüthi, Lorenz M. *The Sino-Soviet split: Cold War in the communist world*. Princeton University Press, 2010, 2.

¹²⁹ Melvin, Sheila, and Jindong Cai, 209.

¹³⁰ The Great Chinese Famine (Chinese: 三年大饑荒) was a period in the People's Republic of China between the years 1959 and 1961 characterized by widespread famine. Drought, poor weather, and the policies of ruler Mao Zedong contributed to the famine, although the relative weights of the contributions are disputed. Estimates of deaths due to starvation range in the tens of millions.

On the other hand, without the silent protection from the USSR, Western music gradually became the tool for Party's political use, and despite Lin's ambition of making a violin teaching career, he had to make compromises because of the political situation. After chairman Mao recommenced his emphasis on "Class struggle" in September of 1962, arts and literature were only focused to serve the political struggle¹³¹. Under this left-wing, led by Jiang Qing during the Cultural Revolution, the western music was prohibit.

When Lin was appointed as a teacher in the Central Conservatory of Music in 1963, he had to temporarily suppress his enthusiasm for violin education. After the first few years of Cultural Revolution, professors in conservatories like Lin were forced to suspend their music teaching, and many of them suffered from persecution. Some had been driven to take their own lives, and others even died during imprisonment or forced labor¹³². This past then became the nightmare of musicians that they would not dare talk about.

Unlike Lin's teacher, Ma Sicong, the president of the conservatory, Lin was not targeted as a right-wing radical, but rather was assigned to the countryside of Beijing to work with students in factories. Regarding Lin's memories during this period of time when he was assigned to the countryside, some of his teaching method was formed.

However, the inference about Mao's influence on Lin can be extended. To illustrate, another musician, Wang Xilin, who had similar experience to Lin, needs to be mentioned. As a

¹³¹ Melvin, Sheila, and Jindong Cai, 220.

¹³² Ibid., 234.

composer who graduated from the Shanghai Conservatory in 1962, Wang got into trouble in 1963. He objected to the policy of the art serving politics, and was punished by being sent to labor in Shanxi province, where he was supposed to change his thinking by reading Mao Zedong's work¹³³. So it can be inferred that under the absolute adoration for Mao, Lin's teaching ideas would certainly be influenced by Mao Zedong. For example, Lin's idea of the unity of opposites indeed coincides with Mao Zedong's *On Contradiction* and *On Practice*. But what should not be overlooked is that Lin perhaps already got some idea of Marxist dialects during his study in the Soviet Union or from his teacher Ma Sicong. In order to let his teaching work be carried out more easily, he included Mao's thought as a reference.

At the later part of the Cultural Revolution, the declined Western music gradually returned to the public, which marked the beginning of Lin's teaching career. Even the ideological trend, which emphasized the proletariat, remained undiminished. Jiang Qing began to encourage the use of model operas¹³⁴ to propagate the Party's will. In order to support more and more performances of model operas, Western instrumentalists were highly demanded by subsidiary orchestras, and then violin teachers like Lin regained their careers but without full respect from the public especially the Party. Because of its revolutionary purpose, musicians were trained to only serve the model operas, which means that they were not allowed to play Western repertoires like concertos or symphonies in public, but only etudes and other training techniques for

¹³³ Melvin, Sheila, and Jindong Cai, 235.

¹³⁴ Model operas, planned and engineered during the Cultural Revolution by Jiang Qing, the wife of Chairman Mao Zedong. They were considered revolutionary and modern in terms of thematic and musical features when compared with traditional operas. Many of them were adapted to film.

practicing¹³⁵. Perhaps this could be one of the factors why the core of Lin's teaching was focused on basic techniques. In the cultural context of the time, Western music was not allowed, as it would be branded bourgeoisie and at odds with the proletarian ideology. Thus when he carried out his teaching work, he was bound not to teach music with Western culture, but only limited to the training of basic skills, then probably over time this had become the core of his teaching methods.

In 1975, musicians gradually had more freedom since Mao began to reconsider the Cultural Revolution. Soon after the collapse of the Gang of Four, the policy has changed, led by Deng Xiaoping, China gradually emerged from the shadow of the Cultural Revolution. Western music seemed to become a new tool for diplomacy to connect China with Western countries. Since the performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony by the China Central Philharmonic in 1977, new concert season plans, new concert halls, and more foreign exchanges signified the beginning of the re-building¹³⁶. Starting with the visits of renowned foreign musicians like Seiji Ozawa, Isaac Stern, Karajan and so on, Chinese musicians who grew up during the Cultural Revolution began to see true professionalism.

However, Chinese musicians quickly exposed their shortcomings in front of these foreign musicians. In Isaac Stern's first visit to China in June of 1979, he pointed out that Chinese violinists were "unaccustomed to playing with varieties of color and passion, and there was a

¹³⁵ Ibid., 255.

¹³⁶ Melvin, Sheila, and Jindong Cai, 286.

distinctly stiff, technical, old-fashioned approach to the way they played¹³⁷”. His criticism of Western music education in China in fact also reflected the shortcomings of Lin's teaching methods. In chapter two, the training method of basic skills accounted for a large part, but the cultivation of musicality only stayed in verbal suggestion like listening to recordings and reading music history, which was far less concrete and vivid than the formulas for basic skill training.

In fact, the lack of musical cultivation of Lin's teaching methods and his emphasis on basic skills can be traced back to his educational background. In addition to being affected by the political environment, Lin's emphasis on basic skills probably also stemmed from his two teachers, Ma Sicong and Yuri Yankelevich. Even though they represented two different violin performing styles respectively as the Franco-Belgian school of violin playing and Russian school of violin playing, they both attached great importance to basic skill training. For instance, according to Yang Baozhi and Lin's memoirs of Ma Sicong, the basic skill training was in the first place in Ma's teaching system. Yang recalled that when he first entered the Central Conservatory of Music, Ma asked him to re-learn all the exercises and etudes, and practice them slowly and carefully, which was exactly what Ma learned in Paris with his teacher Boucherif¹³⁸. As for Yuri Yankelevich, his teaching methods were summarized in his book *On Violin Learning and Playing*¹³⁹. The book systematically summed up the violin playing methods, and in it, even very detailed technique or gesture was explained. Expectedly, the book about Lin's teaching

¹³⁷ Ibid., 289.

¹³⁸ Baozhi, Yang. “The Characteristics of Ma Sicong's Violin Teaching [马思聪小提琴教学的特点],” *Journal of Central Conservatory of Music* [中央音乐学院学报], no. 5 (2002), 17.

¹³⁹ Yankelevich, Yuri. *On Violin Learning and Playing* [论小提琴演奏与教学]. People's Music Publishing House [人民音乐出版社], 2002.

methods, summed up by Yang Baozhi, was very similar to Yuri Yankelevich's book both in content and structure. Both of these two books summarized the skills of violin playing systematically. For example, they both divided the content into left and right hand positions, intonation, articulation, fingerings and so on, and neither of them wrote much about the cultivation of musicality. Thus, the similarity of these two books in terms of the requirements for the accuracy of gesture and techniques reflects that Lin's teaching method could be regarded as a reproduction of Yankelevich's pedagogy in a way that was suitable for Chinese people to understand.

However, if Lin's pedagogy was just a copy of his teacher's, he could never be regarded as the father of violin education in China. His integration of Chinese elements in his methods was the key to his success. For China, which had just awakened from the previous nightmare, Western music was still a luxury item beyond the reach of the public. Lin's distinction lied in that he presented Western concepts with easy-to-understand formulas in Chinese characters, and this interesting way of learning promptly increased the enthusiasm and interest of students. Furthermore, as analyzed in chapter two, the teaching method of using verbal formulas, which has been handed down from ancient times to the present, has always been very suitable for the Chinese educational system.

Apart from Lin's efforts to establish his teaching system, his own approachability and humorous personality also played a role in promoting his career. According to chapter one, his interaction with students is more like that between father and children. He cared about students not only their needs and guidance of their violin education, but also about their lives. According

to Ling Zi's interview with Lin, Lin said that teachers should have two Taos. The first Tao is teacher's morality, which is a point that Chinese traditional culture attaches great importance to. The core of the teacher's morality should be a single word: love, such as love for students, love for talent, and love for teaching. The second Tao is the Tao of teaching. The teacher must have a way to turn what he understands into something the student also understands. Teaching is a regular thing, but it must also vary from person to person. A good teacher cannot just be satisfied with pointing out the shortcomings of the students. He or she should be more like an experienced doctor, accurately determining the shortcomings of the students and formulating prescriptions according to the problems, that is, to propose something suitable for students to solve their problems¹⁴⁰. Therefore, as a teacher with these two Taos, he deserves to be the leading figure in Chinese violin education.

Back to the historical analysis of the development of Lin's teaching career, one other indispensable factor regarding his success could be the transformation of the politics and corresponding policy changes. With the emergence of modernization and the Chinese Economic Reform led by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, Western music, finally opened to the Chinese market. Since Deng Xiaoping pushed the "four modernizations" — industry, national defense, science, and technology — as the governing creed, local governments began to use classical music as a means to project a modern and progressive image¹⁴¹. Not only orchestras and operas, but also conservatories started to modernize under the pressure from the government, primarily by hiring

¹⁴⁰ Zi Ling, "The Eighth Selection of the "Interviews With Lin Yaoji" - I Am Not A Mining Master But A Decorater [《林耀基访谈》摘选之八——我不是探矿大师，更像个装修工]," *Little Performer* [小演奏家], no. 12 (2009), 34.

¹⁴¹ Melvin, Sheila, and Jindong Cai, 301.

Chinese professors who have extensive overseas experience¹⁴². Because of government's emphasis on classical music, Lin finally got the chance to show his talent for teaching. Starting with his student Hu Kun's appearance on international music competition in 1980, his students began to win in major international competitions.

However, regardless of the fact that China gradually built its reputation internationally in classical music, mainstream Western music educators did not think this teaching method was applicable. Isaac Stern thought Chinese players' performances showed their lack of musicality and their technical as well as old-fashioned approach to music. Then another renowned American musician Itzhak Perlman criticized the Chinese violinists who spent much of their time practicing for competitions. Lin stated that it was necessary to take part in competitions, because it was the most effective way to increase Chinese visibility in the classical music scene. And he believed that under the guidance of the Chinese Economic Reform led by Deng Xiaoping, the use of teaching methods with Chinese characteristics could quickly enable students to reach the international advanced level. On the contrary, Perlman did not encourage his students to take part in competitions at all. Even though he knew a lot of people who thought competitions were opportunities, he thought competitions were neither perfect nor fair. Even if some of his students chose to take part in competitions, he would exhort them not to play for the purpose of winning the prize, but to enrich their experiences. Their different attitudes toward competitions could be related to the national conditions of the two countries. Unlike the United States, in the early days of the Chinese Economic Reform, China was in a very backward state in all aspects. Therefore,

¹⁴² Melvin, Sheila, and Jindong Cai, 305.

in order to quickly enhance the strength of the country and its impression to the outside, China had to take shortcuts to achieve its purpose. Lin's teaching method which absorbs the advantages of Russian Violin School in terms of its high standards and strict requirements, was precisely in line with the criteria of current international competitions. Thus Lin's success benefited from not only his early educational backgrounds but also from the current national demands.

Nonetheless, the teaching method is very difficult to have a sustainable developmental result, just like the bubble of Chinese economy today, Chinese violin education has gradually exposed problems. These are displayed by violin students being driven to succeed as soloists than participating in ensembles or orchestras, and their quests for exquisite techniques have gone far beyond their music literacy and their music background. Perhaps in the trend of globalization, exchanges between countries are becoming more frequent, including in the field of music. Due to the rapid progress in technology and media, the standard violin technical training can be spread all over the world, and superb violin technique is no longer the highest yardstick of the competition. Additionally, nowadays the majority of international competition winners are not Chinese. This phenomenon can reflect a change in people's classical music aesthetic, that once regarded as a first-class Russian style has gradually been labeled as old-school and no longer favored by the younger generation.

Over the past decade, Chinese students seemed to be more aware of the inadequacy of their own educational system, and more and more people had chosen to study abroad in America, Germany, and the United Kingdom. In order to gain a deeper understanding of classical music in addition to the technical training and solo performance, Chinese violin education is gradually

innovating. The most obvious change is that conservatories are embracing new faculty members in younger generation who have overseas studying experiences, and new orchestras and music schools have sprung up in recent years, of which the auditions are globally open. This not only creates opportunities for returning students but also for foreign musicians who can help with the development of Chinese violin teaching.

Although Lin's teaching methods cannot meet the full needs of violin education in China today, these methods with distinctive Chinese characteristics undoubtedly laid a solid foundation for the development of violin education in China. His legendary life and his teaching methods that were honed by the unique Chinese history will always be worth remembering by Chinese violinists.

Conclusion

Violin education in China has made great progress since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Under the guidance of Lin Yaoji, the most influential Chinese violin educator in China, more and more Chinese violinists have been recognized on the international stage. Lin's contribution to violin education in China is irreplaceable.

This paper is written about Lin from three aspects, namely: his biography, his teaching methods, and the analysis of his success. Lin's life is summarized comprehensively in the first chapter in a historical order. The chapter combines his experience with historical background and divides his life into several important stages, such as the initial stage of study, the experience of studying abroad, the development of his teaching career after returning to China and so on. This clear induction can give readers a more comprehensive understanding of Lin. The author hopes that by doing so, more people around the world will be able to get to know Lin who has changed violin education in China.

Then his teaching methods were analyzed in detail in the second chapter. This chapter mainly interpreted and analyzed *The Essentials of Lin Yaoji's Teaching Methods*, a book of Lin's teaching methods summarized by Yang Baozhi. The writer interpreted these methods, which Chinese violin students regard as the most precious, in English, and earnestly hopes that these violin teaching methods can go abroad. In this book, the three main categories are as follows: philosophical ideas, verbal formulas, and artistic cultivation. To sum up, the formula teaching method he advocated was very suitable for Chinese students at that time, because the dialectical

philosophy and the observation of natural things contained in the formulas were conducive to teaching Western musical instruments in China. However, the whole book prioritizes explaining basic skills and technical problems, but it does not provide many specific methods for artistic cultivation.

In the third chapter, Lin's success was analyzed from two perspectives: historical aspect and academic aspect. This analysis has combined the contents of the first two chapters. On one hand, his success was inevitably influenced by the specific historical environment at that time. The development of Lin Yaoji's studying experience and his teaching career are closely related to major historical changes in China, such as the relationship between China and the Soviet Union, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and the Chinese Economic Reform. On the other hand, the success of his teaching methods is attributed to his educational background. Because Lin was taught by Ma Sicong and Yuri Yankelevich, Lin learned the essence of the Franco-Belgian school of violin playing and Russian school of violin playing, which is to attach great importance to basic skill training. Because violin performers who were trained under this kind of teaching methods were popular with the judges of international violin competitions, it created opportunities for Chinese violinists to perform on the international stage and also strengthened Lin Yaoji's international prestige.

However, Lin Yaoji's violin teaching methods have limitations. The unbalanced training between techniques and music literacy leads to the general technicalization and lack of musicality among Chinese violinists. Unfortunately, with the change of sophistication of Chinese audience, this kind of technical style performance became less welcome to Chinese audience. As

a result, China has begun to make changes to resolve this problem. More and more violin students choose to go abroad for further study, and more and more domestic music institutions began to recruit talents from all over the world.

At the end, the writer hopes that more people will know more about Lin Yaoji and the violin education in China through this paper. Also, the writer wishes that more violin students will benefit from this, and the violin education in China can continue improving.

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