

# A study of two Chinese-Style Clarinet Works Colors from China and Hommage to China from the Perspective of Cultural Holism

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**ABSTRACT:** Cultural Holism is a guiding ideology for music study proposed by Chinese scholar LUO Yifeng in 2006. It was proposed mainly based on the background of increasingly frequent cultural exchanges in the world today, and contemporary Western classical music works illustrate this trend by increasingly incorporating non-Western music elements. Cultural Holism accordingly aims to interpret the application and integration of different musical elements in the related works from a more comprehensive and neutral perspective. This study selects two representative works - Colors from China and Hommage to China - from a series of recent Chinese-style clarinet works created by Italian composers Michele Mangani and Giuseppe Ricotta, and conducts detailed musical analysis of the two works from the perspective of Cultural Holism in order to present specific examples of innovative uses and combinations of Western and Chinese musical elements, thereby bringing about a clearer and deeper understanding of these works.

**Keywords:** Cultural Holism, Chinese-style clarinet works, Michele Mangani, Giuseppe Ricotta.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Currently we are living in the era of globalization, the cultural exchanges and mutual understandings become more significant than ever. Especially benefits from new technologies and communication methods, the communication between different nationalities and cultural groups in this world is more frequent and deepen. In music field, unlike the situation over the past centuries where Western culture and music were unilaterally imported into China and influenced the formation of Chinese modern musici, nowadays Chinese-style music and art elements are getting more and more attention and application from musicians all over the world [1]. Therefore, this requires us to look at this phenomenon and related works in a new and developmental perspective.

From 2017 to 2023, the Italian publishing house Eufoniaii had published six Chinese-style clarinet work in a row, they are namely Colors from China (2017), Red Flower all over the Mountain (2017), Swan Goose (2018), Sonata Nr.2: Memories from China (2020), and China Melody (2023) by Michele Mangani, as well as Homage to China (2019) by Giuseppe Ricotta [2]. These pieces are all originally composed for clarinet and piano and dedicated to Prof.DONG Dejuniii, a well-known clarinetist and senior educator from China. Since their creation and release, these works have quickly spread in the clarinet circle with the help of Internet video promotion channelsiv. On the one hand, these works have catchy and beautiful melodies which based on the composition styles of the two Italian composers; on the other hand, these works also express Chinese-style musical characteristics prominently. Therefore, these works have attracted great attention and recognition from both Chinese and Western musicians [3]. To this day, in addition to concert and recital performances, the influence of these works continues to grow and attract more and more academic attention.

However, till today, the relevant studies are quite limited in research perspective and depth. For instance, although the two composers, Michele Mangani and Giuseppe Ricotta are considered equally great Italian masters in the field of wind music compositionv, in comparison, Giuseppe Ricotta and his works have obviously received less research attention. Moreover, most of the studies specifically focusing on these Chinese-

style clarinet works were completed by Chinese musicians and researchers (in Chinese language). They often view these works only from the perspective of being as the Chinese people, and there is a tendency to overemphasize the influence of the “Chinese Clarinet School” in their views.

Since the creative motivations and processes of these works are based on friendly, equal, and in-depth cultural exchanges between musicians from different cultural background (Western and Chinese), the understanding and research on these works also need to be based on a broader and more comprehensive perspective [4, 5]. From the author’s perspective, it is necessary to employ the “Cultural Holism”<sup>vi</sup> proposed by Chinese scholar Yifeng LUO<sup>vii</sup> in 2006, as the guiding ideology of the related study. Because from the perspective of Cultural Holism, it advocates equal treatment of music cultures from all over the world, emphasizes the use of multi-value logical thinking to understand the different music cultures contained in musical works, and pays attention to the harmonious interaction caused by the integration of different music cultures. As summarized by LUO, “should insist on [the concept of] ‘all-in-one but different’ and oppose ‘separation and confrontation’”<sup>viii</sup>. Under the guidance of this perspective, the Western and Chinese musical elements contained in this series of Chinese-style clarinet works could be better viewed and discovered respectively, and integration issues between the two can be presented with a fusion and dialectical attitude.

Therefore, this study selects the two-representative works among these six Chinese-style works -Colors from China and Hommage to China (these two works are both first original works by the two composers respectively), and conducts a detailed musical analysis from the research perspective of Cultural Holism.

The goal of this study is to review the Chinese and Western musical elements contained in the selected works from a more neutral and comprehensive perspective under the guidance of Cultural Holism, and to discuss the innovative application and integration of the two types of musical elements through the presentation of specific examples (excerpts created by author), so as to provide readers and performers with a clearer understanding to these works. The author hope that this study could enrich the research results and information on the two composers (especially since there is currently almost no study that specifically focuses on the composer Ricotta and his works), as well as could provide new research ideas and perspectives for researchers focusing on related topics.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the series of Chinese-style clarinet works by Mangani and Ricotta are composed in recent years, the most of relevant research have been done mainly since 2019. And generally speaking, the composer Mangani and his works have received more research attention than composer Ricotta and his works [6, 7]. And as the first piece created in the entire series, Colors from China by Michele Mangani have received particular research attention, shows its representativeness:

MA Tao’s “Lun Dan Huang Guan Zuo Pin <Colors from China> Yin Yue Te Dian Yu Yan Zou Ji Fa (On the Music Features and Performance Techniques of the Clarinet Work Colors from China)” written in 2021, specifically focuses on the study of the piece Colors from China by Mangani. This master’s dissertation firstly summarizes the history and current situation of foreign and Chinese clarinet repertoire and the composer’s compositional career, further makes the general analyzing and information collating of the relevant background of music creation, musical form analysis, musical characteristics and performance techniques as well as the significance of this piece.

CHEN Nan’s “Man Jia Ni Zhong Guo Feng Ge Dan Huang Guan Zuo Pin De Yi Shu Te Zheng Yu Yan Zou Tan Xi (On the artistic feature and performance of Mangani’s Chinese style Clarinet works)”, written in 2021, reviews three Chinese-style clarinet works from Mangani, which are “Colors from China”, “Red Flower all over the Mountain”, and “Swan Goose”. This master’s dissertation explores the information of compositional background of works, gives a brief introduction to the composer, and analyzes the musical structure and artistic characteristics of selected three pieces.

Through these two master’s dissertations mentioned above, it can be confirmed that one of the biggest musical application features of these six Chinese-style works is that a large number of traditional Chinese pentatonic modes are used [8-10]. Thus, the examination of this feature is one of the focuses of this study. But at the same time, these studies did not provide in-depth explanation about the “Chinese pentatonic modes”, nor provided detailed analysis of specific examples. This has led to that although these studies particularly

emphasize the influence of the “Chinese Clarinet School” in concept, in terms of actual music analysis, they often closely follow the perspective of traditional Western composition methods only.

Therefore, the primary focuses and objectives of this study will be to review these selected works with a more neutral and comprehensive perspective (“Cultural Holism”), and use specific cases to discuss in detail the presentation of two different styles of musical elements (Chinese and Western) in these works during the analysis. In this way can the logic of Chinese music contained in these works be more clearly revealed, but also equally values the Western musical logic contained in these works. Moreover, since there is no systematic study and summary of the composer Ricotta, this study will also give a general description of this composer’s creative style based on the collected biography information and research of the selected works, hoping to provide some necessary information and ideas for future research focusing on this composer.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to review two works *Colors from China* and *Hommage to China* under the guiding ideology of Cultural Holism, especially to focus on the use of Chinese-style musical elements and the combination of them with Western musical elements, so as to provides inspiration for the understanding of works of the same type in the future studies.

First of all, this study will gather and present the biography information of two composers (since information on this topic is currently relatively fragmented, especially on the life of composer Ricotta), special attention will be paid to what non-traditional European music styles the two composers have created in addition to a series of Chinese-style clarinet works in recent years. Then this study will conduct musical analysis and present the table of formal structure and general information of two works *Colors from China* and *Hommage to China*, as well as the discussion with the specific examples [11]. Since the selected works for this study are combined with both Chinese musical elements and Western (tonal) musical elements, under the guiding ideology of Cultural Holism, these two types of musical elements need to be treated and understood equally. Thus, this study will review the application of relevant music theory from the perspectives of Chinese and European music respectively (multi-value logical thinking in Cultural Holism) [12]. Therefore, a brief study about the “Chinese Pentatonic Modes” will be conducted (and will be presented) before the musical analysis, with the focus on the organization principles and logics of Chinese pentatonic music, especially for the melodic line. On the other hand, the other parts of these works (such as instrumentation, forms, basis of harmonic line, etc.) that follow the European tonal music tradition will be reviewed as usual by using traditional music analysis methods [13]. And the final result and discussion will be presented in a comprehensive and unified way. This is both the concept of the “harmonious interaction and integration” in Cultural Holism and the actual expression style of these works. Finally, this study will make the summary of musical research on the two selected works, and make an insight to the future study and development.

In order to achieve the research goal, this study will apply qualitative research - content analysis methodology in music score analysis and descriptive analysis that based on the music score analysis as well as two composer’s biography information.

### IV. BIOGRAPHY OF TWO COMPOSERS

#### 1. MICHELE MANGANI

Michele Mangani was born in 1966 in Urbino, Italy. He graduated from the Conservatory “Gioachino Rossini” of Pesaro in clarinet in 1984, and later was certified in band instrumentation in 1987, in composition in 1990, in orchestra direction in 1992, and from Conservatory “GB Martini” of Bologna in choral music and choir direction in 1988.x

Mangani firstly became active in the music world as a clarinetist and (wind) band conductor, then he has become increasingly renowned as a composer, particularly specialized in clarinet (and wind) composition. Now the composition has become already his primary musical activityxi. He is a very productive composer: till today he is the author of over 1000 pieces for chamber ensembles for orchestra and choir, of which more than 600 titles are publishedxii (Eufonia has exclusive rights to these works). The clarinet music and works for band account definitely for the majority among his productionxiii.

Previous research pointed out that one of the biggest features of Mangani's works is "the return to tonality and Romanticism style compositional techniques"<sup>xiv</sup>. A brief review of his works during this study reveals another important feature of his works to constantly absorb the essence of music and art from various countries and nations, and to use these artistic elements as a source of creative inspiration. In addition to his series of Chinese-style works, other well-known and acclaimed works with national music characteristics include: *Tre danze latine* (three Latin dances) for clarinet and piano in 2019, *Klezmer Birthday* for 2 clarinets in 2018 and so on; and of course his series of works based on the famous clarinet solo melody (excerpt) from Italian Opera are also indispensable, such as: *Fantasia Da Concerto – sulla "Danza delle Ore"* for clarinet and piano in 2017, *Sinfonia La Forza del Destino* for clarinet and piano in 2017 (transcribed from the opera of the same name by Verdi), *"Verdiana"- Fantasia su temi da opera di Giuseppe Verdi* for clarinet and piano in 2018, etc.

## 2. GIUSEPPE RICOTTA

Giuseppe Ricotta was born in Palermo, Italy in 1968, He obtained a diploma in clarinet at the "Antonio Scontrino" Conservatory of Trapani in 1988, under the guidance of Maestro Giovanni Vilardi, at the same time he studied composition and harmony with Maestro Colajanni, professor of harmony at the "Vincenzo Bellini" conservatory of Palermoxv. After graduation, he was active as the clarinetist and conductor for youth wind band, he has been part of several instrumental groups and bands, accumulating great deal of the performance and conducting experience.

Besides as clarinetist and conductor, Ricotta began his composition career after attending the composition course with Claudio Josè Boncompagni, Jacob De Haan and Jan Van De Roost, at the Leopolda Philharmonic in Florence in 2002. Since 2005, he has collaborated with various publishing houses where he has published some of his original compositions and marches, indicated for youth bandsxvi. From 2007 till today he composes for the publishing house "EUFONIA" where he has published new original compositions, arrangements and transcriptions for bandxvii [14,15]. In the Italian musicians' circle, he, Michele Mangani and Vincenzo Correnti can be called the three masters of contemporary Italian wind music composersxviii.

Through the search on the Eufonia official websitexix, 70 works created by Giuseppe Ricotta can be found. Besides the band works, clarinet works are definitely another focus of Ricotta's composition (24 works found). From the review of this study, Ricotta shares the similar composition style as Mangani, and he also likes to use music materials with national characteristics from all over the world when composing, such as *Homage to China* for clarinet and piano (Chinese style, also version for clarinet and string quartet), *Kosak* for clarinet and piano (Cossack style, also version for clarinet and band), *Samba Latina* for 5 clarinets and *Tango Para Ti* for clarinet and piano (South American), *Nadir* for clarinet and piano (West Asian), *American Dixie* for band and *Far West* for band (American western), as well as *Sinfonia Italiana* for band and *Serenata Veneziana* for band (local Italian) and so on.

## 3. CHINESE PENTATONIC MODES AND ITS MELODIC ORGANIZATION PRINCIPLE

The "pentatonic mode", as the name suggests, is a musical mode composed of five different tone levels (within once octave, in contrast to "heptatonic mode" such as Western major and minor mode). The pentatonic mode widely exists in Chinese folk music, and "it is the most representative feature of Chinese traditional music"<sup>xx</sup>, and "on this basis, various changes in Chinese national musical modes and a comprehensive music theory system have been formed"<sup>xxi</sup>. Therefore, it is often called "traditional mode" or "(Chinese) national mode". To put it simply, the Chinese pentatonic mode is composed of five tones with a pure fifth interval relationship generated based on the "method of three-division profit and loss"<sup>xxii</sup>. The names of these five tones are: "Gong", "Zhi", "Shang", "Yu", "Jue", they are called as "five major tones" in traditional Chinese music theory. The pitches of these five tones are not fixed, so these names are more corresponded to singing names in Western music theory. Thus, these five tones, arranged in pitch order (Gong-Shang-Jue-Zhi-Yu), can be conceptually equivalent to the do-re-mi-sol-la (1-2-3-5-6), and this is exactly the "Chinese pentatonic scale" that is keenly used in many other studies<sup>xxiii</sup>.

Then in the traditional Chinese music theory, these "five major tones" (and only these "five major tones") of Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi, Yu can be used as tonic to produce five corresponding (pentatonic) modes, they are namely Gong mode, Shang mode, Jue mode, Zhi mode, and Yu mode. The scales of these five different pentatonic modes all contain the same five tones (1-2-3-5-6), but the order is different depending on the tonic

tonexxiv, and thus brings different musical colors. Generally speaking, the musical expression colors of Gong mode and Zhi mode are relatively brighterxxv (among these five modes), they correspond to the major mode of Western music in certain sense; while the musical expression colors of Yu mode and Shang mode are the opposite to themxxvi, have relatively darker musical expression colors and correspond to the minor mode of Western music in certain sense; finally, the Jue mode has the musical expression color between the two sidesxxvii.

On the basis of these five pentatonic modes, four other “minor tones” can be added into the scale, namely Biangong (minor second below Gong tone), Bianzhi (minor second below Zhi tone), Qingjue (minor second above Jue tone), and Run (major second below Gong tone), to form traditional Chinese hexatonic modexxviii and heptatonic modexxix. It should be noticed that these minor tones “are mainly ornamental in the melody and appear mainly in the form of passing or auxiliary tones”xxx. Therefore, even if Chinese-style music uses the heptatonic scale, it is still the “(five) major tones” that are emphasized, which plays a role in clarifying the key and main colors of the music. This is also an important key point that distinguishes Chinese-style music from Western-style music, that is, the scales of modes used in music could be similar (such as Qingyue scale of Gong mode and Western natural major mode are both 1-2-3-4-5-6-7), but the relationships and tendencies between notes within the modes are different. And this further determines that the organizational framework and principles of notes in music are different.

As Chinese scholar LI Chongguang summarized, the biggest (musical) features of Chinese pentatonic mode are: 1. the lack of sharp tendency of intervals such as semitones and tritonesxxxi; 2. the basis of the pentatonic melodic progression is the “three-tone sets”xxxii. These views of Li have gained widespread consensus in Chinese musicology circles and have been widely recognized through many years of composition practice by Chinese composers. According to another Chinese scholar MA Qiwen, the patterns of “three-tone sets” can be broadly classified into three categories (example see below): 1. The three-tone sets in fourth interval range, which is composed of major second and minor third intervals. They are mostly used in fast ascending and descending scale modular melodiesxxxiii. 2. The three-tone sets in fifth interval range, which is composed of a major second and a perfect fourth intervals. They are often used in various changes in the melody, such as reflection, inversion, range conversion, etc., and can also be regarded as an arpeggio form of four-fifth overlapping chordsxxxiv. 3. For the special effect, it can be a combination of Gong-Shang-Jue three-tone progression to form a major third interval (in order to stabilize and clarify the gong tone), or a combination similar to major and minor chords, but “has different color [different musical expression/used differently, author’ note] in comparison with the arpeggio of major and minor chords in Western music”xxxv. Therefore, the examination of the melodic parts in the selected two works (whether they follow the organizational principles of Chinese pentatonic music mentioned above) will be the top priority of this study, see Figure 1.



FIGURE 1. “Three-tone sets” patterns<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Image source: Ma, “On the Training Method”: 37. Original title of image: “the three-note sets in the national pentatonic mode”. The Chinese words on the third line of music is “reflection”.



To sum up, the “Chinese pentatonic modes” used in this study refers to the mode system of Chinese pentatonic music (which not only contains 5 pentatonic modes, but also other 10 different scales of hexatonic mode, as well as 15 different scales of heptatonic mode). It is an important foundation of the Chinese music system and an important external representation of Chinese-style music, and has different musical expression and music logic than Western major-minor mode system. Therefore, the next step of this study is to examine and discuss how the two composers practically applied this theoretical knowledge to create Chinese-style music characteristics in the two selected works, and how to combine them with the Western music composition habits they are more familiar with.

#### 4. STRUCTURE TABLES AND GENERAL INFORMATION OF TWO WORKS

Colors from China for clarinet in Bb and piano, composed by Michele Mangani in 2017, is a single-movement piece. The musical structure of this work is in compound ternary form (ABA with the binary subdivision in A sections). Each section is clearly divided by tempo changes: Allegro Moderato in m.1 (tempo is quarter note in 100 bpm.); Liberamente in m.76 (tempo is quarter note in 60 bpm.), later changed to Andante cantabile in m.80 (tempo is quarter note in 66 bpm.); and Allegretto in m.118 (tempo is pointed-quarter note in 82 bpm.). The initial time signature is 4/4 and has been maintained until m.117 (except for m.75 which was temporarily changed to 6/4), and changed to 6/8 from m.118 until the end. The harmony of this piece is mainly based on Bb Gong mode<sup>2</sup>, See Table 1.

**Table 1.** Structure of Colors from China<sup>3</sup>

Theme	Measures	Harmony (Mode) <sup>4</sup>	Tempo Marks
Section A			
- Introduction	mm.1-4	Bb Gong	Allegro moderato (Quarter note in 100 bpm.)
- Theme A	mm.5-20		
- Theme B	mm.21-31		
- Transition	mm.32-43	Db Gong - F Gong - Gb Gong - Ab Gong	Poco piu mosso
- Introduction	mm.44-47	Bb Gong	Tempo I
- Theme A	mm.48-63		
- Theme B	mm.64-75		
(with codetta)			
Section B			
- Interlude	mm.76-79	d Yu mode - c Yu mode	Liberamente (quarter note in 60 bpm.)
- Introduction	mm.80-81	g Yu mode	Andante cantabile (Quarter note in 66 bpm.)
- Theme C	mm.82-98		
- Theme C (with codetta)	mm.99-117		

<sup>2</sup> The Bb Gong mode here can be conceptually understood (or replaced) as the Western Bb major mode, but more emphasis of music organization is placed on the five pentatonic major tones Bb-C-D-F-G. In the same way, the Yu mode appearing in this study can also be conceptually understood as the Western minor mode with the same key. More details and reason of this marking manner see the discussion section below.

<sup>3</sup> This structural analysis table for this work in previous studies are all different from this table here. From author' perspective, the structural division in Chen Nan's thesis is too rough: he firstly defines this work in compound-ternary form, as he divided the mm.1-31 as Theme A, mm.32-45 as Theme B. In this division logic, he further divided mm.46-74 as Theme A<sup>1</sup>, mm.75-117 as Theme C, mm.118-146 as Theme A<sup>2</sup> and mm.147-181 as Theme A<sup>3</sup>. Also he neither provides the harmonic analysis in his table, nor he discussed the harmonic organization of this piece in detail (such as the modulation in transition section). Then the structural division in MA Tao's thesis is rather strange: firstly of all, he even didn't clearly give the view of formal structure of the whole work, it seems he really treated this piece as a “three-movements” work; for the subdivisions of each part, from his point of view the first part is in compound-ternary form, and second part is in compound period form, then the third part is the recapitulation of first part which is in compound-ternary form too. Moreover, his view on the harmonic analysis of this work is very stick to the Western harmony tradition, this has led to the emergence of many modes other than Gong mode and Yu mode in his analysis, even including the mix use of Western tonality modes. Therefore, in author' opinion, their analyzes are neither in line with (both Chinese and Western) music theory nor the actual auditory characteristics of this work.

<sup>4</sup> This study uses the traditional Chinese pentatonic mode for the “harmony” (organization) marking, rather than use the major or minor (mode) for the “tonality” marking when analyze these work. Because in this way, it can reflect more about the Chinese music logic, and this is also the most prominent musical expression of these works

Section A1			
- Introduction	mm.118-119		
- Theme A	mm.120-135		
- Theme B (with one measure connection to next section)	mm.136-146	Bb Gong	Allegretto (Pointed-quarter note in 82 bpm.)
- Theme A	mm.147-162		
- Theme B	mm.163-172		
- Supplement (Coda)	mm.173-181		

Hommage to China for clarinet in Bb and piano, composed by Giuseppe Ricotta in 2019, is a single-movement piece. The musical structure of this work is mainly based on the single-ternary form (ABA), and can be divided into two partsxxxvi: the first is a lyrical part, the tempo is in Andante (tempo is quarter note in 72 bpm.), and the harmony is based on Chinese pentatonic Bb Gong mode; the second is a fast (dance) part, the tempo is in Allegro (tempo is quarter note in 136 bpm.), and the harmony is based on Chinese pentatonic g Yu mode. The time signature always remains 4/4, see Table 2.

**Table 2.** Structure of Hommage to China

Theme	Measures	Harmony	Tempo Marks
First Part (Andante)			
- Introduction	mm.1-2	Bb Gong mode	
- Theme A	mm.3-10		
- Theme B	mm.11-18	g Yu mode - Ab Gong mode - Bb Gong mode	
- Theme A (with codetta in cadenza)	mm.19-27	Bb Gong mode	Andante (Quarter note in 72 bpm.)
- Theme B	mm.28-35	g Yu mode - Ab Gong mode - Bb Gong mode	
- Theme A	mm.36-43		
- Supplement (Coda)	mm. (upbeat of) 44-48	Bb Gong mode	
Second Part (Allegro)			
- Theme C	mm.49-66	g Yu mode - Eb Gong mode - g Yu mode	
- Theme D	mm.67-101	g Yu mode - Bb Gong mode - Db Gong mode - Bb Gong mode	Allegro (Quarter note in 136 bpm.)
- Theme C	mm.102-119	g Yu mode - Eb Gong mode - g Yu mode	
- Supplement (Coda)	mm.120-129	g Yu mode	

## V. DISCUSSION

From author's perspective, although these two works are both the first Chinese-style composition of two composers respectively, many of examples within these two works show that the two composers already realized that the Chinese-style music has different musical expression characteristics (colors) and different

musical development logic from Western music. The most important and outstanding performance is the melodic organization of these two works:

For instance, the melodic material of Theme A in work *Colors from China* (see excerpt below) is totally composed of the five pentatonic major tones of Bb Gong mode (C-D-E-G-A in clarinet pitch), and conforms to the organization principle of the Chinese pentatonic melody: the organization of the melody is mainly based on the natural up and down progression of the pentatonic scale, the only big interval jump appears in measure 11 (D-E-A in top sixteenth notes and last eighth note), which still conforms the “three-tone set” pattern. Such a simple melody that naturally flows up and down with the scale is like a melodious and bright folk song, outlining the wonderful images of China in Mangani’s mind. It can also be noticed here that Mangani deliberately wrote the crescendo mark in the upbeat of mm.8 and the decrescendo mark in m.12 (these dynamic marks are also written in the piano part), to indicate the direction of the music and the end of the phrase. This is because the development of music is not conducted or supported by the harmonic progression (see discussion later), thus these dynamics marks can greatly help performers to clearly figure out the musical development (although during the performance, many clarinetists generally will do naturally and sometimes unconsciously crescendo and decrescendo with the notes going up and down), see Figure 2.



FIGURE 2. *Colors from China* clarinet part mm.1-12 (created by author)

Also, the melodic material of Theme A in work *Hommage to China* is entirely composed of five pentatonic major tones of Bb Gong mode (see excerpt below), and it can be seen from the excerpt that although this melodic material is not composed of a progressive pentatonic scale like the melodic material of Theme A in *Color from China*, the note organization of this melody is very consistent with the “three-tone set” patterns mentioned above and can be clearly detected with red circles in figure: it is rather clear to find that the main framework of this melody is based on fourth interval progression, and the each phrase (every 4 measures) presents a smooth and graceful melodic line that gradually rises and then falls, showing the direction of music, See Figure 3.



FIGURE 3. *Hommage to China* clarinet part mm.1-10 (created by author). The blue circles indicate the main notes of the melodic line, and the red circles represent the framework of “three-tone sets”

In addition to the complete use (and emphasis) of the Chinese pentatonic major tones in the note’s composition and “three-tone sets” patterns in notes organization by both two composers, it is worth mentioning that Mangani organizes the melodic plan of Theme C in work *Colors from China* with the four-phrase division of “Qi Cheng Zhuan He” (introduction, elucidation, transition and conclusion), which is one of the typical phrase organization methods in traditional Chinese musicxxxvii. During this thematic subject, the first phrase is mm.82-85, giving the main idea (rhythmic pattern, musical expression) of the whole theme,



then the second phrase in mm.86-89 started with the same beginning with the first phrase, but developed differently later; from upbeat of m.90, clearly indicated by the dynamic marks (crescendo to the mezzo-forte), the third phrase brings the “change” of musical expression (more volume and bigger range of notes appeared in the melody), finally the fourth phrase from upbeat of m.94 pushes the music to a climax and ends with long diminuendo (it is same as before that the composer deliberately uses dynamic marks to indicate the division of phrases). The use of this phrase structure also further reinforces and emphasizes the Chinese-style music characteristics in this work.

Based on the above-mentioned note organization methods, the main theme melodies of these two works both express Chinese-style music characteristics very prominently. Besides organizing the melodic line with the development logic of Chinese pentatonic modes, there is also many innovative harmonic application and organization in these two works that are obviously different from Western harmony tradition. The most important feature of this point would be that the functionality of chords which is often vague, and also sometimes the composition of chords is not in triads.

For example, just as the chords that appear in the first four measures of work *Colors from China* (the introduction section) are immediately quite special and complex: as it can be seen from the excerpt below, the chord in first measure is actually composed of all five pentatonic major tones of Bb Gong mode (Bb-C-D-F-G). This kind of chord could very embody the color characteristic of Chinese pentatonic music (therefore, the author would like to name this kind of chords as “pentatonic chord” in the following analysis; the specific name of this chord is based on the bottom notes of the chord, such as the chord here is called “Bb Gong chord”), which immediately forms the beginning atmosphere that is different from typical Western tonal music. And one of the most important features of this kind of “pentatonic chord” is the vagueness of functionality. For instance, if it is said that the first two measures cannot be used as strong enough evidence (because all the notes in the chords do not appear together, so the sounding effect might be not direct), then the chords in the third and fourth measures are a good example: as it can be seen from the excerpt below, this chord is also composed of all major tones of Bb Gong mode, and this time all five major tones have been co-existing for a long time, emphasizing and confirming the sounding effect of Chinese pentatonic music, See Figure 4.

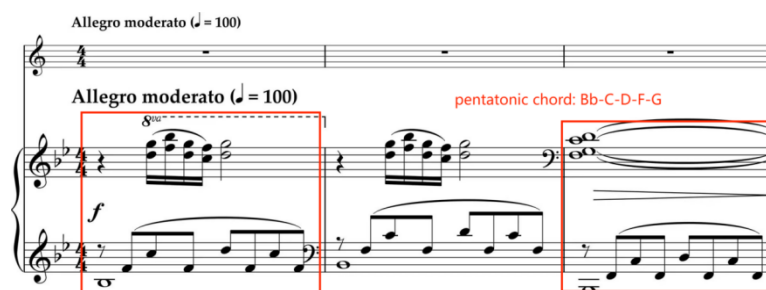


FIGURE 4. *Colors from China* mm.1-3 (created by author).

In these two works, both composers used this kind of pentatonic (added-tone) chord extensively to emphasize and highlight the musical color of Chinese-style. Then due to the complexity of chord organization and the vagueness of harmonic functionality brought about by the application of pentatonic chords, the harmonies in these works tend to be “static”. For instance, the harmonic organization of the Theme A section in work “Hommage to China” is rather simple, the piano continues to play pentatonic added-tone chords with the same structure and organization way as in the Introduction, to render the musical background. And in fact, Ricotta only applies two chords during this section: Bb Gong added-tone chord and C Shang added-tone chord (so there is no typical cadential progression of Western-style music in this theme subject), and for most of measures the harmony stays largely on the Bb Gong chord without any harmonic progression. In addition, although these two chords (Bb Gong chord and C Shang chord) can be conceptually regarded as tonic and supertonic chords from the perspective of Western composition habits, the composer did not follow the classic Western harmonic progression pattern (which uses supertonic seventh chords as passing chord between two tonic chords), and applied the progressions in parallel harmonies. Especially it can be seen from the excerpt below, the piano’s left hand is entirely in parallel fifth harmonic progression. In here, this application of this parallel harmonies weakens the functionality of the harmonic organization (from the perspective of Western

harmonic function system, so there is no accumulation of musical tension brought by the progression of harmonic function), thereby further embodying the characteristics of Chinese pentatonic music combining with the Chinese pentatonic melody, see Figure 5.



FIGURE 5. Hommage to China mm.4-7 (created by author)

In addition to parallel harmony, there is also a very prominent and important “non-traditional” harmony application in the work *Colors from China*, that is, in the interlude section of the second part (mm.76-79) of the work, the composer Mangani boldly and innovatively applied “Quartal Harmony” organization: as it can be seen from the excerpt below, the “chord” (with red square) formed by the piano is actually three stacked pure fourth intervals, and then repeated by major second lower modulation. Therefore, technically it is hard to say “there is harmonic (functional) progression in these four measures”, and the actual sounding effect of these four measures is more like to be the “free and open harmonic organization”. The role of these four measures is only to clearly distinguish the music from the previous part, as well as pave the way for the change of musical color and mood. Also it is worth mentioning that the melodic development of this soprano part of piano is in line with the notes organization principle of Chinese pentatonic music: the whole melody is also only composed of five tones Eb-F-G-Bb-C, and the framework of notes could be divided as F-G-Bb, Eb-F-C, Bb-G-F (the melody goes to G in mm.80), which are all “three-tone sets” patterns, see Figure 6.



FIGURE 6. Colors from China mm.76-79 (created by author)

It needs to be clear that these innovative harmonic applications are also based on the Western harmonic tradition. For example, it can be seen that most of the chords still strictly follow the Western triad's structure and organization manner. Most importantly, in these two works, although the harmonic functionality of is not emphasized in many cases (in order to embody the Chinese-style music characteristics), at some specific points,

both two composers choose to “return” to the traditional writing method of Western harmony. The most prominent manifestation of this feature is the application of cadential harmonic progressions.

For instance, the first time Theme A (mm.5-20) of work *Colors from China* can be divided as two 8-measure phrases, and the second one is a repeated variation of the previous phrase. The harmonic organization of this repeating phrase is basically the same as the previous phrase (only with more variation notes in the melody material), but the exception appears in measures 19 and 20 (see excerpt below), the lowest part of the piano forms a C-F-Bb progression (before it was C-F-G). This progression of the bass part gives a strong implication of functional progression of authentic cadence (subdominant-dominant-tonic)xxxviii, especially with the addition that Mangani clarified the Bb major chord in root position through the length of a full beat in measure 20 (previously the chords was mostly syncopated against the downbeat). All this makes it reasonable to infer that Mangani did intend to design the harmonic progression of authentic cadence in here, to emphasize the structural division (new theme material comes after it). At the same time, it can be seen that in measure 19, the piano’s right-hand part still retains the chords in syncopated rhythmic patterns as before, so it can be said that Mangani did not insert this typical Western harmonic progression into the music rigidly (in complete formation of dominant chord to tonic chord progression), but also took into account the overall effect of the music. See Figure 7.

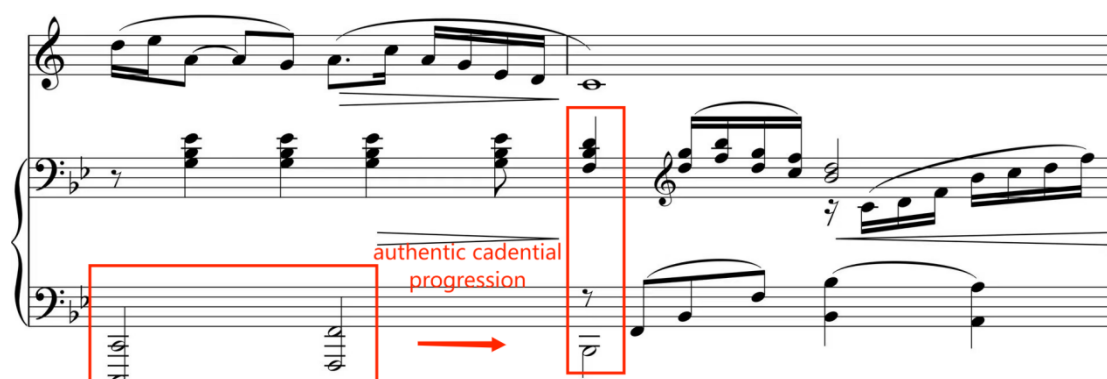


FIGURE 7. *Colors from China* mm.19-20 (created by author)

This note progression in bass line also appears in every subsequent Theme A (mm.29-30, and its variations in the third fast part of this work, mm134-135, as well as mm.161-162), The same use of this note progression can confirm the previous inference, that is, Mangani intentionally uses the subdominant-dominant-tonic (or the secondary dominant-dominant-tonic) harmonic functional progression (authentic cadential progression) represented by this note progression to emphasize and indicate the important structural division.

Similarly, this feature is also manifested in another work *Hommage to China*. For instance, in the ending of Theme B (m.18) in this work, Ricotta writes a F major chord that is jointly played by clarinet and piano together (see excerpt below). Here this chord could be seen as the dominant chord (Zhi chord) of Bb Gong mode, which shows the ending of this section and makes the preparation for the tonic chord (Gong chord) of Bb Gong mode in next measure. And it can be noticed that the composer specifically emphasized B natural (concert sounding A natural) in the clarinet part here, even though this note does not belong to the pentatonic major tones. Thus this “accidental note” (in the context of pentatonic music) can be seen as being used to enhance the functionality of the harmony used here (because this tone is the third-level tone of the dominant chord). At the same time, the composer also writes the pentatonic scale based on Fxxxix in the right-hand part of the piano, to embody and emphasize the application and musical color of Chinese pentatonic mode. This could be interestingly connected with the sense of secondary dominant application also: because if this scale were to be discussed alone, it would be marked as the scale of C Zhi mode (C-D-F-G-A, the F is the Gong tone), which is the dominant mode of F Gong mode. This spot fully reflects Ricotta’s organic combination and application of two musical logics (Chinese and Western) during composing, so that the two musical styles are presented in a rather balanced and harmonious way of expression. This harmonic organization is also used when Theme B is repeated for the second time during this work (mm.34-35), see Figure 8.

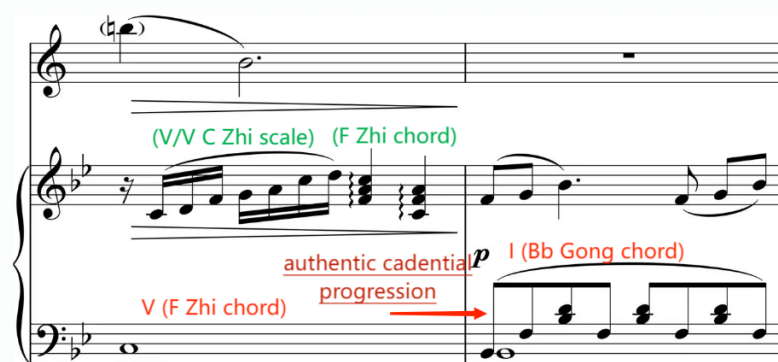


FIGURE 8. Hommage to China mm.18-19 (created by author)

In the second part (fast dance part) of this work, there is also a similar use of harmonic organization: as it can be seen from excerpt below, in mm.65-66, the composer completely jumps out of the thinking manner of Chinese pentatonic mode, and uses the D dominant seventh chord (root position in piano part, and broken chord in clarinet part). And it can be noticed that as before, the composer once again specifically emphasized the third tone of the dominant chord by raise it semitone higher (in the use of harmony before this part, the composer considered more in terms of pentatonic musical color, so he used F natural more. Because the harmonic organization is based on g Yu mode during this section, so the F natural is one of the pentatonic major tones). Combined with the harmony in m.67 (G minor chord), it can be seen that these measures clearly form an authentic (functional) cadence progression and the functionality of chords are particularly emphasized. Same as before, the composer should intend to use the harmonic progression of authentic cadence to have the structural developing motivation, so as to show the important structural division (Theme C and Theme D later) more clearly. The emphasis on the third tone of the dominant chord (i.e. leading tone function) can also be seen as the personal creative habit of composer Ricotta, see Figure 9.



FIGURE 9. Hommage to China mm.65-67 (created by author)

As mentioned before, due to the complexity of chord organization and the vagueness of harmonic functionality brought about by the application of pentatonic chords, in such music, chords and harmonic organization alone cannot provide sufficient structural developing motivation. Therefore, in addition to specially designing the development of the melodies (such as the dynamic marks and the pitch movement of melodic line), the two composers also unanimously chose to apply traditional Western harmonic cadential progression at important structural division points, in order to enhancing the structural developing motivation of music and helping to indicate the direction of music more clearly. This not only reflects the composition

habits of the two composers based on the composition tradition of Western tonal music (as mentioned in their biography), but also serves as a concrete example of how the two composers integrated two musical styles and their thinking manners (logics) in their works.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Under the guidance of the Cultural Holism ideology, through the above detailed review to two works *Colors from China* and *Hommage to China* with specific examples, the first thing can be concluded is that both two works indeed express Chinese-style music characteristics prominently, since these two works both apply the notes organization principle (“three-tone sets”) to construct the melodic lines, and also use a large number of pentatonic chords and innovative adaptations (of harmony application) in the harmonic lines to highlight the musical color of Chinese-style pentatonic music. These factors suggest that the two composers have in-depth understanding of Chinese music theory and are willing to follow the thinking logic of Chinese music development when organizing the overall music (from the perspective of composition practice, this could suggest also that they give priority to the actual sounding effect in the creation of works). And this is the fundamental and essential reason that these works can reflect the prominent musical characteristics and expression of Chinese-style.

On the other hand, it is necessary to notice that the two Western (Italian) composers still organized music based on the Western composition methods (traditions). Thus, these works still reflect and embody the tradition of Western tonal music, such as instrumentation, musical forms, basic harmonic organizations (chord in triads, cadential progressions) and so on. And these factors also bring a Western-style aesthetic preferences to the music in these works. Therefore, from author’s perspective, the most appropriate understanding to these works is to treat them as a kind of “cultural integration” musical works, that is, the composition of these works is based on the both two composers’ full understanding of the two styles of music, then they modified and integrated the traditions and characteristics of two style of music, and finally present the music that is based on these traditions but with new expression with their own labels, so the influence and importance of the two musical elements (Chinese and Western) in these works should be equal and even-handed. This positioning is also in line with the ideological connotation of Cultural Holism.

Finally, through the above research discussion and summary, it can be seen that the perspective of Cultural Holism is more of an ideological guidance rather than providing a specific research approach. It requires that music research methods and values should not be only based on and limited to Western music traditions as the center, but should look at different music cultures with a more open and neutral attitude (taking this study as an example, just because these works were created by Western composers does not mean that the Chinese musical elements in these works are “appendages” to Western musical elements, and vice versa). Therefore, from author’s perspective, the the perspective of Cultural Holism not only brings a clearer and fresh understanding of the selected clarinet works in this study, but can also further provide new ideas for development of other instrumental and vocal music (not only the Western music or Chinese music, but also include the other traditional music in different regions around the world): that is to say, in the future, composers and musicians from different countries and cultural groups could be able to more freely combine various non-Western music traditions on the basis of Western music expressions (since it has well-established theoretical system and composition methods), to present the more diverse styles of music and their musical cultures. As the statement from UNESCO Universal Declaration on the Cultural Diversity says: “creation draws on the roots of cultural tradition, but flourishes in contact with other cultures”<sup>xl</sup>. With the more emergence of this kind of cultural integration (styles combining) musical works that are rooted in both Western and local musical traditions, it will also bring a “rebirth” to Western classical music and other traditional music from whole world. Future research on these works will inevitably need to apply the philosophical guidance of Cultural Holism. Regardless of the specific research approaches and methods (which will be different based on different styles and genres of music), the most important thing is to conduct objective, in-depth research based on the background culture involved in the relevant music with multi-value logical thinking, and then discuss and present the research content with a neutral and comprehensive attitude.



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### Author contribution

All authors made an equal contribution to the development and planning of the study.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors have no potential conflicts of interest, or such divergences linked with this research study.

### Data Availability Statement

Data are available from the authors upon request.

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