

Research Assessment Exercise 2020
Impact Case Study

University: Hong Kong Baptist University
Unit of Assessment (UoA): 39 Music and Performing Arts

Title of case study: Transforming International Practices with Chinese Choral Music

(1) Summary of the impact

The performance-led research in Chinese choral music has led to new cross-cultural knowledge and programming approaches among international choral practitioners. Utilizing a recent Chinese-language art form that draws upon the Western choral genre, Winzenburg's activities have led to changing perceptions of China and contemporary choral music for a wide constituency of conductors, choir members, educators, and professionals. His Chinese choral anthology *Half Moon Rising* has enhanced choral practices, providing musicians with new pathways for collaborative performance, cultural-linguistic expression, thematic programming, and commercial publishing. Practitioners express benefits of positive musical-cultural understanding across continents and within boundaries of China and Asia.

(2) Underpinning research

In his research, Winzenburg (Professor of Music and choral director, at HKBU since 2008) has bridged musical and cultural boundaries through the new yet vibrant Chinese choral genre. Specifically, he has investigated how its repertoire is developed, accessed, and interpreted across disparate national, linguistic, and stylistic traditions in twenty-first-century performance contexts.

Contemporary choral music is frequently informed by cross-cultural interaction, and interest in performing China's cultural forms has strengthened in recent decades by ensembles around the world seeking to better understand the emerging Asian power. Choirs everywhere have faced significant programming challenges due to limited access to 1) published scores, 2) reference recordings, 3) diction guides and translations for singing texts in Chinese, and 4) background information on composers, historical contexts, vocal styles, and folk traditions.

Since 2003, Winzenburg has documented in text-based research how Chinese and Western cultures interacted throughout the twentieth century. He has focused on experimental genres from the 1930s that led to new notions of "tradition" in recent decades. Beginning in 2008, he expanded his scope into performance-led research, conducting university choirs in performances of choral music in Mandarin, Cantonese, and other dialects on Chinese and Western concert stages.

The cultural, lingual, and musical processes of interpretation informing Winzenburg's research led to the first commissioned Chinese choral anthology by a major international publisher, Edition Peters (U.K., Germany, U.S.; 2015) and further publication of a Chinese edition by the Central Conservatory of Music Press (CCOM, Beijing; 2015). The *Half Moon Rising* project [3.1] has involved multiple research strands combining archival research, musical preparation through rehearsals, and recording and live performance of repertoire. The methodology adopted by Winzenburg integrates simultaneous processes leading to publication and various modes of performance, including: score collection and commissioning of new works; composer interviews; copyright clearances in multiple jurisdictions; writing of introductory notes; transliteration and translation of texts; creating piano reductions and simplified accompaniments; setting and editing of scores; formulation of pronunciation guides for Mandarin choral diction and individual works; and conducting choral workshop sessions. All methodology is informed by historical contextualization of Chinese choral music 1) as an adopted Western genre, 2) as a reflection of socio-political movements in modern Chinese history, 3) as an extension and permutation of previous Chinese

traditional forms, and 4) as a new national tradition that also forms part of the contemporary international choral genre.

The collections offer a step-by-step approach towards accessing, understanding, and performing Chinese choral music of moderate difficulty from a comprehensive historical perspective and broad range of regions, styles, and dialects. The international edition combines hard copy and online media, including a Mandarin Pronunciation Guide and scores in transliterated syllables with non-singing English translations. In both editions, unaccompanied works include piano reductions. Each score is preceded by an introduction with useful information on composers, folksongs, texts, choral settings, and performance notes. The online support includes detailed written and aural pronunciation guides for each work in their respective dialects, as well as musical recordings, which have also been published on the separate CD.

(3) References to the research

3.1 Chinese choral anthology and CD:

International Edition – *Half Moon Rising: Choral Music from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan*, compiled and edited by John Winzenburg. London: Edition Peters, 2015 (234 pp.; 28,000 words authored text; 24 edited works; 20,000 words online pronunciation guides; www.editionpeters.com/halfmoonrising)

Chinese Edition – 水光潋滟：华人合唱经典作品选集 [Ripples Glisten Away: Collection of Chinese Classical Choral Works]。 (美) 文盛伯编著 [ed. John Winzenburg]。北京：中央音乐学院出版社 [Beijing: Central Conservatory of Music Press]，2015年11月 (published in affiliation with Edition Peters) (November 2015; 113 pp.; 12 edited works and introductions in Chinese text; <http://press.ccom.edu.cn/Book.aspx?Category=1&mid=2420>)

CD and online recordings – *Half Moon Rising: Choral Music from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan*, compiled and edited by John Winzenburg. London: Edition Peters, 2015 (www.editionpeters.com/halfmoonrising)

(4) Details of the impact

Winzenburg's work has improved cross-cultural knowledge and reshaped practices of amateur and professional choral musicians across five main spheres of **collaborative performance, geography, language, programming, and publishing**. Disseminating research findings through performance and contextual commentary in international media as a pathway to impact, he and the Cantoría have presented Chinese choral works in regional contexts on BBC Radio 3 "In Tune" (2016), and he provided historical insight in *Choir & Organ* magazine (UK; 2015), which recognized *Half Moon Rising* for opening "unexplored avenues of repertoire for choirs and their directors." Locally, Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) Radio 4 has acknowledged Winzenburg for "putting Chinese language, both Mandarin and Cantonese, [into] the international choral arena," with extensive coverage via concert broadcasts (2013, 2016, 2018), radio and *FINE* magazine features (2018), and a four-part "Songs of the Earth" series (2018) framing Chinese choral music within the global repertoire [5.1].

Growing viability for Chinese-Western performance practices can be evidenced by **collaborative cross-cultural programming**, which partnered the Cantoría with prominent arts festivals, professional and amateur groups, composers, and community venues in diverse settings. The performances served as vehicles for premiering commissioned works and exploring choral dialogues between various Chinese and non-Chinese languages, styles, historical texts, and instrumentation [5.2]. Noteworthy among these is the major collaboration with the National Youth Choir of Great Britain, beginning with a jointly presented Chinese choral reading workshop at the 2015 American Choral Directors Association National Conference (U.S.). NYCGB representatives

remark, “the initial introduction to Chinese repertoire [at ACDA] marked a new departure” from traditionally British repertoire. This was followed by a concert series featuring *Half Moon Rising* repertoire around China and the UK (2016-2017, including the Snape Proms and International Youth Choir Festival) and for NYCGB’s first Chinese digital single recorded for Apple Music and Spotify (2018) [5.3].

Conductors and choirs **on different continents** (Asia, Europe, North America, Oceania, South America) **across generations and contexts** have also experienced new modes of choral engagement through Winzenburg’s workshops and presentations at international choral festivals [5.4]. His research insights, through direct exchange and consultation, have helped Western and Asian artists understand deeper layers of cultural meaning and distinctions among regional Chinese styles and dialects [5.5]. International school choral educators have commented, “his work has provided us with access to a new collection of Chinese choral pieces that have helped us to modify our curriculum toward achieving these Student Learning Results,” which include demonstrating an understanding of Chinese culture and proficiency in Mandarin [5.6].

More specific to the Hong Kong setting, his commissioning of new Cantonese works has opened new opportunities for local choirs: to express, for the first time, ancient and modern poetry in their own language; to examine diction in detail, apart from daily pronunciation, in order to make Cantonese lyrics sound natural in choral performance; and to **build collective, cultural-linguistic memory** through group singing [5.7]. The commissions have also enabled Western conservatory choirs to gain their first exposure to Chinese choral music and its rich culture of classical poetry, helping them to both understand a new musical language and see an ancient Chinese style in a new choral way [5.8].

The specific formatting, content, and support materials Winzenburg has provided in *Half Moon Rising* and on the Edition Peters website have given choirs everywhere a **complete set of programming resources** not available before 2015. Ensembles in North America, for example, have altered their repertoire, with entire concert themes organized around the collection, resulting in a substantive choral representation of Chinese styles, dialects, and historical periods within a new, single programme format [5.9].

International publishers have transformed their approaches as a result of Winzenburg’s research, even as they have partnered with him in facilitating change in performance practices. *Half Moon Rising* has had a tangible professional and economic impact on Western repertoire-based Edition Peters and the Central Conservatory of Music Press [5.10]. The foray into Chinese choral music signaled a **new direction in cross-cultural publishing** for Edition Peters, while the inclusion of non-Western texts and music necessitated novel approaches to professional editing and effective score page setting within a unified collection, as well as to securing copyright agreements across Asian legal jurisdictions. The commercial benefits to both publishers extend beyond music sales alone: *Half Moon Rising* marked a modification of international product branding and a new conduit to the China market. The resulting commercial partnership has since continued to bring Western editions of renowned works to China and Chinese publications to Europe.

(5) Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Selection of broadcast media coverage:

RTHK Radio 4 broadcast of 2018 New Zealand-Hong Kong Choral Convergence (2018); 4-part RTHK Radio 4 series “Songs of the Earth” and *FINE* magazine feature (2018); RTHK Radio 4 broadcast of 2016 Cantoria-NYCGB Concert (2016); British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Radio 3 “In Tune” programme (2016); *Choir & Organ* magazine (Rhinegold Publishing, UK, 2015); RTHK Television “Arts on Air” broadcast of WYCCF Opening Concert (2015); RTHK Radio 4

broadcast of 2013 Chamber Choir Showcase (web streaming 2013-2014); Beijing TV broadcast of National Center for the Performing Arts “Weekend Concert” (web streaming 2012-2014)

5.2 List of Chinese choral performance and recording projects during the RAE impact period:

CD (physical & digital): “Quotation of Queries: Choral Encounters of Hong Kong, China, and the Distant West” (recorded at Studio 28, Bangkok; 2018 – signed/released by PARMA Recordings/NAXOS, U.S.; 2019/2020); Colla Voce 2019 喜粵! concert of all-Cantonese works (Hong Kong, 8 premiered works; 2019); New Zealand-Hong Kong Choral Convergence concert (Hong Kong, 2 premiered works; 2018); *Hong Kong Odyssey* (Chinese multimedia cantata premiere with Hong Kong Arts Festival; 2017); National Youth Choir of Great Britain-Cantoría Hong Kong joint concerts (London/Hong Kong; 2016); HKBU-sponsored outreach concerts at Hong Kong City Hall Concert Hall (4 concerts) and Hong Kong Cultural Centre (1 concert) (3 premiered works; 2014-15); Taiwan Exchange tour (Taipei/Kaohsiung, 3 concerts; 2014)

5.3 Email from youth choir with testimonial, facts, and statistics describing the significance of *Half Moon Rising* on performance practices

5.4 List of international workshops and presentations during the RAE impact period:

“Performance Approaches for New Cantonese Choral Music,” Asia Pacific Choral Summit (Hong Kong; 2019); “Bel Canto à la Hong Kong: Cantonese Performance Practice in Chinese Choral Music,” 2019 American Choral Directors Association Conference (U.S.; 2019); Chinese Choral Diction Workshop, Korean Choral Directors Association (Korea; 2018); “Stylistic Development and Hybrid Genres in Chinese Choral Music,” 2015 American Choral Directors Association Conference (U.S.; 2015); *Half Moon Rising* Reading Session, American Choral Directors Association Conference (U.S.; February 2015); *Half Moon Rising* Choral Workshop, National Youth Chamber Choir of Great Britain (U.K./U.S.; 2015); Chinese Choral Workshop, The 24, University of York (U.K./Hong Kong; 2014); “Spanning Regional Styles and Musical Languages in the Emerging Chinese Choral Tradition,” 10th World Symposium on Choral Music, International Federation of Choral Music (IFCM) (Seoul, Korea; 2014); “Chinese Choral Music” 2013 Chinese Composers Festival Symposium, Hong Kong, 2013

5.5 Choral directors association Chinese choral music workshop survey and responses

5.6 Email from international school with testimonial describing the impact of *Half Moon Rising* on modifying the choral curriculum

5.7 Email from choir director and audience response survey from Colla Voce 2019 喜粵! all-Cantonese concert describing the cultural impact of new Cantonese choral music on Hong Kong choirs and audiences

5.8 Email from conductor and chamber choir member with testimonial describing *Half Moon Rising* introducing new cross-cultural programming to the German choir and audience

5.9 Concert programme (U.S.) featuring *Half Moon Rising*

5.10 Publisher corroboration of *Half Moon Rising* impact on editorial and commercial practices