MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY College of Music

Dissertation Completion Fellowship Nomination Form
for Fall Semester 2010 or Spring Semester 2011

IMPORTANT: Follow Guidelines on the reverse side of this form.

Date: 3/19/2010

Name ____________________________

Degree sought (circle one) DMA PHD

Address to receive correspondence regarding competition:

__LANSING, MI 48910__________

Please indicate the semester in which you wish to receive the fellowship

✓ Fall Semester 2010   ___ Spring Semester 2011

Summary of Nominee's Record:

1) Term of first MSU enrollment in this program FALL 2006

2) Current GPA 3.8

3) Number of outstanding DF credits 0 (excluding 996, 997, 998, 999)

4) Course work or recitals remaining (include the current semester)

1 LECTURE RECITALS, 1 CHAMBER RECITAL

5) Comprehensives completed to date: out of (All) N.A.

6) List major fellowships/scholarships/assistantships awarded to date (College of Music, Graduate School, competitive, internal, external)

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP (SPRING 2007, 2009-2010)


Include 6 complete sets (original and 5 copies). Paper application materials must reach the School of Music Graduate Studies Office, 207 Music Practice, by: 5:00 pm, Friday March 19, 2010. (AFTER Spring Break)

Signature of Primary Advisor or Guidance Committee Chair ________________________________

Date 3/19/10
The Cultural Revolution and Its Impact on Chinese-American Composers: 
A Case study of Chen Yi's *Ba Ban* and Bright Sheng's *My Songs* 

Born and raised in China, Chen Yi and Bright Sheng are two of today's most prominent contemporary Chinese-American composers. Both studied piano at a very young age, Chen's and Sheng's musical training came to a halt when Mao Zedong launched the Cultural Revolution in 1966. Even though Mao himself officially declared the Cultural Revolution had ended in 1969, the political and social upheavals continued until the death of Mao and the arrest of some of the most influential political figures in 1976. Chen and Sheng endured this extraordinary time in their lives and became the composers they are today.

During the Cultural Revolution, most things that were associated with foreign culture were suppressed and banned. Western musical instruments were confiscated and people were prosecuted if they were caught hiding or playing these instruments. One of Mao's many social reforms was to abolish the traditional education system. High schools and colleges were closed, and junior high – which is the equivalent of the American fourth grade – became the highest education possible then\(^1\). Under this new policy, not only were students unable to receive a thorough education, they were also sent to remote, underdeveloped regions in China and expected to farm with the local peasants indefinitely as part of their re-education. The exile to the rural areas, however, nurtured an unexpected musical development for both Chen and Sheng. While the Western culture was greatly suppressed then, Madame Mao (who was also a key political figure in

\(^1\) McCutchan 2005.
the Cultural Revolution) increased state funding to arts companies and encouraged them
to bring in young people\textsuperscript{2}. Because Sheng had talents in music and could play the piano,
he was exempted from working in the farm for the peasants and was taken to an isolated
province near the Tibetan border where he worked primarily as a performer. During
those years of re-education, both Chen and Sheng got acquainted with the folk music
traditional that they would not have known otherwise in the urban cities.

The Cultural Revolution profoundly impacted every person who lived through it
in many different ways - emotionally, socially and intellectually. For Chen and Sheng,
the Cultural Revolution also affected their musical development. Speculations can even
be made as to whether or not they would have become professional musicians had the
Cultural Revolution not taken place - Sheng admitted that he would have been
discouraged by his parents to consider music as a profession under normal
circumstances\textsuperscript{3}. While the two composers' usual course of musical training was halted
during the Cultural Revolution, an unforeseen musical development took place as they
were being re-educated in the rural areas. Their formal musical training was resumed
after the Cultural Revolution - they were admitted into conservatories in China and later
on in the United States where they have been living ever since.

The social impact of the Cultural Revolution and the experiences of Chen and
Sheng during the re-education play a significant role in their musical development. In
their compositions: \textit{Ba Ban} by Chen Yi and \textit{My Song} by Bright Sheng, they drew upon
their special cultural experiences and combined with their compositional technique to
display a unique compositional style.

\textsuperscript{2} McCutchan 2005.
\textsuperscript{3} McCutchan 2005.
In my lecture recital, I will provide a historical background of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) with regard to policies concerning music and arts during that time period and the immediate impact of those policies on Chen Yi and Bring Sheng. Though Western art music was banned, music that was used to promote the Party was highly encouraged. Even though both Chen and Sheng went through re-education, their experiences were drastically different: they went sent to different parts in China, and Sheng was working as a performer instead of working in the fields. I also wish to explore whether or not their relocation to the isolated rural areas provided exposure to any other musical experiences (e.g., ritual music and popular music) and the degree to which they were allowed to participate in any kind of musical activities.

Secondly, I will provide the analyses of Ba Ban and My Songs, and through which I wish to demonstrate that the integration of the eastern and western musical elements in their composition is one of the results of their unique cultural experiences. As both composers were thoroughly trained in the Western art music traditions, they demonstrate a strong grasp of the Western formal structure and harmony in their compositions. In Ba Ban, the pitch organization is based on a twelve-tone row but the rhythmic organization reflects the "general impressions of the style of Chinese mountain song singing." My Song is a four-movement suite in which Sheng said "it was the first piece he was searching for tonality (in a non-traditional sense in the western art music) between his "mother-tone" and "father-tone." He made use of many Chinese musical elements in this piece. For example, the heterophonic texture in the first movement is a musical texture that is rare in traditional Western art music but typical in Oriental music, and the

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4 Chen, 2000  
5 Kerner, 1991
third movement is a savage dance built upon a "type of melodic development in Chinese folk music (that) each repetition of the initial motive increases the number of notes, duration, and tessitura."

With Chinese folk forms providing an increasingly-employed source of musical material for composers in the western art music tradition, Chen Yi's and Bright Sheng's compositions are becoming more well-known in both the United States and Chinese-speaking countries in Asia. As individuals who were both thoroughly schooled in the Western art music tradition, combined with their unique experiences in the Chinese Cultural Revolution and their subsequent emigration the United States, Chen's and Sheng's music provide links to multiple music traditions. Their pioneering work in incorporating Chinese folk music into western classical compositions has inspired and influenced other composers in the classical music scene today.

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6 Sheng, 1989
Relationship of lecture recital topic to contemporary scholarship

(Name)

As two of today's most prominent Asian-American composers, Chen Yi and Bring Sheng have created compositions that are gaining popularity among musicians and with the audience in the concert hall. Music scholars, too, have taken an interest in their music and creative processes – in recent years their work has been the focus of an increasing number of publications. The existing documentation regarding their compositions has often explored the affinity of their compositional style to Chinese music. Chinese folk tunes, folk music style and instrumentation have been significant topics of interest – namely, the blending of eastern and western musical elements in their compositions. Although there are graduate level theses and dissertations written on compositions by Chen Yi and Bring Sheng; few of these documents, however, address the impact of the Cultural Revolution on both, personally and musically. There are other publications that discuss topics regarding Chinese music (e.g., idiomatic piano compositions) and musicians at large during the Cultural Revolution, but few have focused on any specific musicians who are influential today in classical music.

In my lecture recital, I will provide a historical background of the Cultural Revolution with regard to policies concerning music and arts during that time period and the immediate impact of those policies on Chen Yi and Bring Sheng. I also wish to explore whether or not their relocation to the isolated rural areas provided exposure to any other musical experiences and the degree to which they were allowed to participate in any kind of musical activities. As both Chen's and Sheng's music are becoming more well-known in both the United States and the Chinese-speaking countries in Asia, I wish to address the impact of both of their music and musical style in the contemporary classical music scene today.
Schematic Overview of the Lecture Recital:
"The Cultural Revolution and Its Impact on Chinese-American Composers:
A Case Study of Chen Yi's *Ba Ban* and Bright Sheng's *My Songs*

Part I. Lecture

A. The historical background of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), with focus on policies regarding music and arts
   Though most things associated with foreign culture were suppressed and banned, music that was used to promote the Party was highly encouraged.

B. The individual experience of the Cultural Revolution for Chen Yi and Bright Sheng
   Sheng was sent to near the Tibetan border where he worked as primarily a performer. Chen's home was searched and her family collection of music was seized, and she was sent to perform manual labor in the countryside.

C. Analysis of *Ba Ban* by Chen Yi and *My Songs* by Bright Sheng
   Pitch organization, rhythmic organization, formal analysis

D. Conclusion: The impact of Chen's and Sheng's music in the classical musical scene today.
   As two of the most prominent Asian-American composers, their compositions are gaining popularity among musicians and audience alike. Their pioneering work of incorporating Chinese folk music to the Western classical music compositions have also inspired and influenced other composers today.

Part II. Live performance of the two pieces
Timetable for completing the proposed lecture recital

Fall 2010

As I am pursuing the option of giving two lecture recitals, I plan on completing both recitals in Fall, 2010. Below is the timetable for completing the lecture recital on "The Cultural Revolution and its Impact on Chinese-American Composers: A Case Study of Chen Yi's Ba Ban and Bright Sheng's My Songs."

April – August:
Continue researching on Cultural Revolution

May – June:
Traveling to China/Hong Kong for more resources, especially resources that are not available through interlibrary loans in the United States
Establishing borrowing privileges in universities in HK to conduct more research regarding music and arts during the Cultural Revolution

June – August:
Interviews with Chen Yi and Bright Sheng. Sheng currently teaches in Ann Arbor and Chen in UMKC in Kansas City.
Organizing all the materials

September – October:
Final organization of all the materials and prepare for the lecture recital.

Mid-October:
Submit the first draft to the committee

November: Defense the thesis and give the lecture recital
Name
Address
Lansing, MI 48910
Phone:
Email:

EDUCATION
- Doctoral of Musical Arts Performance (ABD) 2006-Present
  (Expected Graduation: December 2010)
- Masters of Music, Theory Pedagogy 2008-Present
  (Expected Graduation: May 2010)
  Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan
- Masters of Music Performance 2003-2005
  Peabody Conservatory, Baltimore, Maryland
- Bachelor of Music Performance 1999-2003
  Ithaca College, Ithaca, New York

WORK EXPERIENCE
- Graduate Teaching Assistant
  Music Theory Department, Michigan State University
  • Teaching freshmen ear-training lab sessions, 2009-Present

  Piano Faculty
  Community Music School of Michigan State University
  • Teaching private lessons and preparation for recitals, performing in faculty recitals, 2008-Present

  Piano Faculty
  Community Music School Battle Creek & Hastings, Michigan
  • Taught private lesson and preparation for recitals, 2007-2008

  Graduate Teaching Assistant
  Music Theory Department, Michigan State University
  • Taught freshmen theory lab sessions, Spring 2007
**Piano Faculty**
Performing Arts Institute, Kingston, Pennsylvania
- Taught private lessons, class piano and piano masterclass; coaching chamber music and performing in faculty concerts, Summer 2006

**Piano Faculty**
McDonogh School, Pikesville, Maryland
- Taught private lessons, preparation for recitals, 2004-2006

**GRANTS & AWARDS**
Piano Scholarships, Michigan State University, 2006-Present
Music Mentorship, Residential College of Arts and Humanities of Michigan State University, 2008-Present
Peabody Graduate Grants, Peabody Conservatory, Johns Hopkins University, Maryland, 2003-2005
Ithaca Opportunity Program Grants, Full Tuition Grant, Ithaca College, Ithaca, New York
First Prize Winner, Mary Hayes North Piano Competition, Ithaca, New York, 2003
Finalist, Thousand Islands International Piano Competition, Clayton, New York, 2002
First Prize Winner, Empire State Piano Competition, New York, 2001

**CONCERTS:**
Burcham Hills Retirement Community, East Lansing, Michigan, 2009
People’s Church, East Lansing, Michigan, 2007
Premiers of New Music, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, 2006-Present
Orchestra della Fondazione Salina, Arona, Italy, 2006 (Mozart, Concerto in C major, K. 467)
Villa Julie College, Stevenson, Maryland, 2006,
Broadmead Concert Series, Baltimore, Maryland, 2005
YMCA Silver Bay Association, Silver Bay, New York, 2004
Concert Series at Kendal, Ithaca, New York, 2003
Associazione Culturale Ensemble XXI, Milan, Italy, 2002
Corning Community College, Corning, New York, 2002

**REFERENCES**
Available upon request
Letter of Recommendation for

I am writing this letter of recommendation for [Name]'s application for the Dissertation Completion Fellowship as the co-chair of her Guidance Committee. [Name] is completing two degrees at MSU; the DMA in piano performance as well as the MM in Music Theory Pedagogy. As of the end of Spring semester 2010, she has completed all requirements for her degree except for her final lecture-recitals.

[Name] has proposed a particularly ambitious and interesting project for her lecture-recital. She is researching the role that the Cultural Revolution played in the music of two well-known 20th century composers, Chen Yi and Bright Sheng. Her project will involve interviewing the composers about their experiences during the Cultural Revolution and determining to what degree those events shaped their compositional style. This project requires her to have an understanding of the historical, political and social implications of the Cultural Revolution, and to be able to relate those to the composers’ development of a compositional style and footprint.

This is a fascinating topic that has not been addressed in English language scholarship, and would not be able to be addressed in Chinese language scholarship. As a native speaker of Chinese and an extremely fluent speaker of English, [Name] is in a unique position to be able to do the research required for the project and to be able to synthesize the information she uncovers.

This ambitious topic will encompass music history, musicology/ethnomusicology, music theory, and performance practice; she plans to make the historiography relevant to the performer in determining interpretation of two pieces, “Ba Ban” by Chen Yi and “My Songs” by Bright Sheng. The Dissertation Completion Fellowship will help her cover the costs of research and acquiring materials from China, as well as traveling to interview the composers.

I strongly support [Name]'s application for the Fellowship; I believe that her topic is an excellent example of a unique contribution to scholarship, and deserves the College of Music's support.

Sincerely,

Leigh VanHandel
Assistant Professor of Music Theory and Cognitive Science
415 Music Practice Building
College of Music
Michigan State University
March 19, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of [Student’s Name] for the dissertation Completion Fellowship. I have been a student in two of my recent musicology seminars, and in both cases, she has demonstrated a superior level of intelligence and engagement. She has consistently shown herself to be a thoughtful student who has always been willing to take on difficult and sometimes controversial problems. Her goals for her doctoral work are ambitious, but I am confident that she possesses the skills and motivation to complete it successfully.

[Student’s Name]’s proposed doctoral project is something of a departure from the typical performance-based study of repertoire. Her focus on the works of Chen Yi and Bright Sheng, two prominent Chinese-born American composers, will provide opportunities to draw upon interdisciplinary perspectives, as well as to explore works outside the standard piano literature. She will be studying and performing one major work from each composer, providing an analytical overview that highlights the use of Chinese folk idioms in each work. Additionally, she will contextualize each composer’s approach within their own experiences growing up during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, assessing how these experiences may have impacted their work, particularly with respect to their connection to traditional Chinese themes. This project thus provides her with the opportunity to understand the production of these pieces within a broad framework of culture, history, politics, and globalization. I believe this will suit her well in the future career, as it demonstrates her willingness and ability to cross traditional disciplinary boundaries.

In summary, I have enjoyed working with [Student’s Name] immensely over the past few years. She has always been receptive to constructive criticism when it was given, and has demonstrated a willingness to improve her performance where and when it was needed. I believe that given the opportunity, she will blossom into a first-rate performer-scholar, and that she will represent the University and College well in her post-doctoral endeavors. I give her my enthusiastic recommendation for this fellowship, and I trust you will give her application a most thorough consideration.

Sincerely,

Ken Prouty, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Musicology and Jazz Studies
### Course Listing by Subject Area

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# COLLEGE OF MUSIC

## REPORT OF THE GUIDANCE COMMITTEE

See the Academic Programs Catalog regarding composition of guidance committee and deadlines for its formation and for filing this report listing all degree requirements.

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## DOCTORAL PROGRAM

**PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY AND CLUSTER BY FIELD.**

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## Approved

(Print guidance committee members' names BELOW signature line. Graduate Studies Office will type and obtain signatures.)

1. **Chairperson**
   - George Schnadze
   - 2/14/09

2. **Deborah Moriarty**
   - 4/17/09

3. **K. R. Novy**
   - 7/26/09

4. **Leigh Van Handel**
   - 10/30/10

**Course Credits**

(In addition to at least 24 credits of 996, 997, 998 or 999) 30

**Comprehensive Examination Areas** (circle all that apply):

- Music Theory
- Music History
- Music Composition
- Music Education

**Student**

- [Signature]

**College of Music Associate Dean, David Ray**

- [Signature]

**Date**

- 1/30/10