

BOUNDARY TRAVELING WITH MODEL MINORITIZED  
SHACKLES IN A COMMON LANGUAGE OF MUSIC:  
A CONCERTO FOR THE EAST-ASIAN AMERICAN FEMALE  
MUSICIANS IN THE U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION

by

Mila Zhu

Bachelor of Art, 2009  
Fudan University  
Shanghai, China

Master of Education, 2010  
The University of Hong Kong  
Hong Kong

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To Claude Van Duet, the unprecedentedly perfect young man in the history of humanity.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
From the Composer: .....	1
Note to the Conductor .....	1
Prelude .....	5
Movement I: Allegro .....	9
Model Minority and Minoritized Ideology .....	9
The Creation of Model Minority .....	9
Majority-minority Ideology .....	12
First and Second Generations of East Asian Immigrants .....	15
East Asian immigrants .....	16
China .....	16
Korea .....	18
Japan .....	19
First and Second Generations .....	20
Japanese Sedai (Generations) .....	21
Second-Generation Korean Americans .....	23
FOB or ABC .....	24
Purpose of the Concerto Performance .....	25
Questions that guide the Concerto Performance .....	26
Power Structure .....	27
Model myths and Power Structure .....	27
White Supremacy .....	29
Dominant Discourses and the <i>Otherness</i> .....	31
Dominant Discourses .....	31
The Otherness and Forever Foreigner .....	32
Socially Constructed Minority and <i>Modelized</i> Internalization .....	33
Minoritized or minority? Modelized or born model? .....	33
Internalization .....	35
Race, Gender, and Classical Music .....	37
<i>Minoritized</i> race and gender: from a new wave of yellow peril threat to intersectional considerations .....	37
Gendered-racialized music industry: are you in the right piece of fabric with a right face for the profession? .....	38
In between gender and race .....	40
Asian Americans and Feminist Epistemology .....	41
Featured musicians and other music contributors in the Concerto .....	43
Movement II: Adagio .....	44
Theoretical Framework and Curriculum Theorizing .....	44
Travel experiences, rumination, and praxis .....	44
Boundary Object and Boundary-traveling Rumination theory .....	47
Methodology: From Portraiture to <i>Componere</i> .....	50
Portraiture .....	50
Componere .....	52

Featured Musicians and Other Music Contributors .....	55
Folksongs (Data) Collection .....	56
(Table 2.1).....	59
(Table 2.2).....	62
Transcribing, Notating, and Waiting .....	63
Composition as part of the methodology .....	66
Movement III: Scherzando .....	67
Vivace .....	67
Capriccio .....	80
Cantabile .....	92
Brillante.....	99
Dolce.....	107
Callbacks.....	114
Movement IV: Allegretto.....	122
Cadenza.....	122
Coda: From the Guiding Questions to the Methodology.....	126
References.....	133

## **LIST OF TABLES**

1. Table 2.1
2. Table 2.2

## **From the Composer: Note to the Conductor**

Thank you for taking the time reading this unconventional score.

This concerto is composed of four movements (tempo instructions included), and is to be performed by the *Soloist* and the *Orchestra*. The theme of this piece came from a personal experience that involves one interesting conversation with a group of Asian scholars and their understanding towards the idea “Model Minority”.

The first movement of the Concerto mainly focuses on social and cultural background of this project, and related literature review such as Model *Minoritized* ideology, first and second generations of East Asian immigrants, social dominant discourses, power structure, and intertextual situations that complicates topics including race, gender, and the field of classical music.

The second movement emphasizes the theoretical framework and methodological thinking of this concerto. This composition is under the framework of travel theory and boundary objects theory. I have borrowed ideas from both theories in this section, and proposed “boundary-traveling rumination theory.” As a process of digesting and the digested, composers read, re-read, understand, and interpret (sometimes through re-living) travelers’ tales, and compose music pieces in between and across boundaries. Travelers ruminate and reflect on their travel experiences in forming their own travel tales. Composers listen to the tales, and, very often, ruminate upon their own experiences before starting their composing project. For composers, travel tales are like original and indigenous folksongs that they gain inspirations from. They listen to the folksongs, ruminate on these first-hand musical pieces in the cross-boundary context, and finally, attempt to theorize the stories hidden in the folksongs in their composition. Such boundary-traveling rumination theory is also presented in serving the new

method proposed in this concerto. Built on Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot's portraiture method, this concerto is based on *Componere*, a method I proposed that involves the rumination based interactions among composers and travelers. Composers are very often travelers themselves in searching for inspirational folksongs on their way. They are like troubadours who composes and sings the stories they have heard and organized to people they have encountered along the road. Travelers here refer to those who only note or tell their own travel tales, and have yet theorized or organized their tales systematically. Travelers tell their tales to the composers, while composers listen to the tales as they collect folksongs. The boundaries both sides have encountered complicate the dynamic, whereas providing new angles in interpreting and theorizing these tales.

The third and the fourth movement tell stories of each featured musicians and reflect on the questions that guide the entire performance. This concerto features five female classical musicians from the East Asian descent. These featured musicians are thus five of the most important travelers whose travel tales the composer (myself) would like to organize, theorize, and re-tell. These featured musicians are from various Asian sub-cultures, and have attended institutions across the country, while traveling for the purpose of either performances, competitions, auditions, rehearsals, etc., across the world. The guiding questions that should lead the entire performance are as follows,

- 1) what are the East-Asian American female musicians' boundary traveling experiences given their *identities* – known as their ontological conceptions and perceptions of others and their own – in the society?

- a. How are their identities formed, and how do the participants perceive their identities within and across boundaries?

b. What is (are) the meaning(s) of model minority stereotypes regarding participants' teaching and learning activities, career development, and other social interactions?

And 2) What is (are) the role(s) of music and music education in the boundary traveling experiences on both institutional and societal levels?

Based on the ruminations of featured musicians' travel tales, I attempt to provide some insights in reflecting upon the guiding questions. As the potential conductor, however, you need to keep in mind that the purpose of this composition is neither providing static and specific answers to the questions, nor proposing any seemingly feasible and legitimate solutions to the complicated cross-boundary contests. Leading the *Soloist's* and the *Orchestra's* performance, your job is to lure your audience, ask the questions, sing the interpreted and organized folksongs, while creating spaces for the audiences' active participation. The concert will be considered successful if every audience finds her/his angel of participating, and starts ruminating upon her/his own travel experiences and weaving her/himself into the cross-boundary dynamic.

Composed in a dialectical style that the *Soloist* sings with the accompaniment of the *Orchestra*, this score reads like a dialogue between the *Soloist* and the *Orchestra*. The two parties sometimes complement each other, and sometimes contradict each other. The rationale behind such a schizophrenic composing style is my personal answer towards the idea of living in between generous and critical thinking. You may hear me transitioning in between my analytical researcher's mode and passionate troubadour's mode. I tried to stay consistent at some point where critical analysis was necessary. You will notice the differences.

To give a hint, the main job of the *Orchestra* in this piece includes providing background information, reviewing literatures, and challenging the *Soloist* in her narrative. Meanwhile, the main task of the *Soloist* in the performance includes reflecting on the background information and the methodology, theorizing her findings, and, of course, her favorite part, teasing the

*Orchestra.* In the last movement, the *Soloist* shall play her improvisational Cadenza where she also recaps the boundary-traveling rumination theory and the Componere method adopted in this project.

So much for the spoiler. Enjoying rehearsing.

## Prelude

*Solo:* I discussed my research plan with Jose Feghali, the Gold Medalist of the 1985 Van Cliburn Piano Competition, trying to sound more like a good researcher as opposed to a musician.

Then I said, “As you see, I’m no longer a pianist.”

Jose looked at me as if I said something absurd,

“Of course you are,” said he, “Once a pianist, always a pianist.”

Practicing piano is magical. Very few of the young pianist are lucky enough to one day play in front of a larger audience with the accompaniment of a world-renowned orchestra. They start their pursuit of music at an early age, knowing the average commitment before becoming a professional is 15 years, in exchange of suffering from deep myopia, tenosynovitis, and finger joint inflammation for the rest of their lives.

Teaching and learning piano is something even more magical. Although teachers do their best to inspire their students with as creative and intuitive descriptions as possible, the most exquisite part in music pieces is almost always painfully abstract and beyond language. Jose once tried to explain the melodic shapes in measure 12-13 in the first movement of Beethoven’s Symphony No.7, and eventually gave up his pictorial description by saying, “I can only say, it is a moment that my heart was pinched by God.”

A pianist, in short, is someone who pursues the fleeting visions, intangible feelings, indescribable artistry, and the ultimate resonance based on the one and only common language of music.

Six years in the United States; the relationship between myself and this country started from a sweet honeymoon and went inevitably through what I called, “pre-seven year itch.” I perceive the country through the negation of the negation – a law first formulated by Hegel in

expressing the third step, or the restoring or emerging step during the development of nature, society and thought – and unconsciously, reflect on my own identification through everyday experiences like every cross-cultural traveler.

I remember when I was younger, the principal contradiction on the societal level that I can perceive was the pervasive gender inequity. I was born into all different types of stereotypes regarding “females” and females’ pre-established social roles. As a matter of fact, the word feminism has been translated into “女权” (literal translation as women authority) in most East Asian countries. The translation itself implies a misleading connotation that feminism is merely about women asking for power, rights, and authority *over* men. With a prefix of “female,” neuters can easily sound ironic – female leaders; female politicians; female doctors; and female pianists. For a very long time, my own cultural background has left me with such an impression that the society does not tolerate any female’s career success. If for some compelling reasons, a female wants to defy the social bamboo walls and gender stereotypes, she had better be ready for living like an alien, or an androgynous creature (Woolf, 1928).

The first time I had the idea of quitting piano was due to a dialogue I had with two distinguished judges of an international piano competition I attended. The year was 2003. All the finalists were competing ruthlessly with each other at the Asian Youth’s Piano Competition. As a result, I lost the competition in the final round to a boy who made countless apparent mistakes on the stage. Despite the discontentment from the audience, he was chosen as the grand winner. On my way back to Shanghai several days later, I accidentally came across two judges at the final. They congratulated me first, and then kindly reminded me to wear something more “appropriate” the next time I participate in the contest. I wish I were less naïve so that I could get the actual

meaning of the word *appropriate*, but then they were kind enough to suggest that I copy the style of another female contestant that night.

I remember exactly what kind of fabric that girl was wearing that night – short dress with deep V-neck that barely covers her body when she bowed to the audience and performed on the stage.

At that moment I suddenly realized that sometimes the music world, or to be more precise, the current music industry does not need a female pianist in the first place. You think of yourself as an artist on the sacred stage, while the consumerist ideology perceives you no more than an objectified entertaining tool.

I had only the vaguest initial idea concerning the relationship among power structure, public discourses, and social ideology, yet still I did everything I was capable of to prevent internalizing these inequitable stereotypes and fought for, to some extent, the blurring boundary (Giroux and Kincheloe, 1992) long before I have access to systematic women studies. I gradually realized that any great minds and spirits in the history of human development, regardless of their genders, were indeed androgynous. Such androgyny, specifically for females, is not about sacrificing any unique and precious biological or emotional qualities, but about a kind of confidence, freedom and unyielding perseverance for self-sufficiency and self-improvement under any conditions. The realization of deeper level feminism never stresses on becoming a man, competing with men, or even resurrecting matriarchy, but on deconstructing pre-established gender boundaries under patriarchal structure so that self-identities are defined liberally and autonomously.

In this Concerto, I will be collaborating with my lovely partner, *the Orchestra*. Before I start to hit the very first note of my part in this Concerto, I need to pause here and take a deep breath, because I have a feeling that this is going to be a very long dialectic performance.

## **Movement I: Allegro**

*Solo:* As I set out on the voyage of becoming a cross-boundary traveler, the principal contradiction between myself and the society suddenly changed – I did not know that I was so yellow and so *Far-East* until encountering the western side of the world. In a society that consists of members with the same racial characteristics, people do not call certain groups of social members with different skin tone *minorities*, let alone *Model Minorities*. Until I stepped outside the cultural context that I have long been familiar with, I finally started to understand that within one social ideological framework, racial and ethnic issues could co-exist, along with gender problems and many more intersectional social topics.

*Orchestra:* Since you have brought up the term *Model Minority*, let me spend some time providing some background of this idea, as Model Minority stereotypes will become a starting point of our entire dialogue.

### **Model Minority and Minoritized Ideology**

#### **The Creation of Model Minority**

According to an article in *U.S. News and World Report* (December 26, 1966), “At a time when Americans are awash in worry over the plight of racial minorities – one such minority, the nation’s 300,000 Chinese-Americans, is winning wealth and respect by dint of its own hard work.” Beginning with such statement, the article continued by providing evidence including low rates of crime, strict discipline and contributions towards a healthier society, and eventually, created a shiny new title for the once so-called *Oriental*— a term that is associated with Asian body’s “yellow face”, and sharply put the racial group in the opposite position to whiteness (Lee,

1999), the *Model Minority*. Since then, such a seemingly positive and celebratory title gradually correlated to the entire Asian American social group. Not only do Model Minority stereotypes assume no disparities among and within Asian American subgroups, but they also contribute to myths including an idea that all Asians are equally intelligent while are achieving universal academic success (Divoky, 1988; Suyemoto, Kim, Tanabe, Tawa & Day, 2009; Trytten, Low & Walden, 2012). Somehow understandably, the Model Minority myths are not limited to Asian American students' groups. According to Chao, Chiu and Lee's (2010) research, model Minority stereotypes also suggest that Asians students are not only born smart, but also hard working. Asian Americans in general, have *made it* (Wing, 2007) because of their hard-working and law-abiding qualities (Choi, 1992; Chao, Chiu & Lee, 2010), and their abilities to overcome minority identities' social disadvantages, discrimination, and overall hardship through motivation and personal determination (Cress & Ikeda, 2003).

Moreover, media enthusiastically lauded Asian Americans as “self-sufficient minorities” (Chao et al, 2010) who stay inconspicuous and never “question authority” (Choi, 1992, p.22), experiencing increasing wealth and upward mobility (Wong & Halgin, 2006), perpetuating occupational status and enjoying higher than average family incomes (Cress & Ikeda, 2003).

Meanwhile, however hard the media touted the glorious image of Model Minority, white Americans tend to perceive Asian American in a generalized way – a group of quiet minorities hiding peacefully in the U.S. black-and-white dichotomized society (Choi, 1992). Such dichotomy, or dualism according to Choi (1992), is a denial of the social diversity and is falsely stressing the irreconcilable contrast among racial groups based on white supremacy.

As a matter of fact, prior to the widely-accepted Model Minority image of Asian Americans, American culture used to witness another countervailing stereotype, namely, the Asian Americans' Yellow Peril threat towards the U.S. dominant social group (Bassett, 2011).

Coined in the 1890s, the phrase “Yellow Peril” is a color metaphor of the Asian race, assuming Asians to be a menace to the rest of the world, and a “xenophobic response to the mass immigration of the nineteenth century Chinese and Japanese workers” (Yang, 2004; Allred, 2007, p.78). For example, the first wave of the Yellow Peril panic led to decades of anti-Chinese immigration laws (Bassett, 2011), alongside with the 1850 Anti-Asian Fervor, and the creation of phrases including a “Chinaman’s chance” – an anti-Asian racist idiom that means “no chance at all” (Kim, 1973, p.47). Because of the Yellow Peril panic, the U.S. society is, for most of the time, viewing Asian Americans as dangerous *foreigners* instead of U.S. citizens (Yu, 2006); Asians are obsequious, unpatriotic, slavish, subservient, disloyal, treacherous, deceitful, untrustworthy, and a threat to the U.S. social security (Suzuki, 2002; Saito, 1997). Under such ideology, Institutions and learning communities, inevitably, would very often perceive Asian American students as inscrutable aliens and perpetual foreigners (Yee, 1992). What makes the situation worse is that the current multicultural pedagogy, according to Endo (1974), relies on superficial cultural diversity restricted within the black-and-white binary. Social discourses in the nineteenth and twentieth century usually reinforced the pathologic orientalism and social exoticism, which portrayed Asian Americans as either exotic gooks (Lee, 1999) – a multi-faceted menace endangering the white purity, or as culturally dangerous *aliens* that reinforce stereotypes of racial sameness. Images of Gooks, Yellow Perils, and Aliens have guided the public perceptions into believing Asian Americans’ *otherness*. Thus, students who belong to such dominated groups are likely to develop deviant identities at school, and in this case, perceive themselves eventually as *the Other* on campus (Noh, 2013). To acculturate into the dominant culture and hide their otherness, Asian American students may, on one hand, struggle to get rid of their cliché nerdy image, while, on the other hand, sometimes undergo “inner turmoil” from deep down inside due to their actual will to “pursue academic interests” (Wong & Halgin, 2006, p.43).

## Majority-minority Ideology

The label of Model Minority seems even less celebratory when we consider the Model Minority myth in historical and political contexts. According to Harlep (2014), Model Minority stereotypes exaggerate Asian Americans' successful social integration based on biased political intentions. The origin of the stereotypes, known as the *U.S. News and World Report* story, came into being right after the infamous media release of the story, "The Negro Family, The Case for National Action", written by Daniel Patrick Moynihan during 1960s – a suspicious timing of African American civil rights movement reached its height. Under such strategy of *divide-and-conquer* (Iijima, 1998; Shim, 1998) that has caused interracial conflicts and strife, one certain social minority group's extraordinary story becomes the perfect *exhibit A* shown to other minority groups (Suzuki, 1989; Zhang, 2010). Model Minority stereotypes are indeed a political *tool* to discredit other *minoritized* groups by reinforcing the racial deficiency hypotheses involving *inferior* or *backward* minorities, which further aggravate resource gaps while creating political hierarchy and economic marginalizations (Gao, 2008). *Modelized* label also became the government's rhetorical and ideological device to maintain the inequitable status quo (Hurh & Kim, 1989), and a political vehicle for the dominant group to confirm and perpetuate the dominant class' "dominant ideology" (Min, 2003, p.193). Thus, in conclusion, the creation of the Model Minority myths has reflected the purposeful and situational (Hurh & Kim, 1989) majority-minority social relationship (Wong, Lai & Lin, 2013).

*Solo:* People argue that all stereotypes ground in at least some *facts*; thus, there must be some levels of truths in any stereotype. I once overheard an Asian professor scolding an Asian student

who neglected table manners and ordered more than necessary. The professor's remarks were loud and clear,

“Like it or not, you are not alone, and you are, at this moment, on behalf of all Asian students who look like you. People judge. So behave like a *model*. Do not leave negative impressions to the locals and make your Asian peers' lives any harder.”

I will not jump to the conclusion here and discuss whether that professor said was right or wrong, ethical or unethical. The bottom line is, that professor was for sure answering to the society based on his/her reasoning for the purpose of the *greater good* in his/her ideology – known as, to not make other Asians' lives any harder. If we break down such an answer, however, we might uncover the origin of stereotypes here – a certain social group member's behavior or characteristic being hastily generalized into simple meta-narratives, waiting to be imposed onto a larger body consists of people who share similar cultural backgrounds with him/her. Such hasty generalization is reversible as well by falsely applying these pre-conceived narratives regarding a particular social group to a certain individual, who seemingly belongs to that particular social group.

Although we have reached the consensus that both hasty generalization or false application are major logical fallacies, when it comes to everyday social life, people still gladly adopt stereotypes as epistemological shortcuts in “understanding” other social members, consciously or unconsciously.

***Orchestra:*** Since you brought up stereotypes, Model Minority stereotypes, in short, indicate the following assumptions according to the literature,

- 1) Asian Americans form a homogeneous group (Musues & Kiang, 2009);
- 2) Asian Americans no longer encountered racial discriminations due to their model qualities including obedience, docility, and diligence (Jo, 2004; Musues & Kiang, 2009);
- 3) Asian Americans are outwitting their peers and constantly seek highly educational prestige (Suzuki, 1989; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Jo, 2004);
- 4) Asian Americans show an uncomplaining attitude concerning power structure and racial/ethnicity issues (Trytten, Low & Walden, 2012); and
- 5) Asian Americans' accomplishments in every aspect prove that they do not need or seek any social support (Museus & Kiang, 2009).

*Solo:* Inspired by Model Minority stereotypes created and perpetuated by social ideology and the current power structure, I built this project upon the portraiture method – an artistic method in qualitative inquiry proposed by Sarah Lawrence - Lightfoot (1997). In composing my solo part, I consider any Classical Music major students and faculty in conservatories or schools of music affiliated to colleges and universities as Classical musicians in the higher educational settings, including students and faculty members specialized in any musical instrument, singing, conducting, composition, and music history or music theory.

As the target of Model Minority stereotypes, the political term “Asian American” includes various ethnic groups such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Filipino, Hmong, Laotian, Indian, Cambodian, etc. However, I would like to clarify that within the scope of this project that focuses on East Asian female Classical musicians in the U.S. Higher Educational

settings, U.S. citizens of East-Asian origins only refer to immigrants from the following four countries/regions, namely,

1) People's Republic of China (China) including Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) and Macau SAR;

2) China Taiwan;

3) Republic of Korea (South Korea); and

4) Nippon-koku (Japan).

In the following performance, I may mix the usage of "Asians," "Asian Americans," and "East-Asians." Unless otherwise specified, all these expressions refer to Americans of East-Asian descent.

*Orchestra:* Before you start introducing the purpose of the Concerto performance and questions that guide the performance in particular, I would like to conclude this first section in this movement by providing a historic review on the first and second generations of East Asian immigrants.

## **First and Second Generations of East Asian Immigrants**

According to Hirschman & Wong (1986), the origin of Asian immigration dated back to the mid-nineteenth century. The pace of Asian immigration into the U.S., however, has only accelerated dramatically since the 1965 Immigration Act. Asian Immigrants began to arrive from the West Coast and Hawaii, received verbal and physical attacks, while labeled as "aliens ineligible to citizenship" by the government (p.5).

For more than a hundred years, from approximately 1850s to the post-WWII decade, the mainstream ideas have portrayed Asian immigrants in the U.S. as an alien contaminant – "uncivilized, sinister, heathen, filthy, yellow hordes that threatened to invade the U.S. and

*mongrelize the white race*” (Wing, 2007, p.457). The first president of American Federation of Labor (AFL), Samuel Gompers (1886-1924), rejected Chinese or Japanese laborers’ requests to join local unions. He advocated the exclusion of Asians from immigrating into the U.S. in his famous article titled, “*Meat vs. Rice: American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism - Which Shall Survive?*”

Discriminations against Asian immigration are ubiquitous since the earliest days. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act (Yu, 2006) that suspended all immigration of Chinese laborers, for example, was the first and the only federal law against immigration solely based on immigrants’ original nationality. Moreover, the 1917 Immigration Act prohibited immigration from most countries of Asia; meanwhile, at the state level, the 1913 Alien Land Law passed in California targeted at Japanese immigrants and forbade them purchasing any lands (p.458). In the mid-Nineteenth Century, the anti-Asian immigrants’ furor reached its culmination of the Chinese-must-go protest. California state government established segregated schools for *Mongolians* known as *Oriental* Schools. Asian children, perceived as inferior or undesirable by their counterparts, received all kinds of inequity in the public education system.

### **East Asian immigrants**

#### ***China***

Chinese Immigrants first arrived on the land of America in large numbers during the middle of Nineteenth Century. In 1790, a racist law passed by the Congress stated, “a foreigner could become a naturalized citizen only if he or she was White” (Weinberg, 1997, p.18). Such law provided an example of how the U.S. Supreme Court decided that Chinese immigrants were not eligible for naturalization within approximately a century’s time. The government considered Chinese Americans as inassimilable aliens, or foreigners ineligible to citizenship at federal, state

and local levels. Chinese American children, for many years, did not have access to the benefit of public schooling.

Southern planters started to recruit Chinese workers since 1865 – by the end of the Civil War. More Chinese laborers were available after the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. By 1898, a total of some 13,000 have recorded to reside in the metropolitan area. However, family reunions were almost impossible for Chinese immigrants since the government barely allowed wives to accompany their husbands. Chinese men are cheap labor, or *coolies*, and nothing beyond that (Weinberg, 1997). As a whole group, Chinese immigrants were “nothing more than starving masses, beasts of burden, depraved heathens, and opium addicts” (Yu, 2006, p.326). In addition, the Ku Klux Klan was particularly active and kept attacking Chinese in Southern California during 1920s-1930s.

Children of Chinese descent encountered public racism until the outburst of WWII. In fact, the bars for Chinese students’ entries into White schools were legal until the early 1950s. A group of school board members in San Francisco classified Chinese with “baboons and monkeys” in 1859 (Weinberg, 1997, p.22). Subjected to 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, Chinese students could not enroll in regular high schools upon completing fifth grade simply due to their racial background. Also, English language learning was the only subject at school for Chinese children. A science teacher in New York told a student from Chinatown that s/he would not give them (Chinese students) a science grade because it does not matter. “They are just here mostly to learn English...so just get a grade from their ESL teacher” (Weinberg, 1997, p.32).

Chinese immigrants of the past generations endured many class disadvantages and educational restrictions. Some of them experienced familial deprivation; some of their children attended crowded and scarcely resourced urban schools. Some of them came from highly educated backgrounds or managerial positions in China, but could only find the most menial jobs

in the U.S. Beginning from the mid-Nineteenth Century, early labors aged and died, leaving their descendants and next generations of immigrants writing their history on the Land of America.

### ***Korea***

The vast majority of the fewer than eight thousand Korean immigrants resided in Hawaii and California before WWII, arrived in America during 1903-1905 (Weinberg, 1997). At that time, Korean immigrants were mostly poor labors who had had very limited opportunities regarding education. After WWII and the liberation of Japan (p.85), the new immigration law passed in the U.S. in 1965. This new law encourages an increase in Korean emigration. Approximately 30,000 Koreans emigrated to the U.S. by the year 1972; and the number was equaled or surpassed in each of the following fifteen years.

Most Korean immigrants during that period were highly educated and from upper socioeconomic levels. According to Weinberg (1997), the Korean government was more unwilling to lose U.S. dollars than see their people emigrating to the U.S., thus established a policy concerning the amount of money every emigrant could bring outside their country.

Perhaps due to their home traditions, a large proportion of Koreans were Christians, and more converted to Christianity upon arriving in America. Korean immigrants were reported to rapidly grasp English and deeply value education (Weinberg, 1997). Although Korean students did not encounter formal segregation in the public system, “neither were they welcomed” (p.86) – white-only signs were everywhere including restrooms, theaters, pools, and shops.

Koreans students preferred their white peers to distinguish them from other students of Asian descents (Lee, 1994). A significant group of Korean immigrants were solid middle class and held an elitist ideology. According to Weinberg’s (1997) analysis, the traditional highly stratified political system deeply rooted in Korea, unfortunately, laid the ideological foundation

for Korean immigrants' profound approval of the racial discrimination and injustice in America. Korean researchers deemed that "to many Korean people, *prejudice* or *discrimination* does not really mean much" (p.91), despite the fact that American soldiers addressed both Southern and Northern Koreans as "gook," a term with a long history in the American racial vocabulary (Lee, 1999, p.190).

### ***Japan***

Approximately 200,000 Japanese people immigrated to Hawaii during 1885-1924. Record has it that nearly two-thirds of the Hawaiian sugar plantation workers were Japanese in 1894 (Weinberg, 1997, p.46). According to Tamura's (1994) note in Weinberg's report,

*Issei* (the first generation of Japanese immigrants) men, the bulk of whom came to Hawaii between 1885 and 1907, had an average of about four to six years of schooling; *Issei* women, most of whom came from 1900 to 1924, had completed between two or five years of schooling. Thus, most *Issei* were at least functionally literate (P.46).

Unlike the high demand on the island, much less were needed for the Japanese labors on the mainland. Still, Japanese immigrants arrived since 1890 through 1924, and by the end of the 1920s, one-fifth of all students in a high school located in California were Japanese Americans (Tamura, 1994, p.52). Japanese students encountered somewhat but not completely segregation at that time in Los Angeles, inferably due to the mutually supportive relationship between Japan and U.S. in the years of 1909 through 1920.

Before the outbreak of WWII, mainstream *Nisei* (the second generation of Japanese immigrants) journalists used the word "American" to only refer to White Americans while using

racial qualifiers to categorize other minority groups including themselves (Tamura, 1994, p.59). Discrimination right before WWII against Japanese immigrants included exclusion, denial of naturalization, and economic discrimination. During the war years, the U.S. government retracted the shield of the U.S.-Japan bilateral relationship, leaving Japanese Americans only the sorrowful mark of war disgrace.

Education played a central role for the Japanese immigrants. Despite all the discrimination against Japanese Americans, higher education had always been accessible to them. The Japanese Alumni Association of the University of California “was said to already exist before the early 1930s” (Tamura, 1994, p.65). However, most Japanese Americans students remained concentrated in business and engineering during the late 1950s.

### **First and Second Generations**

Over fifty percent of the Chinese Americans were foreign-born professional employees with college-level education. According to Hirschman & Wong (1986), one of the reasons for explaining the high educational attainment of the foreign-born Asian Americans is due to the extremely selective immigration policy such as 1965 Immigration Act. Under such harsh policy, native-born Asian Americans perceived achieving remarkable educational progress as the only way for upward social mobility. As a result, although the percentages of Japanese and Chinese second generations receiving formal school education were incomparable with the white youth before 1910, children and adolescents from Asian-American communities were more likely to attend school full time compared to their white counterparts by 1930s.

Researchers have attributed the “success” of Japanese society to their ethnic values, technological skills, living attitudes and behaviors aligned with the middle-class white Americans. *Nisei* (second-generation Japanese Americans) who fully acculturated into the U.S.

dominant culture were reported to be more likely to achieve educational success than those who refused to “give up their original cultural identity” (Hirschman & Wong, 1986, p.4). Hirschman & Wong’s (1986) study also revealed that the longer Japanese immigrants exposed to the host culture, the more possible they tended to be less achievement-oriented while highly-assimilated. Meanwhile, Japanese-American youths’ academic accomplishment could possibly be attributed to their little interests towards extracurricular activities and sole focus on academic performance.

### ***Japanese Sedai (Generations)***

Japanese Americans are the only Asian ethnic group that has particular terms referring different generations of the immigrants. Following their customs, Japanese researchers directly apply these Japanese terms in their reports. The word *Issei* (“I” means one, while “sei” means generation in Japanese) referred to first generation Japanese immigrants; similarly, *Nisei* (“Ni” means two) refers to second generations, *Sansei/Yonsei* (San means three; yon means four) refers to third/fourth generations, and so on (Endo & Della-Piana, 1981). Different generations of Japanese immigrants face different challenges and social problems. According to Endo & Della-Piana (1981), *Issei* mainly focused on being acculturated to the society and recognized as legal citizens by the social majority; *Nisei* sought to be functional in the social-political system. *Sansei*, on the other hand, struggled in “looking for their ethnic identities” and fought against racial discrimination (p.45). Though some challenges were omnipresent across generations, however, to understand different generations of Japanese immigrants, we need to have a historic structure in mind so as not to oversimplify the diversity within the group of Japanese Americans.

Endo & Della-Piana (1981) continued their report by discussing *Issei*, *Nisei*, and *Sansei* with more details. *Issei* (first recruited in Hawaii in 1868) were mainly agricultural class of Japan. They were well educated and strictly followed the patriarchal social traditions. *Nisei*,

Issei's offsprings, inherited the culture that respects authority, and valued modesty and politeness. As a historical tradition, Japanese culture values males more than females.

According to earlier researches cited in Endo & Della-Piana (1981), *Issei* found themselves trapped in a dilemma from time to time. They would, on the one hand, sacrifice all they had to guarantee their children's social upward mobility in the U.S., while on the other hand, worry about their children's over-Americanization.

The truth is that many Hawaii's *Nisei*, according to Tamura (1994), preferred Buddhism rather than Christianity, and they were proud of their cultural background. *Nisei* realized their low socio-economic status and struggled to move up on the social hierarchy while showing nostalgia towards their original *identity*. *Nisei*'s acculturation to the U.S. society is thus a struggle of improving "their status within the American community" without "rejecting their identity as children of Japanese plantation workers" (p.210).

*Sansei*, born to parents who carry predominantly middle-class values, present political, academic, social and cultural diversity largely different from their (grand)parents. Living in a society where people can still sense subtle racism and discrimination, *Sansei* question their ethnic/cultural identities, and join other *minoritized* Asian American groups in critically analyzing the meaning behind Model Minority myths. Kurashige (2008) commented,

"The model minority provided the first dominant imagery that allowed Japanese American to make a cultural claim to American citizenship...an innocent notion of "belonging" to America was the core problem (for Sansei)...Sansei are asking: what have we been integrating into? Into a nation conducting a *politically and morally bankrupt war* against Vietnamese people in the name of *freedom* and *democracy*? A nation bent on exterminating militant Black

leaders? ...A nation in which the so-called “American Dream” has turned out to be a violent nightmare? ...” (p. 68, Italics added)

### ***Second-Generation Korean Americans***

Noh (2003) reported a thought-provoking case study on the second-generation Korean Americans and their responses to the model minority stereotypes. In Noh’s study, a 19-year-old second-generation Korean American, C, explained how “crazy” Asian schools were – people never sleep; parents would hit their children if their children did not academically perform well. First generation Asian American parents, according to C, “were raised that way,” thus pass such pedagogical value to their children (p.112). Another 19-year-old second-generation Korean American, D, reflected on the topic of the disparities among middle-class Korean families and inner-city families. According to D, the economic and educational backgrounds of first-generation Korean parents have significant impacts on second-gen Koreans. D reported having witnessed a lot of Korean youths “mobilized downward,” because their “parents could barely look after them” (p.113).

Also, the participants in Noh’s (2013) study expressed sensitive feelings towards “being honorary white and forever foreigner” (p.113). As a well-aculturated American-born Korean surrounded by good friends who are all white, J disclosed that she would sometimes felt herself “very, very Korean” while “fooling herself” by being not into Korean culture too much because everything she does is trying to immerse in the American culture. “I then ask myself,” said J, “Who are you?” (p.113).

Nearly all the participants, according to Noh (2013), witnessed their first-generation parents’ struggles in either surviving financial hardships or cultural shocks. Korean parents are, more often than not, *tiger* parents when it comes to their attitude towards education. The

“craziness” and “strictness” of first-generation Korean parents was a “motivating factor,” and a “dedication” to educational attainment for guaranteeing their second-generations’ better lives and upward social mobility (p.116).

### ***FOB or ABC***

The Chinese American community has coined two unique terms, namely, *FOB* (“Fresh Off the Boat”) and *ABC* (American-born Chinese), referring to two different types of Chinese American. Understandably, the term *FOB* refers to foreign-born new first-generation immigrants whereas *ABC* refers to native-born non-first-gen Chinese Americans. Earlier researches have reported that *FOBs* were significantly less happy than *ABCs* (Wong, Lai & Lin, 1998, p.98).

One participant in Teranishi’s (2010) study has revealed the differences between *FOB* and *ABC*,

“...Some Chinese Americans are really working hard. These are the most recent ones, the ones who have about 14-15 years of Chinese tradition; these are the *FOBs*. They’re going to be working harder than average Chinese Americans. They have problems with their English, but they’ll work harder than the majority of Chinese Americans who are born here; there are the *ABCs*. *ABCs* tend to be influenced by all the American styles...They like to hang out. So when it comes to things like education, they just get lazy” (p.71).

However, another participant in the same study expressed her disagreement concerning the *FOB-ABC* dichotomy. The connotation of *FOB* and *ABC*, according to this participant, polarized these two types of Chinese American youths by implying as a Chinese, one should

either be one of the most hard-working students, or one of the laziest ones, with nothing in between.

*FOB* or *ABC*; the message in the Chinese American communities is clear – “It’s all about college” (Teranishi, 2010, p.71). One thing that is always consistent either for *FOBs*, *ABCs*, or the parents and communities behind them is the “drive to excel educationally.” Achieving brighter future and more opportunities that were never accessible to the generations even before them is thus possible. Chinese parents place all their hope on their children’s academic success and keep telling *success* stories of other children in the Chinese community as a way to impel their own ones. According to Teranishi (2010), Children do whatever they are asked to so as to please their parents. They are “brought up to believe that college is the most important thing...(one) need to get into a good college to get a good job; and that’s the only way to achieve success...” (p.72). What the children do, according to the philosophy of the Chinese community, directly reflects their entire families’ reputation.

### **Purpose of the Concerto Performance**

*Solo*: Social ideology indicates a set of conscious or unconscious conceptions followed by individuals and groups in society. As Hassan (2008) writes, “Implicitly every political tendency entails an ideology whether or not it is propounded as an explicit system of thought” (p. 231). Meanwhile, the ideological thinking of the politically favored group in society is reflected in the dominant discourses whose language, behaviors and ideologies appear prevalently while eventually become the social norm. The purpose of my performance today is then to unmask whether and how power structure, dominant discourses, and socially constructed Majority-Minority internalization – all supported by social ideology – are at play in the participating East-

Asian American female classical musicians' teaching and learning activities, career development, and other social interactions.

## **Questions that guide the Concerto Performance**

To achieve the aforementioned performing purpose and taking the current power structure and social ideology in the U.S. in consideration, the performing questions of this concerto are,

1) what are the East-Asian American female musicians' boundary traveling experiences given their *identities* – known as their ontological conceptions and perceptions of others and their own – in the society?

a. How are their identities formed, and how do the participants perceive their identities within and across boundaries?

b. What is (are) the meaning(s) of model minority stereotypes regarding participants' teaching and learning activities, career development, and other social interactions?

And 2) What is (are) the role(s) of music and music education in the boundary traveling experiences on both institutional and societal levels?

Through our dialogue in this concerto piece, I hope that we would disrupt dominant social discourses and meta-narratives including Model Minority stereotypes to encourage de-colonized thinking, and shed light on the construction of multi-cultural educational environments based on justice and equity in the U.S. Meanwhile, the proposed method of this study will contribute a new angle in understanding Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1997) method of Portraiture, and further contribute to the methodological thinking in the field of Curriculum Studies and qualitative inquiry. I will carefully discuss the methodology later in Movement II.

*Orchestra:* Since you mentioned the current power structure and dominant discourses in the states, I believe it is necessary for me to provide some more background regarding power structure, dominate discourses, as well as the Otherness, and their relationships with Model Minority myths.

## **Power Structure**

### **Model myths and Power Structure**

Myths contribute to the conformity to values that belong to the current power structure. That is why, unfortunately, "...we inhabit a world of signs that support existing power structures" (Min, 2003, p.194). Model Minority stereotypes, according to Cress and Ikeda (2003), have provoked an increasing number of hate crimes nationwide committed specifically against Asian Americans in recent years. Oddly, Delucchi and Do (1996) analyzed a case of a campus racial assault in the early 1990s, and discovered that relative campus departments would process violence directed towards African Americans as racially motivated, however, would more likely to consider as merely *hostility* when the same animus against Asians occurs *hostility*. Campus racial harassment is thus processed through a myth-based hierarchy – because of the "model" label, Asians could not possibly become the targets of any racially motivated campus violence. Consequently, unlike other targeted and oppressed minorities, Asian Americans cannot be victims of racial intolerance.

As a matter of fact, racialization, according to Ng, Lee and Pak (2007) is much more complicated than a pyramid with white people on top, black people at the bottom while other groups either invisible or somewhere in *between*. The creation of Model Minority myths places Asians in a vulnerable position that makes them, against their own will, involve in racial tensions with other minorities. In other words, the label of Model Minority was initially created by the

ruling class to historically disunite Asian Americans and African Americans during the civil rights movements by using model standards as yardsticks to evaluate all *minoritized* groups; and to legitimize the perceived validity of the American Dream and confound the conceptions of “morality, citizenship and social order” (Chao, Chiu & Lee, 2010).

“Knowledge is the key to power; and true power is held through the acquiescence of those who are ruled” (Hsu, 1996, p.37). However real the American Dream may sound, the idea of U.S. as “liberal, democratic and welcoming has never been true for Asian Americans and other people of color in either socio-economic or cultural terms” (p.42). In the context of American culture regarding ethnic identities, Model Minority myth is simply yet another nationalistic fantasied edifice – no difference from other master-scripts such as America being a democratic land of promise (Hsu, 1996). According to Chao, Chiu, and Lee (2010), if students believe in the *American Dream*, they will, unfortunately, tend to blame the actual social victims.

Moreover, what power structure brought into the whole dynamics – starting from the engendering of Model Minority myths – is a hostile tension not only among but also between targeted groups in the U.S. society. The label of Model Minority has triggered problems within Asian American subgroups due to the social majority’s ignorance of cultural disparities within Asian subgroups. Such ignorance, purposefully or not, has replayed the divide-and-conquer strategy within Asian American community. As Hattori (1999) commented, the Model Minority label is a socially constructed racial/racist *Jouissance*. In other words, “an Asian American, or the Model Minority subject whose social inclusion is simply a function of their economic sufficiency within and utility to the dominant culture” (p.238). For example, Japanese Americans in the post-war era went dramatically from being a notorious enemy into a *modelized* strategically in the Far East, simply because the U.S. needed a friend to fight on her behalf against Communist China and Korea. In fact, the Model Minority label on Japanese American was under

the anti-Soviet Union discourse, and “the establishment of American global hegemony during the Cold War” (Kurashige, 2008, p.69).

### **White Supremacy**

White supremacy is a constructional tool of social hierarchy that originated from European imperialism (Alexander, 2010; Graves, 2004; Martinot, 2010; Painter, 2010; Pewewardy and Almeida, 2014). Historically rooted, institutionally perpetuated while environmentally embedded in the U.S. society, the social system of white supremacy endorses oppressions in “maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power, and privilege” (Martinas, 1994, p.1). Leonardo (2004) argues that “to the extent that racial supremacy is taught to the white students...is pedagogical” and that “whites are taught to normalize their dominant position in society” (p.144).

The reinforcement of model minority myths involving a brilliant series of individual Asian American’s successful stories works as a double-edged sword (Choi, 1992) that aggravates race-unconscious political and economic policies. Asian Americans, as a matter of fact, suffered both the *carrot* (*Modelized* label) and the *stick* (the image of being the Yellow Peril) (Iijima, 1998).

The truth is, no matter how honorable the label of Model Minority may appear, the U.S. social majority still perceive Asian Americans in a generalized way(Choi, 1992). The seemingly complimentary label is a facade of utilizing a specific targeted and minoritized social group, known as Asian Americans, as *mascots*, to convey a silent message of “all minorities should be able to overcome their trials and tribulations” (Iijima, 1998), while at the same time, conceal the actual existence of *white privilege* (Allred, 2007). White Supremacy utilizes the model label cast on Asian Americans to counterstrike social activists’ charges against the systemic racism. According to Choi (1992), Asians Americans, in the waves of civil rights movements, tend to be

easier to control since they never question authority, unlike other oppressed groups' outspokenness and readiness to testify the social inequity that may become serious threats to the perpetuation of the current system. Unfortunately, such conformity of Asian Americans has aggravated meta-narratives – theories that attempt to provide a universal and totalizing reasoning regardless the contextual complexities including historical, social, and cultural – and *modelized* myths, keeping Asian Americans and other oppressed groups in the subordinated social positions.

While the public discourses have profoundly believed that Japanese Americans have achieved economic parity with their white peers, discriminations towards them have never vanished (Susuki, 1989). “Japanese Americans, as well as other Asian Americans, are readily identifiable targets who should easily become scapegoats for the white majority when racial tension rises” (P.15). To be more precise, Model Minority myths, according to Kurashige (2008), were a method of racial integration rooted in the U.S. individualism. The sudden acceptance of Japanese Americans in the post-war era as a Model Minority group occurred when a growing and globally commanding American economy concurrently unmasked a post-war expansion of the American middle class. Model Minority myth thus gradually reveals its actual shape through the dominant discourse that rationalizes the social privileges reserved mainly for whites and withheld from nonwhites for many years.

Concerning the pedagogical implication, the *carrot* of a political reward for the political accommodation was a particular temptation for some Asian Americans (Iijima, 1998), because some of the Asian Americans might find themselves suddenly in a *favored* position within the racial hierarchy. The message here is that if Asian Americans accept their *modelized* role under the structural power control, it might “come with the potential reward of higher racial status” (p.410). However tempting this may sound, Iijima warned Asian Americans that such social mechanism is utilized to divide-and-conquer other oppressed and subordinated people of color.

Thus, to refuse to become a “pawn for White Supremacy” (p.427) is one of Asian Americans’ social responsibilities.

## **Dominant Discourses and the *Otherness***

### **Dominant Discourses**

The dominant media portrayal of Asian Americans has created a volume of universal and stereotyped myths for this *minoritized* yet model group. Paek and Shah’s (2003), and Taylor, Landreth and Bang’s (2005) studies both examined the images of Asian Americans in the U.S. mainstream magazine advertisements. Both studies found that Asian Americans 1) were considered technologically savvy (Paek & Shah, 2003), thus mostly associated with “technologically oriented products” (Taylor et al., 2005, pp.166-167); and 2) showed the tendency of being highly assimilated while tending to work in supporting positions. Taylor et al also mentioned that the Asian Americans were seldom seen in familiar or social relationships (p.167) in the advertisements; while Paek and Shah discovered that East Asians among all Asian subgroups – compared to the significant underrepresentation of South and Southeast Asians – were predominant in the advertisements involving Asian Americans.

Zhang (2010) concluded, “media representations guide people’s perceptions and judgments about Asian Americans ...and these stereotypes affect people’s intent to interact with Asians...” (p.32). Though media endorsement does not automatically validate the Model Minority stereotypes, it does support dominant discourses, and (mis)guide the public into believing that stereotypes equal social *reality*. Despite the many apparently misconceived fallacies connected with Model Minority myths that endorse various grand narratives concerning Asian Americans, the general public has no way to shun the mainstream propaganda, whose influences take an active lead in distorting understandings towards Asian Americans (Chang,

2011). As Chao, Chiu, and Lee (2011) proposed, the Model Minorities' image conformed to the political interests of the dominant social groups has "set up a model standard for American people to self-evaluate, and to evaluate other disadvantaged groups" (p.45).

### **The Otherness and Forever Foreigner**

Starting from the ideological legitimacy of Asian Americans' *unassimilability*, Media Action Network for Asian American (MANAA) proposed a list of heart-broken racial portrayals concerning Asian Americans' acculturation and assimilation into the dominant culture of America (Min, 2003). The MANAA list stressed the irreconcilable fundamental differences between East and West, thus implied Asians' *forever-alien* identity. Apart from being a group of unassimilable foreigners, the list also portrayed Asian Americans as financial predators trapped in cliché occupations. Under the impact of such discourses, Asian Americans are, for most of the time, foreigners instead of U.S. citizens (Yu, 2006). In fact, the hierarchical social categorization has pre-arranged the European Americans' being insiders while immigrants of color outsiders (Park, 2011). The Executive Order 9066, known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, is thus a massive public emotional outburst from the social-identified *insiders* towards the *minoritized outsiders*. While the idea of "foreignness" is socio-legally constructed, such social ideology reinforces U.S. racial hierarchy.

McGowan and Lindren's (2006) study confirmed the detrimental impact of Model Minority stereotypes and MANAA's list. Participants in their study reported their 1) deep beliefs in Asian Americans' foreignness and un-patriotism; 2) feelings that racial minorities have only themselves to blame for poverty or educational/professional limited upward mobility; because there is little or no racial discrimination in the U.S.; and 3) feelings of hostility to foreigners/immigrants and government-sponsored support program for Asian Americans and other social minorities.

Saito (1997) reflected, the otherness and the foreignness involving questioning a certain portion of social members' citizenship by calling them aliens, is probably due to the consideration of this group's military or economic threat towards the dominant group (Saito, 1997). Under such discourses, various learning communities also start to perceive Asian American students as inscrutable aliens and perpetual foreigners (Yee, 1992). Asian American students encountered unjust neglect at the institutional level (Mooko, 1995; Tayag, 2011), and have experienced "exclusion, alienation, and marginalization in the U.S." (Koo, Peguero & Shekarkhar, 2012, p.131). Noh's (2013) study on the second-generation Korean Americans revealed that a number of educators still came into the classroom with generalized *a priori* assumption of the foreignness of their Asian American students. Under such teacher influences, students who belong to a dominated minority group are likely to gradually develop deviant identities at school, while eventually perceive themselves as the *other* on campus (Noh, 2013).

## **Socially Constructed Minority and *Modelized* Internalization**

### **Minoritized or minority? Modelized or born model?**

Does a "typical" Asian American student equal an eyeglass wearing and awkwardly nerdy kid who holds just a slice of the American dream and spends countless hours in the library doing mathematics or science (Wong & Halgin, 2006; Kibira, 2002)?

Do Asian American students naturally prone to schoolwork? Are all Asians alike concerning culture, language, appearance and academic achievement (Wing, 2007)?

What should be the *standard* traits for a *typical* and *traditional* Asian American student? Obedience, silence, non-assertiveness (Endo, 2012), people who "do not normally initiate

conversation,” “are comfortable with being silenced,” and behave as “timid, over-dependent, and lacking in initiatives” (Ng, Lee & Pak, p.101)?

Such grand narratives reinforce Asian American students’ homogeneity and perpetuate stereotypes regarding Asian Americans’ foreignness (Endo, 2012). The clear message of each Asian American individual’s uniqueness is profoundly missing at school. Hence, peers and teachers view each of them as a stereotypical one without considering the nuances among individuals. Such multicultural education propagated at school, according to Endo (2012), is, in fact, a kind of multiculturalism *without* Asian Americans.

Are Asian American students all nerdy and naturally good at mathematics? Lee & Ying (2001) have found significant distress across Asian American students who struggle with their academic performances. Instead of being trapped in cliché disciplines, Asian American students are, in fact, showing a wide range of interests across social sciences, humanities, and education, and have a wide range of scores on standardized tests (Bassett, 2007). Students from East Asian, South/Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander descent are not all academically well-prepared (Kao, 1995; Nadal, 2010). Stereotypes about Asian Americans as a group cannot be generalized to characterize Asian American individuals (Junn, 2007). Immigrant Asian students are not equally “happy” (Sue & Zane, 1985). The detrimental effects caused by Model Minority myths form a “negative campus climate,” which aggravated Asian American students’ level of depression (Cress & Ikeda, 2003, p.86). Some Asian American students tend to please their parents by “masking feelings of depression, frustration and desperation” so as to reach their parents’ expectation (Wong, Lai and Lin, 2013, p.98). Although most Asian American students appreciate the family support and sacrifices their parents have made for their *brighter* future in the U.S.,

some have reported feeling the extreme pressure to repay their parents' suffocating love (Divoky, 1988).

In addition, another impact Model Minority myths have brought to the campus is the sense of a realistic threat. Maddux, Gallinsky, Cuddy & Polifroni (2008) explained that the concept of Asian American students' model traits of being hardworking and academically successful, may contribute to a sense that this group is posing a realistic threat to other social groups – minority or majority – by taking away educational, political and economic opportunities supposedly belong to others. Such socially conceived threat will inevitably cause “negative attitudes and emotions targeted at Asian American students” (pp. 86-87).

### **Internalization**

Lee's (1994) ethnographic study conducted in a high school setting reported that the *Korean*-identified students were a distinctive subgroup. Those students insisted that they were “better” than other Asians. Not only do they live up to the Model Minority standards, but they would also admonish other Asian students whose behaviors would potentially *tarnish* the name of being a model minority. Such action is called *lateral oppression* – members of the same minoritized group oppress each other. Lateral oppression was also found in Trytten's (2012) study that reported Asian American students' “simultaneously casting the label on their fellow Asian Americans...” (p.460).

Asian immigrant students' accepting Model Minority stereotype as well as their gradual formation of *modelized* identities are an active response to the perceived racial/ethnic hierarchy. These *minoritized* students internalize the Model standards, and have chosen to achieve *honorary citizenship* (Park, 2011; Noh, 2013). Although self-internalization may cause conflicting feelings of wanting to refute generalized stereotypes (Noh, 2013), these students, at the same time, enjoy

the relief of accommodating White Supremacist policies (Iijima, 1998). According to Yu (2006), the internalization of Model Minority stereotypes may eventually couple with a denial of self-identity – an identification sacrifice some of the East Asian students are willing to make.

Colleges “are bound to reflect the bigotry and prejudices of the U.S.” (Delucchi & Do, 1996, p.415). Apart from Lee’s (1994) study on Asian American students’ internalization of model standards, Green & Kim (2005), Museus (2008), and Kim & Lee (2014) all studied Asian American students’ responses toward Model Minority stereotypes from different angles. Green & Kim (2005) studied a group of female Korean doctoral students. They discovered that this group of students – more often viewed as cute Asian girls as opposed to professional academics by their colleagues – had a severe burden of endorsing the model minority stereotypes, trapped in supportive roles as a coping strategy during group collaborations. Kim & Lee’s (2014) study, meanwhile, focused on the relationship between Asian American students’ internalization and their help-seeking attitudes. Their report shows that the deep level of internalization is a significant predictor of unfavorable help-seeking attitude – inferably due to the unwillingness to risk losing the name of being a *model* in a dominated context. On the other hand, Museus (2008) juxtaposed a *Model* Minoritized (pan-Asian) student and an *inferior* minority (*minoritized* racial group other than Asian) student. He concluded that the *model* student has significantly internalized model minority myths while the *inferior* student struggled to get rid of the side effects caused by the creation of Model Minority that has largely affected both of their classroom experiences.

*Solo*: Building upon your background analysis, I would like to specifically talk about the intersectional relationships among race, gender, and the current Classical music industry.

## Race, Gender, and Classical Music

### ***Minoritized race and gender: from a new wave of yellow peril threat to intersectional considerations***

One of the reasons why we should be careful about meta-narratives such as Model Minority stereotypes, according to Chang (2011), is that they can soon turn into a new wave of Yellow Peril panic. Model Minority stereotypes, similar to what Yellow Peril conspiracy has once suggested, implies that Asians threaten the country by taking away opportunities supposedly belong to the dominant group in the U.S. society. Such implication is, in fact, already echoed in modern-day America when media started to accuse Asian Americans' over-dominating Ivy League admission. After years of being models for minorities, or even honorary Whites, Shim (1998) predicts the tendency of Asian Americans' soon *gaining* back their position of being Yellow Peril, or *renewed* Yellow Peril (shim, 1998). In terms of Asian groups' social upward mobility outside educational institutions, what Model Minority stereotypes suggest have caused more than a glass/bamboo ceiling – a transparent career-development barrier that allows the Asians to see and imagine the views above, while never actually overcome it (Duleep & Sanders, 1992; Khator, 2010; Wang & Nagasawa, 1991). The Model Minority label is deeply embedded in the social injustice while intertwined with issues including gender inequity (Green & Kim, 2005; Suzuki, 1989; Kim, 1994) and unconquerable occupational hierarchy (Kim, 1994). According to Kim (1994), Asian American females earn around \$1,785 per year less than Asian American males in the federal labor force. The average salary for Asian American females is also lower compared to white and African American females in every white-collar occupation series. Also, Asian American females are less likely in attaining supervisory and managerial promotions. Underrepresented and understudied (Mayuzumi, 2008), Asian females in professional settings are thus double minoritized in this regard.

**Gendered-racialized music industry: are you in the right piece of fabric with a right face for the profession?**

Researchers have studied female musicians and non-western classical musicians from different angles. Atterbury (1992) believes that obstacles block female musicians' social paths as professionals. To be more specific, Bennett (2008) discovered that females in the music world are more likely to pursue a teaching career due to the lack of ability in maintaining high performing skills. He explained that the balance of family commitment and sustaining an uninterrupted performing career for women was rather a challenge. Similarly, Jenkins (2014) also pointed out the challenge of balancing home duties and professional music work for female musicians, and analyzed the profound lack of home support and the inequitable social expectations for female and male musicians based on the assumption that "the basic division of labor in any society is by sex" (p. 46).

Being successful as a female musician in the music world that has a tendency of underrepresenting female musicians – to be more specific, females composed only 28% of photographic representation over the past 50 years at positions of conducting or authority in major music journals (Kruse, Giebelhausen, Shouldice & Ramsey, 2015). According to Stremikis (2002), females who achieve a highly successful career as professional musicians tend to be more self-directed, motivated, aware of their professional intentions at a considerably early age, and most importantly, less "conforming to gender stereotypes" (p.85). Interestingly, Stremikis also found out that successful female musicians are more likely to come from families with music ties, and at the same time, either without brothers or with much younger brothers. However, as a matter of fact, female musicians are facing inequitable career barriers in achieving a successful professional performing career is. According to Sheldon and Hartley's (2012)

research findings, males are overwhelmingly outnumbering females as primary conductors while female musicians are more likely to take on teaching jobs at the secondary school level.

The truth is, the world of classical music has a history of intensifying gender roles, which has resulted in the gender stratifications in professional performing ensembles and the association of gender and the choice of musical instruments. Music teachers commonly adopt teaching philosophies that reinstate gender stereotypes (Roulston & Misawa, 2011). Wych (2012) reviewed literature on the topic of the relationship between gender and instruments in the past 30 years, and concluded that the considerable correlation between music students' gender and their instruments' selection has limited students' potential in musical participation. Ideas including "boys should not play flute or violin" or "drums, guitar or trumpet are not for girls" (p.29) that closely aligned to gender stereotyping are rooted in music students' minds. What is worth noting is that male students are more reluctant to broaden their range of instrument selections, due to their gender role epistemology based in "an early and active avoidance of anything thought to be feminine" (p.33).

As a matter of fact, I am not the only one receiving criticisms regarding my poor choice of concert dresses. Griffiths did two studies in 2009 and 2011 in investigating the effects of female classical musicians' physical appearance and concert dresses on audiences' perceptions of their performing abilities, and the relationship between female classical musicians' sartorial decisions and their underlying implications. She concludes that female musicians consider factors including physical freedom, the level of displaying personal characteristics, and the respect for the classical traditions when selecting dresses. However, audiences have their own strong concepts regarding the appropriateness of concert dresses, and an "inappropriate" dress

may, unfortunately, result in a detrimental impact on observers' perceptions of the musician's performing ability.

If choosing a dress is still something female musicians can easily control, physical appearance is then a whole different story. External factors such as appearance, or to be more specific, performers' attractiveness, according to Ryan and Costa-Giomi (2003), audiences' evaluations on audio-visual recordings of professional music performers are influenced by their attractiveness biases. As a result, those more attractive female performers are a lot more favored by the audiences regardless of their performing status.

### **In between gender and race...**

Intersectionally, race, as another dimension, is also one of the extraneous factors in judgments of musical performances (Elliot, 1995/1996). Davidson and Edgar's (2003) empirical study indicated that in-group racial trends, together with a significant effect of performers' gender were detectable in observers' evaluations on musicians' performances. Moreover, Elliot (1995/1996) discovered black trumpeters and flutists' performances were significantly unfavorable compared to their white counterparts. VanWeelden's (2004) study on audiences' perceptions of ensemble performances and conductors' races confirmed that a conductor's race significantly affects observers' ratings on his/her professionalism as well as the ensemble performances, regardless of the observer's gender, race, and educational background.

Concerning both gender and racial factors, Yoshihara (2007) summarized, "Asian musicians' gender, racial, and musical identities are inextricably woven together" (p.102). Taking the media depictions for the 2005 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition for example, the story coverage in local newspaper such as *Fort Worth Star Telegram* has paid unrelated and

unnecessary attention to Asian females musicians' physical appearance, concert dresses, and *shopping penchant* –

“The upper echelon of this musical mecca (China) is largely populated by women – confident, passionate women who tackle a technically daunting Chopin etude with bravado and then take a graceful bow, being sure to show off their Gucci glamour... While they pour their hearts into Chopin, many of these beautiful young pianists also pour themselves into Chanel gowns. They love their Manolos as much as Mozart. When they're not playing Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto, they're hitting the shops on Fifth Avenue...” (p.100).

Elliot (1995/1996) confirmed the consistent and significant gender and race associations in influencing audiences' expectations and the evaluation of music students' performances. The de-professionalized, gendered, objectified, and sexualized images of Asian female musicians, according to Yoshihara (2007), have led these classical music performers to rethink their music identity in surviving the music business whilst perpetuating their personal and artistic integrity.

### **Asian Americans and Feminist Epistemology**

According to Benkratis & Feagin (1995), gendered racism is deeply rooted in the U.S. society. Victimized by European White “standards”, women of Asian ancestry are either restricted to subordinated social and economic positions, or degenerated into an exotic, sexualized femininity (Yoshihara, 2007). Away from the dominant idea of a professional female, the gold medalist in 1991 Winter Olympics, Japanese American skater Kristi Yamaguchi was forever stigmatized as someone with Japanese ancestry in media coverage, stopping her from receiving equal endorsements as other European-American skaters. Recording companies

happily sell Asian American female musicians' gender and racial backgrounds with provocatively and explicitly sexual meanings. Marketed to sell her physical attractiveness, classical violinist Vanessa Mae's debut album, *China Girl*, has highlighted every *Chinese* and *feminine* element the marketing company could think of. One would never know her profession by a glance at the CD cover – instead of a classical musician, all one can see is an exotic young woman with dark eyes and clichéd bobbed hair in a traditional Chinese dress.

As a social and political movement, feminism, according to bell hooks (2000), seeks to uncover the social inequity by comparing the living experiences of men and women in against sexism, racism, and oppression. Gender discrimination and racial inequity “have continued to be linked” – women of color experienced *gendered racism* where one kind of system level oppression reinforces and interacts with another (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995, p.29). Feminist scholars perceive knowledge and politics (Alcoff and Potter, 1993), while legitimate the uniqueness of individual experiences and situational contexts (Kolmar & Bartowski, 2013).

Chow (1987) focused on the complexity of Asian American communities' involving in the U.S. feminist movement, and equates “feminism” to any activism for women rights. She asserted that Asian American women have been “socialized and conditioned” to accept dominated roles at familial and societal levels, and to accept “a hierarchy of authority based on sex, age and generations, with young women at the lowest level, subordinated to father-husband-brother-son” (cited in Yee, 2009, p.56), a distorted Confucianist ritual legacy. Such brainwashed default setting becomes an ideological barrier for women in Asian American communities to actively join feminist movements. The theorizing of predefined gender expectations in families and communities connected me to Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's (1997) description of five epistemological perspectives, namely, silence-received knowledge-subjective knowledge-procedural knowledge-constructed knowledge as, from feminist scholars' view, from “mindless

and voiceless, subject to the whims of external authority” to perceiving “all knowledge as contextual” and “themselves as creators of knowledge”. Belenky et al. (1997) concluded that feminist epistemology considers self-images as resulted from all social interactions.

## **Featured musicians and other music contributors in the Concerto**

Guided by the research purpose that focuses on East Asian American female musicians’ teaching and learning activities, career development and other social interactions under current power structure and social ideology; and the research question that emphasized on these female musicians’ identities and music background in boundary traveling within the social contexts, I will perform a suite of stories featuring five East-Asian American female classical musicians in the following Movement III together with the accompaniment of the Orchestra in a dialectic way. These five musicians are known as the *featured musicians* in the Concerto. They are either Classical Music major students or faculty members, and are currently studying or working in conservatories or school of music affiliated to colleges and universities in the U.S.A. Details regarding the *featured musicians* and *other music contributors* will be in the methodology section in the second movement.

## **Movement II: Adagio**

*Orchestra:* As related previously in the first movement, the purpose of this Concerto performance is to identify whether and how *power structure, dominant discourses, and socially constructed Majority-Minority internalization* are at play in the East-Asian female Classical musicians' teaching and learning activities, career development, and other social interactions.

*Solo:* To survive the living conditions inextricably consisted of gender and racial stereotypes and bamboo ceilings in their career development, the featured musicians did their best to dance with *shackles* on – as a female, a musician, and an East Asian, traveling not only across the Western and Eastern world, but also racial, gender, cultural and occupational boundaries and obstacles.

In this movement, we will discuss the theoretical framework and the methodology that undergird this Concerto piece. Meanwhile, we will also discuss how we theorize and reframe our methodological thinking through the composition process.

### **Theoretical Framework and Curriculum Theorizing**

#### **Travel experiences, rumination, and praxis**

*Orchestra:* Conventionally, the concept of travel means the act of moving outside one's home for business, tourism, or pleasure (Macintosh and Goeldner, 1986). However, according to Cohen (1995), various conceptual and theoretical perceptions regarding the definition of tourism have confounded the theorization of travel and travelers, hence researchers should consider related studies as tunnels for more critical perspectives concerning the nature of traveling as a social phenomenon and an aspect of human geography, but not simply for business or pleasure. As a

social phenomenon, traveling creates a cultural laboratory for individuals to experience new spheres of their identities (Franklin & Crang, 2001) and axiological formations.

Under the circumstances of globalization, multiple purposes in international contexts require more travelers (Phillips, Gully, McCarthy, Gastellano & Kim, 2014). Alice Kaplan's (1993) explanation of people's adopting another culture in her book, *Frech Lessons*, is that "there's something in their own (culture) they don't like, that doesn't name them" (p.209). With the increasing amount of people traveling to study and work, to live internationally, like Kaplan believed, in searching for the right culture from elsewhere that name them just right, theories and theorists in a broader meaning are traveling across borders at the same time every day.

Traveler's travel tales appeal to individuals from different communities of practice for various purposes, and enlighten theorists who study these experiences as abundant research data (Smith, 1999). Travel tales that consist travelers' ideas and forming conceptions and theories, provide unlimited first-hand perceptions for curriculum theorizing, as long as, according to Berno and Butler (1996), researchers respect the original cultural contexts. Such travel tales and the study and theorization of travel experiences are significant in breaking cultural boundaries (Echtner & Jamal, 1997).

*Solo:* I was looking at my calendar this morning and suddenly realized that this year's Spring Festival is actually in four days, which also means, that this is going to be the ninth year I am away from my birthplace and my family there during the most important festival in Chinese culture. Nine years and counting – that is, believe it or not, 1/3 of my entire life so far, and equals the actual number of years I have spent at home, my "real" home – which makes me wonder, where exactly in this world is my real "real" home? Yi-Fu Tuan (2011) said in his speech *Home as Elsewhere* that although humans are genetically prone to be sentimental regarding "home,

sweet home,” our imagination, and our emotional feelings that lead us to the negation of some of its indigenous culture will make us travel elsewhere “to realms of beauty and fruitfulness”, whether imaginary or realistic, that “no comforts of home can satisfy.”

When you think of those proverbs and allusions in Chinese and Japanese cultural roots, you will find classical sayings such as “树挪死，人挪活 (plants die from frequent moving, while people live prosperously because of constant traveling)”; “读万卷书，行万里路 (Read millions of books and travel millions of miles)”; and 「可愛い子には旅をさせよ」 (If you love your children, let them travel.) In short, the idea of “travel” in both cultures serves as a fundamental aspect of intellectual and emotional development. Similar to Confucius’ argument regarding the relationship between “learning” and “thinking” (学而不思则罔，思而不学则殆 Learning without thinking leads to blindness; while thinking without learning leads to idleness), the relationship between “reading” and “traveling”, in my point of view, is much like the process of praxis that theorizing becomes possible through rumination. Reading without traveling leads to isolation and impracticalness, while traveling without reading leads to groundlessness and bigotry.

If travelers’ experiences are the foundation for perceiving situated realities, then how they ruminate what they have experienced on top of reading before, during, and after each journey is an indispensable link in praxis through which theories are proposed, embodied, revised and when possible, evolved. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire considers praxis as “reflection and action directed ... at the structures to be transformed” (1970, p.127), through which the oppressed group achieves an awareness that lays the foundation for liberation. Hannah Arendt (1958) believes that as the highest level of politically active life, praxis is inevitable in achieving human freedom. For me, the process of praxis is more than an infinite loop between theory and practice;

it is an infinite cyclical movement among theories, experiences, rumination, and counter-theories in which reading, traveling, rumination, and confrontations and reflections across boundaries are all necessary.

### **Boundary Object and Boundary-traveling Rumination theory**

*Orchestra*: Boundary theory (Zerubavel, 1991; 1996) as a cognitive theory originally focuses on the work-family relationship and offers preliminary explanations within the organizational model (Nipper-Eng, 1996). Boundaries suggest the scope of a certain domain, and traditional management theories perceive identifying *boundaries* as the foundation for efficient decision-making (Walker, 2013; Santos & Eisenhardt, 2005). Realizing the narrowness of the application and evolution of boundary theory, researchers including Piszczek and Berg (2014) argued that current studies on boundary theory should acknowledge the importance of including both organizations and individuals and take broader social factors into account.

Educators, on the other hand, consider transcending boundaries, or *borders*, as opportunities for onto-epistemological theorizing instead of pre-defined borderlines for niche studies. Greene (1988) proposed that an ideally educated person should be someone, who recognized the boundaries, or “obstacles and chose to intelligently and persistently attack it” (p.xi). Many researchers adopt the idea of *blurring boundaries* in their inter-disciplinary/ inter-sectional studies. For example, Farrel, Vernaza, Perkins, Ricketts-Duncan and Kimbar (2012) proposed their multi-dimensional inquiry model in theory construction through crossing boundaries and borders. Wolfgang (2013) recommended inter-disciplinary boundary crossings and considered boundary crossings as a critical postmodern approach. He argued that the disciplinary boundary crossing is “an emancipatory act” (p.64), and it further illuminates the in-

between spaces, and unpack the intersectional opportunities. Of course, to achieve such boundary crossing, “collaboration, reflexivity, and dialogues”(p.68) are necessary.

In considering boundaries and these *in-between* opportunities engendered by boundaries, Wenger (1998; Oleksiyenko, 2018) introduced boundary as an integral concept in his social theory of learning, and, for the first time, proposed the idea of *boundary objects*. Since then, boundary object becomes a sociological concept adopted in various ways by different communities of practice – groups of people who share an interest, a craft, or a profession (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Star and Griesemer (1989) described boundary object as something plastic and immutable at the same time and can be either abstract or concrete. Such boundary object, in short, is “plastic” enough to accommodate the limitations within and among boundaries and communities of practice, yet “robust” enough to perpetuate their own identities in boundary-crossing experiences (p.393). In other words, the recognition of boundary objects can be the first step of in studying these inter-sectional in-between spaces, and the understanding of how these boundary objects work in their boundary-crossing experiences provide opportunities for further theorizing intersectional and cross-boundary thinking.

*Solo:* We all travel. We have our own travel experience and are very often living in other people’s travel tales. FBI Director, Chris Wray asserted on February 13th, 2018 at the Congress, that Chinese students were “covertly gathering intelligence for their government back home.” He claimed,

“In their (Chinese students) education here, very few absorb humanity and modern civilization. They mostly come at an age when humanity has been not only stripped but also

immunized against. They come here to pick up science and technology and go home to serve their Nazi value system.”

I must say I was annoyed, offended, while entertained at the same time when I receive the tweed news. I believe it would not be an easy thing to encounter another statement this extremely racist, generalized, mythical, and conspiracist.

Whatever sub-context Wray has had, he could have done himself a huge favor spend some time listening and reading other travelers’ tales and boundary-crossing experiences. Travelers’ tales, as above related, open a door for in-between spaces and opportunities for eliminating misunderstanding. If we regard these travelers and their travel experiences as boundary objects, we would be able to discover boundaries that we might have missed so far. In the scope of this performance, I propose a combined theory, boundary-travel rumination theory based on travel theory, boundary object theory, and my reflections on rumination-based epistemology.

One day later after Wray delivered his speech at the Congress, the 15-year-old Chinese immigrant Peter Wang (2002-2018) was killed after helping his fellow students escape the mass shooting in Parkland, Florida. He was awarded the Medal of Heroism and has been posthumously admitted to the U.S. Military Academy.

Back to the boundary traveling rumination theory. Rumination, a process of digesting the digested, has two levels of meanings here. From the angle of the traveler, they constantly ruminate upon their travel experiences that are included in their unique and vivid travel tales. Meanwhile, composers (re)read and interpret these ruminated tales and reflect upon their own experiences. The rumination of the ruminated process here provides *in-between* spaces for

boundary recognition and understanding. Such boundary-traveling rumination theory is also closely related to the *Componere* method to be introduced in the following section.

## **Methodology: From Portraiture to *Componere***

### **Portraiture**

*Orchestra*: Based on her years of research experiences, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) pioneered the distinctive method, *Portraiture*, in social science inquiry. In her seminal book, *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, Lawrence-Lightfoot depicted the *portraitists*' (investigators') job to be deeply empirical. Grounded in systematic data collection, critical self-questioning, and constant examination of biases, Lawrence-Lightfoot specifically pointed out the importance of portraitists' own voices. She believed that the researchers' voices should be everywhere in the research through "undergirding the text, framing the piece, naming the metaphors and echoing the central themes" (p.85) without overshadowing the *actors*' (participants') voices. In her words, the researchers and the participants perform "duets" – either in harmony or counterpoint. The actors "sing the solo lines," and the portraitists "support their efforts at articulation, insight, and expressiveness" (p.85).

During the data collection process, according to Lawrence-Lightfoot, the portraitists should be careful, open, and receptive to listening and observing. Portraitists should acclimate themselves to the research sites and keep documenting, or in Miles and Huberman's (1994) word, "memoing", in an *impressionistic* style. Lawrence-Lightfoot believes that such an impressionistic journaling style that includes information less fixed and visible (St. Pierre, 2011) allows the portraitists to focus on the data not only in data collection, but also during the process of data analysis in discovering patterns, following the "development and dialogue of ideas", and

discerning the “convergence of phenomena” (p.188). Throughout every stage of data collection, portraitists keep “gathering, scrutinizing and organizing” their data and, meanwhile, make sense of what they have perceived (p.187). Thus, in portraiture, data collection and data analysis are not necessarily separated, but may very often happen at the same time. Lawrence-Lightfoot compared the “data-analysis-data” process to Miles and Huberman’s (1994) analytic coding work that stresses the identification of “emerging themes” (p.188), which considers coding as something that drives further data collection – a form of on-going and continuing analysis. Lawrence-Lightfoot also referred to such dialectical on-going data collection-analysis process as the *constant comparative method* proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

According to Lawrence-Lightfoot, moreover, analyzing data in portraiture is less “action-oriented” and more “ruminative” (p.189). She agreed with Goets and LeCompte’s (1984) advice that encourages researchers to search for emerging patterns through a “process of sorting, grouping, and classification” while anticipating the “construction of narrative” in theorizing (p.189). Such data analysis process helps researchers acquire meaningful data units (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Here Lawrence-Lightfoot specifically reminded the portraitists to not only attempt to organize their data systematically, but also to always listen *for* the voices that are seemingly falling outside, or diverging from the emerging patterns.

Finally, Lawrence-Lightfoot compared the story shaping (in her words, *portrait weaving*) process to “stitching together a colorful quilt” (p.247). Portraitists, similar to novelists, search for the overarching vision/conception. Lawrence-Lightfoot considers the *structure* of her story a “scaffold” for the narrative, and the *form* of her story the “currents that wash across the structure,” and eventually, the “aesthetic whole emerges through the development of coherence” (pp. 251-255).

## **Componere**

*Solo*: Although Lawrence-Lightfoot built her methodological metaphor upon the art of portrait painting, she adopted quite a few musical terms in delineating the process and strategies of her method – such as researchers’ and participants’ singing “*Duets*” when explaining the importance of listening *for* stories (p.85).

What I appreciate about portraiture is how Lawrence-Lightfoot adopted the idea of singing solo and duets, listening for the voices, as well as thinking impressionistically and ruminatively. However, the way how she refers to Miles & Huberman (1994) on acquiring “meaningful” data unit, and to Glaser & Straus (1967) on the constant comparative method is less appealing to me under the post-qualitative framework. The reason why is that in coding and comparing new data with previously collected ones when theoretical propositions are formed, or confirmed, or discounted, one can rely heavily on her/his empirical experiences in determining whether or not these data are meaningful, and accidentally swing back and forth in binary thinking, thus fall into the pattern of empirical positivism.

The field of fine art, in a word, creates experiences of aesthetic appreciation through a sense of synesthesia. Inspired by Lawrence-Lightfoot and her remarkable methodology, I proposed a customized progression of the portraiture method for this performance, a methodological progression I call *Componere*.

Literally meaning “to put together,” the Latin term *Componere* is the root of the English phrase, *musical composition* (Harper-Scott & Samson, 2009). According to Jean-Benjamin de Laborde (1780), the musical composition consists in two things – 1) ordering and disposing of several sounds (*melody*) and 2) rendering multiple simultaneous sounds (*harmony*) (Forte, 1979).

Through years of practice, nowadays, people tend to consider musical composition as a process of ordering and presenting fundamental elements of music such as *rhythm, pitch, melody, form,* and *harmony*. Among all these elements, the *form* of musical composition is a general outline of a music piece. Along with the eras starting from Medieval and Renaissance, followed by Baroque, Classical and Romantic, and up until the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century, different ages have witnessed the creation and prosperity of forms of musical compositions such as Chanson, Concerto, Sonata, Symphony, and Film Score.

Musical composition involves various methods, such as *musical notation, transcription, orchestration, or musical montage (sound collage)*. Musical notation means to transcribe the imagined or heard musical sound, including expressive instructions as hints for the performance of the composition. Transcription in music means notating a sound or a music piece that was unnotated before. The orchestration is a practice of writing or adapting music previously composed for other mediums, such as an ensemble. Musical montage, or sound collage, means to put together different sound recordings or samplings. The novel sonic study that Walter Gershon (2017) conducted in his book *Sound Curriculum* where he aligned audio tracks and his theoretic arguments was a combination of musical notation and sound collage.

To be more specific, the role of the researcher in Componere is much like an enthusiastic and curious composer. When diving into a research site filled with colorful yet random musical elements, the composer works first as an indefatigable folksong collector. Yue Fu (Music Bureau) is an institution of Chinese history that specifically aims at collecting folksongs that have inspired numerous musicians and poets across the nation. Such an institution first came into being at around 221 BC in Qin Dynasty, and continue to develop regardless of the transitions of dynasties. Mo Li Hua (Jasmine), known as one of the most famous Chinese folksongs, was adopted by Giacomo Puccini (1924) in his epic work, the opera *Turandot*. Just like Mo Li Hua

and Turandot, folksongs, nowadays, are continuously inspiring composers across cultural and geographic boundaries.

Compared to a portraitist who listens and observes for stories in data collection, a composer picks up random rhythms and pitches in folksongs collecting (data collection) through active interactions with any music contributors in a research site. Through carefully notating and transcribing these music elements, a composer arranges the rhythms and pitches s/he has perceived, and start transcribing and notating the scratches of melodies while waiting for the right motif lingering in her/his mind. A musical motif is a trigger, or sometimes the right starting point that gives a hint to the theme of her/his work. Rumination is cardinal in Componere. The original rhythms and pitches that a composer gathers from folksong collection are her/his best friend. A good composer keeps these folksongs available to her/him and refers back to her/his original scratches every day. Although the composer's own research and travel experiences are important in a way that they provide a bigger picture, and lead her/him to a deeper level of rumination, she/he should not rely solely on these empirical experiences. Scattering melodies, gathered folksongs, lingering motif, notated and transcribed music pieces are equally important in music composition.

Once the composer starts to hear the lingering motif in his/her work, s/he should anticipate, or decide, if not already, the *form* of her/his musical presentation.

The form of a composer's presentable work is sometimes decided based on the composer's research design. For example, if the composer has decided to conduct a specific case study on a group of participants in their institutions, a *solo concerto* – that features the group of participants (soloists) while accompanied by other melody lines from their organizations (the orchestra) – might be one of the form choices. If, in another case, the composer has decided to launch an ethnographic study based on a special research site where all sounds are equally

important and unique, a *symphony* (- if s/he is thinking of writing in 3-4 chapters under one topic) or a *suite* (- a set of several small instrumental pieces that might focus on various topics) can be some of her/his choices.

Sometimes, however, the *form* is decided by the research data or the gradually emerging music theme through the composer's ruminative thinking. For example, if a phenomenon is stressed multiples times in a composer's study that lingers in her/his mind, the composer may consider a *Rondo* (a music form that contains repetitions of a specific section *A* and presents in patterns such as ABA, ABACA, or ABACABA, etc.) as her/his presentational form.

As Lawrence-Lightfoot *weave* her portrait as the final process in portraiture, the composer concludes her/his study with a music manuscript based on her/his motif, emerging musical theme, the melodies that come from the original pieces s/he notated and transcribed, and the decided presentational form.

As related before, historically, musical composition involves ordering the *melody* and rendering the musical *harmony* (Jean- Benjamin de Laborde, 1780). What *harmony* here stands for in *Componere* is similar to what Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) calls the search for "goodness" in Portraiture (p.161). Through her/his endeavor in conducting a *Componere* research, the composer commits to pursuing the *harmony* – ultimate happiness in modern society based on social equity, mutual understanding, and social justice, even though the musical reality s/he presents can be, at some point, dissonant.

### **Featured Musicians and Other Music Contributors**

*Orchestra:* Guided by the research purpose that highlights East Asian American female musicians' teaching and learning activities, career development and other social interactions under current

power structure and social ideology, we invited five East Asian American female classical musicians who have attended multiple institutions across the U.S.A. to join our folksong collection. These musicians are *featured musicians* in the study. We have assigned these featured musicians alias (Vivace, Capriccio, Cantabile, Brillate, and Dolce), and some of their information are coded in protecting their confidentiality. More details will be provided as we continue our performance. Also, although these aliases – borrowed from music terminologies – may have certain expressive meanings, they do not indicate these featured musicians’ personalities or characters. Our soloist simply opened the music dictionary, closed her eyes, and randomly pointed at one of the terminologies. Yes, I agree. She is hopeless.

*Solo:* Apart from these featured musicians, I have also successfully connected with people around these featured musicians such as Vivace’s previous homestay parents, some of her peers and one of her instructors in graduate school; one of Capriccio’s mentors and her/his spouse and some of her enthusiastic audiences; some of Cantabile’s friends and family; and some of Brillante’s and Dolce’s students. We are calling all these people around the featured musicians *other music contributors*. Starting from Movement III, our performance will be based on the stories of all the featured musicians and their interactions with other music contributors. We will start with Vivace’s story, and pause at Dolce’s story. The sequence of our presentation is determined based on these featured musicians’ years of travel experiences (from the greenest to the most mature). The greener she is, the less experience she has in teaching, thus connections with her students were less possible.

### **Folksongs (Data) Collection**

*Orchestra*: The folksongs collection process is completed from September 2014 through September 2015, and from October 2016 through September 2017 through face-to-face interviews, observations, social media pages tracking, follow-up conversations and occasionally, facetime meetings.

Face-to-face interviews with the featured musicians are based on, but not restricted to, *the Interview Protocol for Feature Musicians*. The protocol is as follows,

## Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

### (For Featured Musicians)

Date:  
 Featured Musician:  
 Venue:

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>∞ Personal Background                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Demographic questions</li> </ul> </li> <li>∞ Professional Background                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Other institutions attended</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Music in Boundary Traveling	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>∞ How's learning music when you were younger?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o When did you start? Who made the decision?</li> <li>o How do you feel about the decision now and then?</li> <li>o If you have kids, will you let them learn music?</li> </ul> </li> <li>∞ How's studying and practicing music in higher educational settings?</li> </ul>
<b>Notation:</b>	Any boundary crossing experiences?
Identities in Boundary Traveling	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>∞ How long have you been living in the U.S.?</li> <li>∞ Identifiers you can think of about yourself in different stages and different contexts (as a student/faculty member on campus; a professional player on the stage; or a daughter/wife/mom in the family...)</li> </ul>
<b>Notation:</b>	Any gendered identifiers?
Model Label	

<p>Model Label meaning</p> <p>1) Teaching &amp; Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>∞ Interactions with advisors/ students/ colleagues/ faculty/ staff members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Would you like to share with me about some specific teaching and learning experiences that you believe to be worth noting?</li> </ul> </li> <li>∞ If you can make some changes regarding your current teaching/ learning environment as an Asian American female, you will...?</li> </ul>
<p>Model Label meaning</p> <p>2) Career Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>∞ About your short and long term career goals? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Anything you wish you had or had not done to help achieving goals?</li> <li>o How do you foresee your career development in the field of music/ the higher educational settings (particularly as an Asian American female)?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Model Label meaning</p> <p>3) Social Interaction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>∞ Within academic or musical settings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o How's collaborating with other musicians?</li> <li>o Working across races/ethnicities</li> <li>o Would you like to share more about being a female, an Asian in the music setting?</li> </ul> </li> <li>∞ Outside academic or musical settings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Travel stories</li> <li>o Media orientations (tiger moms, FOB sitcoms...)</li> <li>o Experiences as an East Asian American musician in the society</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Notation:</b></p>	<p>Any overarching social ideology and socially constructed minority internalization at play?</p>

Note:

(Table 2.1)

*Solo*: Under the framework of the questions and purpose that guide the performance, the protocol for featured musicians was composed of three topics, namely 1) Music in boundary traveling; 2) Identities in boundary traveling; and 3) Model label meanings in teaching and learning, career development, and social interaction. The first round of interviews was scheduled and conducted near these musicians' institutions at that time. The shortest interview (the interview with Cantabile) lasted for 30 minutes, and the longest interviews (the interviews with Vivace and Dolce) lasted for 1.5 hours. Upon mutual consent, I audio-recorded all the interviews and observed their tones, their facial expressions, and the way they presented their stories. I did not purposefully withhold any personal background information. Two of the featured musicians (Brillante and Dolce) did ask for my opinions regarding the last question in the "Model Label Meaning" section. The rest three did not ask for my personal input during our interviews.

After the face-to-face interviews, I transcribed all the audio recordings and started to notate original music excerpts based on the interview transcripts and my observation notes. Although transcripts are easier to get access to, those original audio recordings and observation notes are more authentic folksongs in the study.

Apart from face-to-face interviews, observations, social network pages tracking, and follow-up conversations either in person or through facetime meetings are also part of the folksongs collection process. I observed one Vivace's recital, followed Vivace's and Capriccio's social network posts for a year, and Cantabile's and Dolce's facebook updates for a year. I also visited Brillante's and Dolce's studio once and followed Brillante's blog for a year. All observations and social media posts tracking are based on mutual agreement. Observations in studios and recitals have provided insights that I was not able to get from one-on-one interviews, and following the social network activities have complemented the melodies engendered by featured musicians' general social interactions.

Meanwhile, during visiting the studio and attending recitals, I conducted mini-interviews, or “Quick Responses” with some of Dolce’s and Brillante’s students, Vivace’s previous homestay guardians, one of Capriccio’s mentors, and some of Cantabile’s friends and family. Findings from the folksongs collection process performed in the following movement. The protocol for the mini-interviews is as follows,

*Mini-Interview Protocol*

Date:

Featured musician in question:

Venue:

Music in Boundary Traveling	
	<p>Could you briefly define “music”?</p> <p>Could you briefly define “female musician”?</p>
Identities in Boundary Traveling	
	<p>What identifier(s) can you think of speaking of XX (the musician in question)?</p>
Model Label	
<p>Model Label meaning</p> <p>1) Teaching &amp; Learning</p>	<p>How have co-working, studying or learning experiences with XX been?</p>
<p>Model Label meaning</p> <p>2) Career Development</p>	<p>Where do you anticipate XX will be in ten years?</p>
<p>Model Label meaning</p> <p>3) Social Interaction</p>	<p>What identifier(s) can you think of when it comes to “East Asian Americans”?</p>

Note:

(Table 2.2)

### **Transcribing, Notating, and Waiting**

Solo: When folksongs have been collected and notated during the time frame of composing any music pieces, it is common for any composers to have the urge of comparing these collected folksongs to melodies they have collected previously. In traditional qualitative data analysis, making sense of data is very often achieved through constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) while groups of data are perceived meaningful only when any repetitive patterns or phenomenal convergence occur. Such repetitive patterns, on the one hand, make categorization possible in final composition, however; it also, on the other hand, engenders “meaningless data” that seemingly fail to be categorized.

I am not saying composers should never compare data, or in Componere’s philosophy, juxtapose folksongs and melodies. My point is, the comparison should not be the purpose in the post folksongs collection process. We as social members have had the historical tendency of making sense of identities, social phenomena, literature, cultures, traditions, and other individuals through comparative studies. Comparative studies are adopted even more often in pedagogy. When Chinese students were clueless about *The Tale of Genji*, the epic Medieval realist Japanese novel authored by Murasaki Shikibu, we said, well, you could compare it to *The Story of the Stone* (also titled as *Dream of the Red Chamber*). When my students felt less familiar with the idea of “Noble Man” in the Analects of Confucius, it was so natural for me to say, “Well, why don’t you compare it to the spirit of Chivalry, or the idea of gentlemen in European culture. You can even compare it to the Bushido (the spirit of Samurai) in Japanese culture if that makes it easier.”

Such comparisons and analogies, at a glance, provide shortcuts for onto-epistemological developments, however, when we compare one thing that we are less familiar with to something

we are well familiar with, our mindset has been set to the framework of our own ideology. Such comparison based on cultural arrogance creates single-sided stories and sometimes endorses stereotyping. The moment when we start to feel better and believe we have grasped the essence of a new culture, though based on the understanding of our own, we have lost the opportunity of truly understanding that culture even through global traveling.

The pilot study phase for this performance was based on conventional qualitative methods. I interviewed the participants, observed their lessons, and coded the interview transcripts. Looking at the shells and reflexive notes I had, I had the feeling that something is missing. Something that is supposed to be on to something, though I do not know how to describe, are missing. While coding data, what I had done was like making highly condensed laundry detergent sheets – that I condensed a dozen pages of dialogues into one single page full of themes and patterns. With such a coding coordinate system constructed, all nuanced information and undefined knowledge were pushed coercively into the system. As all data became gradually condensed, easier to wrap up, and less and less messy, this “something” was lost. Such “something” could be a transient expression; a barely graspable undertone. It could also be a trigger to myself that, at that moment, linked me to certain feelings, some specific things, or some other people. When I started composing my manuscript based on the condensed sheet, the only feeling I had was “I need to go back to re-read the full transcripts” because I was not confident that I was conveying what they want me to convey. The missing “something” was exactly what forced me to re-think my methodology in preparing for this performance.

The idea of rumination-based post-folksongs collection process in *Componere* stresses transcribing and notating any elements in a situated and authentic way. Instead of adopting comparative thinking that might be based on plausible reasoning, the composer resists her/his impulse to compare new data to the older ones, and compare even new data to the pre-structured

coding coordinate plane. Rather, the composer values each musician's boundary-traveling experiences, trusts her/his own ruminations, and waits patiently while s/he ruminates on theories and past travel experiences s/he has heard or personally had to form layers of melodies. Such melodies may eventually evolve to lingering music motif, or fade away unexpectedly and transiently. With these new layers joining the ensemble, the sound effect may become harmonious and pleasing, or cacophonous and dissonant.

One of my personal favorite music work, the series of piano pieces, *Visions Fugitives* (1915-1917), Op.22 by Sergei Prokofiev, were said to be inspired by Balmont's poem:

*In every fleeting vision I see worlds,  
Filled with the fickle play of rainbows.*

Prokofiev composed a suite of music pieces and successfully presented to his audiences the view of a transient mirage. Despite the dissonance in his music, the actual sound effect is pleasant and harmonious.

Similar to *Visions Fugitives*, composing this concerto was also a project of grasping fleeting visions. It has been the composer's responsibility in Componere research to respect "every fickle play of rainbows", and bravely present harmonious and dissonance to her/his audiences.

Led by the boundary-traveling rumination theory, the recognition of travelers' boundaries was necessary. The identities and the process of identity formation of featured musicians became more meaningful and situational when social, cultural, geographic or occupational boundaries were defined. For example, one of the boundaries that Vivace has encountered in her journey is the balance between what the market demand and her professionalism in career development. In

her narrative, she delicately expressed the potential dissonance in between the two, which is something she perceives challenging.

We will continue with the discussion in upcoming movements.

### **Composition as part of the methodology**

*Orchestra*: The final composition was part of Componere methodology. Considering the research purpose and questions that guide this performance, we decided that the *form* of the final piece would be a *Concerto* for the featured musicians with the *Solo* singing one part, and the *Orchestra* supporting her presentation. Together, the *Solo* and the *Orchestra* weave featured musicians' travel tales and answer the guiding questions that focus on East-Asian female musicians' boundary traveling experiences and the contributions to the improvement of social justice and equity. The final manuscript was composed in contributing to the theorizing of methodological thinking in post qualitative inquiry and the advocacy of social harmony.

## Movement III: Scherzando

### Vivace

*Solo:* Listen, so I met this girl, Vivace, the other day in a cafe located in their university bookstore for a conversation. She requested that place in particular by the way. She walked in, holding her red music binder with a huge Hello Kitty sticker on the cover in one hand, and a cup of coffee purchased from another cafe three blocks away in the other.

*Orchestra:* What do you know about this Hello Kitty Vivace girl?

*Solo:* Well, Vivace is a Chinese born first-generation American. She traveled 10,000 miles ten years ago, and have spent seven years in the school of music affiliated to a university located in the Southern U.S. before starting her new journey in a prestigious conservatory on the East Coast.

As many parents of her generation, Vivace's mom is willing to overcome any obstacle to provide what she has been once deprived – Western classical music – to her child. Western classical music becomes a dream passing from a generation to the promising next generation.

Vivace said that she was never *diligent*, based on the Asian standard that a piano learner spends averagely 6-10 hours on daily practicing, and the stereotyped American standard that a Chinese piano learner practically lives in the practice room. Well, I guess I have never been diligent either based on those standards– no wonder I peaked ten years ago and have been walking downside ever since.

*Orchestra:* That might be just because you are not talented enough.

*Solo:* You could be right, but honestly, I am not even qualified to talk about talent because I do not think I have ever tried hard enough, at least not as hard as what those standards suggest. But anyway, back to Vivace. Though not diligent enough, Vivace knew she always enjoyed the company of music, and she would not hesitate for a second to provide her future child(ren) equal learning access to music. Not only music, but also other forms of art. Vivace framed it beautifully when justifying her rationale – music, art, and literature have an all-round influence on human development. Such influence promotes and strengthens our minds and bodies, and leads us to a higher aesthetic level. “It is up to him/her whether to become a professional. But to receive such cultivation is not a choice.” Said Vivace.

*Orchestra:* Poor imaginary kids. Welcome to the world of music and a potential tiger mommy.

*Solo:* Easy. Not every Chinese girl becomes a tiger mommy eventually.

Anyway, Vivace’s mother traveled through the historic barriers and introduced the Western classical music to her, and Vivace herself traveled across geographic and cultural boundaries so as to learn the Western classical music in its originated Western world. Up until her very last year in the South, she studied under the same piano teacher who passed away before her graduation concert. I could not imagine how she handled the tragedy - her piano teacher sent her to his own hometown for a performing tour; and before she could tell him how wonderful she was on the stage and how successful the entire concert was, she received a phone call from her teacher’s very best friend, telling her to sit down first, and stay calm.

*Orchestra:* It seems like you knew a lot about the bond between Vivace and her piano teacher?

*Solo:* Actually...our conversation in the following two hours ever since she brought up that piano teacher has been related to him– let us call him Mr. GA – one way or another. Vivace could have started her journey in any of the most world-renowned conservatories in either North America or Europe ten years ago, but she was totally smitten by Mr. GA’s professional skills and personal charisma during the audition at her undergraduate Alma mater. She declined all the other offers across the world right after this audition, being determined to make Mr. GA proud of her one day.

I also remember Vivace recalled vividly all the top-notch recording gadgets in Mr. GA’s studio. She said, “You know other kids who need to apply for permissions to use the school concert hall and beg for the technicians on the campus payroll to record their practices? This has never been the case in our studio. Mr. GA himself is the best recording technicians with the most advanced equipment you have ever seen.”

Many music students reflected that the most distinguished feature of the relationship between a student and his/her major course teacher is that it is significantly one-on-one. Your teacher is your school, your style, your career direction, and your guardian. Thus, whether or not the teacher accurately grasps the uniqueness of a specific student and the student adapts to the teacher’s styles smoothly become cardinal. Such close collaboration between the master and the protégé either makes you and breaks you. And Vivace believes that working with Mr. GA has been effortlessly fruitful and comfortable, “He’s sharp and professional in the lessons, and so supportive and encouraging before you get on the stage.”

And then she paused, and added, “Although it might be because I’m not that competitive. As far as I know, those most competitive students almost always find it hard to collaborate well with their mentors.”

Vivace visited her undergraduate Alma mater recently after her East Coast debut and met her academic advisor in the hallway. “She said that I had made huge progression since the first

day she met me because she remembers the days when I was struggling with everything – from the language, to coursework, and to daily routines years ago.”

Vivace smiled, with tears in her eyes, “And that she knows Mr. GA would have been very proud of me.”

*Orchestra:* May I ask what exactly happened to Mr. GA?

*Solo:* Yes, you may. But I will talk about that later. I promise I will tell you later.

*Orchestra:* Well then, since you mentioned that Hello Kitty Vivace has studied and lived in Asia, the South US and the East Coast, I am curious how similar or different those living and studying experiences are.

*Solo:* You are going to laugh.

I thought she was kidding, but apparently, she was not. Even growing up in a similar metropolitan city in China with similar learning experiences in professional music schools, I found it hard to believe.

What Vivace was telling me was those unique security cameras in each of their practice room back when she was a student in the Middle School Affiliated to China Central Conservatory of Music (CCCM). The school has hired three *wardens* sitting in the control room, doing nothing except for monitoring students’ practicing. For instance, when whoever in practice room 502 is stretching or just needs a break, their wardens would ring the bell and yell through the walkie-talkie, “502, what are you doing! go back to your practice!”

And that is not the best part of it.

You know those young student couples, according to Vivace, would have the wishful thinking of bypassing such monitoring by turning off the lights. Such immature behaviors are certainly useless in front of their experienced wardens. “It’s kind of funny.” Said Vivace, “they would shout, ‘you think I don’t know what you’re up to in there? Stop wasting your life and go back to practice!’”

*Orchestra:* I guess those security cameras are believed to be what sustains the quality of CCCM and guarantee their students’ unconquerable musical techniques over the years.

*Solo:* I like your thinking. But yeah, CCMC together with whose security cameras are where Vivace has been *from*. From her starting point, all she has learned is Lang Lang practiced 14 hours per day.

*Orchestra:* Of course, there is no way to avoid mentioning Lang Lang in the context.

*Solo:* Because he is an icon, a national hero, and an inspirational role model whose success is what thousands and millions of Chinese parents want their kids to copy/paste. We all grew up listening to his stories about how his father standing outside the studio taking lesson notes in snowy days; how he started winning global competitions at the age of 11 and how he totally blew the judges away in the International Tchaikovsky Competition for Young Musicians at the age of 13. He is the Chinese version of Van Cliburn... I think he even has two honorary doctoral degrees.

*Orchestra:* So...14 hours per day, huh?

*Solo:* No kidding. And you know what? The fact is that you are not Lang Lang. You do not have even half of his talent, so you should probably at least practice 24 hours per day to match him.

*Orchestra:* Fair enough...I guess?

*Solo:* What Vivace also learned prior to her journey is that winning one of the International Competitions means everything. She said, “Everybody tells you that you should do whatever it takes to win a competition; nobody tells you the purpose and most importantly, what happens after your winning a competition. You will take for granted that everything will be pre-prepared for you once you are the winner – concerts will be scheduled; companies will sign you; and even teaching positions will be waiting.”

*Orchestra:* Unfortunately, that is just not the case.

*Solo:* Such pre-existing practicing style and mindset regarding professional development, according to Vivace, have shocked almost all the music students from similar learning backgrounds, either mainland China, Taiwan, or Korea once they start their cross-national journey. “Language is just one small element. The real problem is that none of us knows how to build connections, promote ourselves, and even *lose* in a competition.”

She was right. When all your training backgrounds stress on winning, you do not know how to handle losing.

“It is through the interactions with the local kids that I gradually become less clueless.” Said Vivace, “You know Evan, right? I still remember how surprised I was when I saw him posting his professional information outside random restaurants during my first semester here.”

Evan's self-promoting activities were enlightening for Vivace. Since then, Vivace pushed herself to break out her comfort zone and build positive connections with various churches, hospitals and community centers where pianists might be needed. She transforms gradually and fits into this capitalistic new environment, and accommodates the new thinking mode and ideology. The definition of a good pianist is no longer someone who figuratively spends 24 hours a day in the practice room and wins every major competition without any purpose, but someone who knows how to seek opportunities for self-promoting; who realizes that winning a competition is just the beginning, and it is up to you to build more connections with agencies, record companies and schools for potential teaching positions; and who understands that losing in a competition is not the end of world.

*Orchestra:* Exactly. The jury's preferences maybe one thing. You just never know who happens to be sitting down there in the audience likes your performance, and happens to have a say in institutions, agencies, or mass media.

*Solo:* Seriously I really like your pragmatic thinking.

*Orchestra:* I know you are not a fan of pragmatism. But you might turn into one pragmatist yourself someday.

*Solo:* You never know.

*Orchestra:* So who is this Evan guy?

*Solo:* Oh, Evan. I personally know him prior to this project for some reason, but got to know him better after I did those mini-interviews for Vivace's story. Evan is not a tall guy, but when he is on the stage, he performs like he is seven-feet tall and owns the entire universe. When he is playing Beethoven's 5th Piano Concerto ("Emperor"), he makes you feel that he is truly the one and only *Emperor* – simply sensational.

Watching him perform is both enjoyable and torturing. He kept making me feel how small I am and there were moments I even thought to myself, that a female pianist like myself could never be that expressive given my physical condition.

*Orchestra:* Come again?

*Solo:* You heard me. And then I wanted to kill myself for thinking that way, followed by a series of struggles both as a nascent feminist researcher and as a former professional pianist knowing clearly my personal limitations.

*Orchestra:* Just get to your point.

*Solo:* We will get there.

If Evan is one of the reasons why Vivace started to adapt to the market, Mr. GA is the only reason why Vivace stopped feeling guilty for sitting herself in the practice room less than 14 hours a day.

“You know where I am from, and understand my default mode. I believed deeply that being a pianist is all about repetitions and isolated practices until Mr. GA dragged me out of my practice room.” Said Vivace.

One day, Mr. GA knocked at Vivace’s practice room door, telling her that she has been working on the same measurement without making any progress for over half an hour. He told Vivace that such practice was meaningless, even harmful since she had been reinforcing the errors. He then suggested Vivace come out and enjoy the nice weather, listen to others’ performances or just watch an inspirational movie.

After that day, Vivace goes to her practice room with a pocket notebook and a timer, per Mr. GA’s requirement. Mr. GA required her to keep a log of her practice and set the timer for ten minutes for each section. He said that she needed to be clearer about her practicing purposes, and keep tracks of her progression. Vivace reflected that practice with her notebook and timer became a milestone in her career. She finally realized that there was a different world outside mere repetition. What Mr. GA taught her was various forms of practice, either inside or outside the practice room.

“He would give me a list of readings as well as films, all categorized into different genres and themes. When I was learning Brahms, Beethoven or Bach, I would at the same time read the history during the time the piece was written or background stories of the composer. So now whenever I found lost in the practice room, I will just go out for a walk or go back home, listening to different recordings, finishing some readings, or recording my own performance and looking for flaws from a different angle.”

The result was that, even though Vivace had spent less time in the actual practice room, she was gradually transforming from being a piano learner to a real pianist. She said, “it feels like I am now able to see things that were once not there.”

And then Vivace shared another episode with me.

Mr. GA visited CCCM, where Vivace went in China a few years ago to give master classes. There he encountered a 14-year-old young pianist who had achieved the technical culmination of the piano art while was at the same time completely clueless in musicality. For example, when she finished playing her almost flawless *The Well-Tempered Clavier* (Bach), Mr. GA asked if she had listened to the versions played on a harpsichord. The poor little girl looked back at him, and asked, “What is a *harpsichord*, sir?”

Mr. GA, later on, told Vivace that seeing such a talented yet totally lost kid made him feel deeply frustrated inside.

Hearing the story, Vivace told Mr. GA for the first time that she was once lost too. But because of him, she found her way. And she felt so lucky.

Mr. GA then said something Vivace would never forget,

“If you believe what I have said or done was helpful, then I hope you could also help your students find their way one day. Being a musician is cool, but being a music teacher is great in a way that the spirit of this beautiful form of art blooms forever and is conveyed from generations to generations.”

*Orchestra:* Beautiful.

*Solo:* I know, right?

*Orchestra:* Based on what I am hearing, is it safe to say that this Hello Kitty Vivace (this name is really growing on me) is one of those who acculturated successfully into the Western society?

*Solo:* The combination of “acculturation” and “successful” in your sentence is making me feel a bit uncomfortable here, but we will get there. Before that, let us talk about something else, say, her identification.

*Orchestra:* OK. Where would you want to start?

*Solo:* I asked Vivace to think of any words, phrases, or sentences as her own identifiers.

*Orchestra:* What did she say?

*Solo:* “Treated by the combination of Chinese traditional acupuncture and Western medicine to achieve better results”...

*Orchestra:* So musicians are patients...?

*Solo:* You know, one of the greatest female cellists, Jacqueline Du Pre did once say, “music lifts you out of yourself into a delirious place.” So yeah, musicians can be demented, sometimes.

*Orchestra:* Exactly what is this combination of Chinese and Western medicine from an East Asian international traveler’s view?

*Solo:* From her point of view, Asian kids are likable. However, because of the different ideological things of two cultures that have cultivated students' different ways of thinking, Asians, or should I say, *minoritized* Asian students are less purposeful (-in a pragmatic sense) compared to the dominant student groups. She perceived the cultural collision as something positive, as students are exposed to quite the opposite ideologies so that they can reflect upon their advantages and disadvantages. She did stress though that such collision made the teaching and learning interactions harder. Either the teacher or the student should compromise more in their relationships to find an equilibrium of what the market demands and the cultivation of professionalism needs.

*Orchestra:* Has Vivace found the equilibrium among being a female musician, an Asian, and a global traveler?

*Solo:* First of all, Vivace did not believe in any gender inequity in the music world. "We show them what we have, and let the capability talk" is what she believes. Although she recognizes certain boundaries between classical musicians' professionalism and the entertaining requests from the music industry nowadays, she did not necessarily perceive those boundaries as something negative. Moreover, Vivace is not refusing any potential relationships. She had been waiting for her Mr. Right by the time we had our second conversation and was looking forward to being a wife and a mom in the future.

*Orchestra:* To find the balance between professionalism and career development, and among roles of being an East Asian female musician, an international traveler, a wife, and a mom... Did you share with her what being a wife and a mom means to you, on top of being a musician?

*Solo:* Let us just wait for her to find out the meanings for herself.

*Orchestra:* There are a lot of balances to find.

*Solo:* She would probably say, we all have a lot of balances to find. I am just one of them *all*. She keeps a notebook full of Mr. GA's words with her wherever she goes as an amulet. What Mr. GA has conveyed to her is the unparalleled love towards the piano art, and a strong belief that she will one day helping many more lost kids on their way of pursuing music art despite all the social boundaries and obstacles.

## Capriccio

*Solo:* Let me introduce you to another outstanding pianist, Capriccio.

*Orchestra:* Who is Capriccio?

*Solo:* Technically, Capriccio is from the same city where I am originally from — Shanghai, China, the most beautiful and exciting city in the world.

*Orchestra:* Totally biased.

*Solo:* Could not care less, but let me paraphrase. Shanghai is the most beautiful and exciting city in the world — as long as it stops getting too New Yorky, and stops mimicking educational privatization and adopting neoliberalism, though unfortunately, the whole country is fairly good at mimicking stuff from so-called developed countries.

Anyway, just like myself, Capriccio takes a lot of pride in her hometown though she had to leave it behind in pursuing her music dream at a very young age, and became a U.S. Citizen through naturalization ten years after she first set foot onto this land, and forfeited her original citizenship.

Paradoxically, she said that deep inside she still feels closer to the Chinese culture. She requested that we communicate in Chinese and naturally switched to Shanghai dialect from time to time throughout our conversation. She could not stand the relentless weather on the East Coast where she lives and most classical music agencies are based, and dreamt of moving to the West

coast one day where “Chinese foods are genuine, and the weather is much more amicable for a Shanghainese”.

*Orchestra:* I guess more agencies means more opportunities for career development. So how did she start her piano career and decided to travel to the west?

*Solo:* Capriccio’s parents bought their daughter her first electronic keyboard in luring this little girl’s musical interest when she was 3. They were not, or at least they said that they were not planning to cultivate a professional female pianist, to begin with, and have never required daily practicing longer than 6 hours — just to be clear, daily practice less than 6 hours equals “we are not serious, and we are not cultivating a professional pianist” from my cultural understanding.

*Orchestra:* Whatever you say.

*Solo:* Capriccio did enjoy her keyboard a lot, thanks to the easiness of daily practice, and the excitement and joy through attending various amateurs’ contests. After she won her yet another trophy, one of the judges finally approached her parents and seriously suggested them to get serious about their daughter’s unlimited music potential. Thanks to that judge’s seriousness and Lang Lang’s appealing, poisonous and contagious success story...

*Orchestra:* Here we go again...the inevitable cultural icon.

*Solo:* ...her parents finally got serious, and decided to give it a shot – Capriccio’s mother resigned her job, and accompanied her middle school girl to the land of promise, the almighty United States.

Unsurprisingly, the little girl wowed all the professors at the audition and was admitted into Curtis Institute of Music, the exact school where Lang Lang’s legendary journey begins in the Western world.

What do I know about Curtis? Firstly, this institute does not come with a graduate school. According to their rationale, students of Curtis should already be internationally famous before even thinking about wasting their lives at graduate schools. And secondly, almost every Chinese student’s parent believe that her/his kid is the next Lang Lang. Outside each studio, one after another future Lang Lang’s parents are standing there taking notes and making plans, snowy days or not.

*Orchestra:* What does their plan look like?

*Solo:* Step 1, practice. Step 2, win a kick-ass competition. Step 3, be successful.

*Orchestra:* Why do I even bother asking.

*Solo:* Technically other than winning a competition, there is another route to becoming successful, known as,

Step 1, become an understudy. Step 2, curse the featuring performer so that s/he would get sick right before the concert. Step 3, take her/his place and perform a kick-ass performance. And step 4, be successful.

Since there is one more step involved in this route, such route is less favored among future Langs' parents. Such route is still feasible though, and we will get to it later. But now, let us discuss the former route first.

Realistically, "The sad truth of all art contests is that there is never a standardized rubric, and that means they are never really *fair*. Frankly, it's all just about each judge's preference, and how they eventually decide to compromise among the entire jury." said Capriccio.

*Orchestra*: Pessimistic indeed, though I cannot argue with it.

*Solo*: If you are looking for fair and square, watch the athletics events instead. Preferences and prejudices are simply inevitable in art contests. The reason why Lang Lang's success story is both cheerful and poisonous is that his experiences are realistically unreplicable, yet have provided so many Asian students just enough hope to travel to a whole new land.

*Orchestra*: How does Capriccio perceive this whole new land then?

*Solo*: Like many international travelers, she also enjoyed a sweet period of honeymoon with it, until some of her professors started to express pre-conceived ideas publicly. Capriccio said that some professors still believe that Chinese students know nothing about chamber music. She laughed about it, and said, "This could be the case for some of the newcomers, but they should not take it for granted. And besides, how hard can chamber music be when you are already such a well-established performer?"

*Orchestra:* I do not know much about Zen theory, but from what I am hearing, this “already well-established” mindset could potentially hurt her professional development, especially in forming a harmonious and healthy mentor-mentee relationship.

*Solo:* I think you are right about the humble attitude in professional development. And I think the Chinese idiom you were thinking about is *Moon waxes only to wane, and water surges only to overflow*. However, meanwhile, I also understand what confidence or even pride means to a professional performer. You do not do solo, so you probably have not yet had such an experience of feeling the *ultimate loneliness*. Sitting there alone on the stage – however gigantic the grand piano in front of me was – all I can feel before hitting the first note were loneliness and helplessness. I cannot imagine how any solo performer could survive without a strong will and high self-esteem.

But again, you were totally right about forming a harmonious and healthy mentor-mentee relationship, and as a matter of fact, the relationships between Capriccio and her mentors throughout her school years have always been somehow complicated.

Despite Curtis’ no Graduate Studies policy, getting into Curtis does not necessarily guarantee your successful career. Capriccio described her piano teacher at Curtis as “sick,”

“At first I thought that he saw something special in me and had his plan for my career development because he did not allow me to participate in any competitions. He said, ‘Oh you are still young and immature, the most important task for you at this phase is focusing on the practice.’” Said Capriccio.

*Orchestra:* I get that she is frustrated because apparently according to these future Langs’ ideology, taking part in competitions is the most efficient way for self-promotion; but I think her

teacher also has a point. She should not chase fame so eagerly and forget the vital role of being a student.

*Solo:* ...You know what, I am currently in a schizophrenic status due to this paradoxical dynamic.

So let me tell you the realistic truth and the not-so-realistic truth in the music industry, and I hope you will not be offended.

If you ask me in my former-pianist-who-barely-practice-now-and-thinks-she-is-doing-some-great-research mode, I would probably say you are right. I just do not understand why winning is so important. There is no winning or losing in the music art. The moment you start to think about winning, you have lost already.

However, if you ask me in my musician's mode, I would bear no more and start yelling at you, "Are you out of your mind? Classical musicians are also humans, and they need jobs to live, OK?" The only reason you belittle those who value competition results and wait for chances to perform in front of the judges and a big group of audience is that you are not a desperate classical music major student.

*Orchestra:* Somehow it is fun watching the schizophrenic you entangled by paradoxes...but I will just keep my mouth shut and let you finish the story.

*Solo:* Capriccio complained about how she was forced to attend competitions secretly with no supervisory support. "He would find out eventually, and would then scold me for the next whole week."

Capriccio thought about finding herself another mentor, but such action could incur potential bad influences because “It’s a small circle. People will perceive you as a traitor if they find out you have once betrayed your teacher and converted to another school.”

What made Capriccio finally made the hard decision and tried to transfer to the head of the Pre-college Department at one of the best conservatories in the country, was her potential contract with Columbia Records (Sony Music) which went awry. “Their agent heard my rehearsal and loved me. The offered to sign me and everything went smoothly until he found out and totally went mad.” Her teacher called off the contract and finally infuriated her.

*Orchestra:* Columbia Records...is a decent company.

*Solo:* Before I was able to say something expressing my feelings, Capriccio paused, and sighed, “Well, so much for him. It’s been a while, and I appreciate that he’s willing to teach me for so many years. He passed away a couple of years ago in the same way of Jose Feghali, you know...not the most honorable way, so I don’t want to @^~#\$\$%&!\*...”

*Orchestra:* Hello...?

*Solo:* I heard Jose’s name, and I heard “not honorable” right after his name, and then I practically lost my hearing and could no longer follow any of her words for the next few minutes.

Sometimes people do not realize how unreasonably harsh they are when they comment on experiences they do not necessarily share. I wish I could have been a better listener and noticed Jose’s condition earlier. I should have realized his depressive tendency. Jose accidentally hurt his wrist while picking up his luggage at Shanghai Pudong airport, and did not performed as

well as he had wished. He blamed himself so badly and did not even try to explain anything reading some of the negative comments. Why did I and how could I miss so many signs...?

Jose Feghali was a great artist, a perfect friend and mentor, and one of the most honorable persons who I know.

Remember that I promised that I would tell what happened to Mr. GA in Vivace's story?

Yes, he also suffered from depression for decades, and whom I believe is also singing in the heaven, suffering no more pain.

*Orchestra:* Take your time and let me know whenever your hearing recovers.

*Solo:* You are impossible.

*Orchestra:* Is that all of Capriccio's years at Curtis?

*Solo:* Actually, no. Capriccio said, "In retrospect, I don't think I ever had the luck of gaining something from competitions. My teacher practically hid me in his small studio and got mad at me each time I expressed my willingness to compete. He thought us Chinese students as full of potential yet too eager for quick success. When I proposed to follow another mentor instead since I saw no future at his studio, however, he did everything he could to keep me. Honestly, I've been having trouble understanding him although I've done everything I could to understand him. That being said, I did get something very important from Curtis."

She then told me how forming a good long-term relationship with a local community accelerated her naturalization process.

“I voluntarily performed a lot at their schools, hospitals, and churches, and mayor wrote a passionate reference letter supporting my petition.”

Despite the fact that Capriccio believes deeply in her Chinese identity, she greatly values her U.S. citizenship. “It is just so hard to get a green card for a foreigner in the 90s, you know. And I got mine in no time. It’s a lot more convenient when you have the permanent residency if you have decided to build your career and make a living here.”

*Orchestra:* Another dilemma, but I think somehow I understand her situation.

*Solo:* Since then whenever Capriccio competes, she competes as an American. Years later, she started her doctoral study in another private institution referred by her second mentor.

*Orchestra:* Why not just study at her second mentor’s institution?

*Solo:* Long story short, Capriccio wanted a doctorate whereas she could only get into the Artist Diploma, a non-degree program at her second mentor’s institution. So she transferred to a less competitive school, where according to Capriccio, Asian students practically owned the piano division. “We call piano division ‘Ping Pong division’. It’s basically a competition among Chinese students within the school.”

I know she exaggerated a little bit as I personally know quite a few wonderful piano major students from European and other Asian countries in that school, but Chinese students are indeed well prepared regarding their skills and techniques, thus easily made them one of the top tiers in any music institutions across the country.

*Orchestra:* I am wondering how the string department is like.

*Solo:* That my friend, according to Brillante, another featured musician in this study, is ruled by Korean Americans.

*Orchestra:* I hear a new form of segregations here.

*Solo:* Yes that could be personal as I did not hear any similar comments from the rest of the musicians. Anyway, we will get to Brillante soon.

Now back to Capriccio. I asked Capriccio why it had to be a doctoral program, Capriccio said,

“Don’t you see? There’s no job position out there for classical musicians, especially pianists.”

You cannot even audition for any symphonic orchestra, because there is just no such thing as a piano in an orchestra. Getting an ultimate academic degree at least gives you some chances to find a teaching position.

What she said reminds me a conversation I overheard years ago when two music critics were commenting on Jose Feghali’s career development. One said that for someone who owns a title as the grand winner of Van Cliburn, Feghali’s professional development seems a bit disappointing. While the other disagreed and said that getting a teaching position at a higher educational institution is the best thing a professional pianist could wind up with, as compared to those music agencies, the platforms any colleges could provide are a lot more long-lasting and promising whether it is performance, teaching or doing research that you prefer.

However, that has brought us another issue.

As higher educational positions are rather limited, the chance for a young female classical pianist such as Capriccio to find a permanent teaching spot is not that high.

“Females are not favored in the job market. People tend to remember those male pianists even if you are just as good as them. See Clara, or *the other* Mozart.” Said Capriccio.

Clara Schumann (1819-1896), one of the most distinguished composers and pianists in the Romantic era. Despite her great achievements, most people, according to Capriccio, “only recognize her as Robert Schumann’s wife.”

Similarly, when speaking of Mozart, people naturally think of the image of the music prodigy, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and very few would recall this young prodigy’s own inspirational idol, his elder sister, Marianne “Nannerl” Mozart.

People like Clara and Marianne lived under the shadow of someone else. Some of them coped well with the patriarchal society, while some of them collapsed in the most tragic way.

That is when we both recalled Vadym’s wife.

Sofya Tsygankova, the estranged wife of 2013 Van Cliburn Piano Competition winner, Vadym Kholodenko, was charged with capital murder after her two daughters’ bodies were found.

“She could have been a top-class pianist herself.” Said Capriccio, “She sacrificed her career and was buried by her duties as the wife of another pianist, and a mother of a young kid and a baby.”

The marriage between Sofya and Vadym lasted for five years until Vadym filed divorce petition on the ground of “a discord or conflict of personalities.”

Sofya collapsed. The next thing the world knows is that her daughters’ bodies were found having suffered from “homicide violence”; while herself severely injured due to self-inflicted stab wounds in North Texas.

“I don’t know...” Said Capriccio, “after all these years even I myself started to believe that physically I am indeed not as good as those male pianists.”

*Orchestra:* Somehow this sounds familiar to me. Did you not say something similar when commenting on Evan’s performance?

*Solo:* Your memory serves you well.

I asked Capriccio if there is any way to bypass the gender biases and survive the music industry, she said, “I think so. As long as you are willing to consider your gender as a selling point, like Yuja Wang.”

Remember *the second route* to becoming successful? Although it involves a fourth step, female pianist Yuja Wang has tested its feasibility by debuted in North America in 2005 at Ottawa, Canada under the baton of Pinchas Zukerman, replacing Radu Lupu.

“Yuja is...interesting. She has a bazaar taste in almost everything. And I think good kids like us just can’t easily copy her fashion style.” Said Capriccio.

*Orchestra:* Are you suggesting that Yuja is not a good kid?

*Solo:* I am not suggesting anything.

## **Cantabile**

*Solo:* Claude, my 2-year-old little buddy, was testing the stability of my piano as well as the soundproofing level of our condo again as a daily exercise, which made me wonder if it is time for me to find him a real piano teacher.

*Orchestra:* No.

*Solo:* Just as I started to look through my contacts, a name popped into my head – Cantabile.

*Orchestra:* I thought I said no...never mind. Who is Cantabile?

*Solo:* Cantabile is a half Korean, half British pianist who grew up in the Southern U.S.

By the time I first came to know her, she has earned two master's degrees – one from a music institution in London, U.K., and the other from one of the biggest state universities in the U.S., and have just started her doctoral study at a private institution thirty minutes away from where she grew up.

The reason why I thought of her first is probably that she has already set up a fairly large piano studio where students from any diverse backgrounds are welcomed.

*Orchestra:* Is Cantabile's doctoral study mainly focusing on piano pedagogy as well then?

*Solo:* Interestingly, no. She is still focusing on performance as according to her mentor, performance majors are more likely to find a higher educational teaching position compared to

pedagogy majors as their professional qualities are considered significantly higher. Unlike Capriccio, however, Cantabile does not care much about competitions or public performances. Besides her personal piano studio, she is very famous for her special techniques in accompaniment and her familiarity towards a variety of vocalists' and string soloists' repertoire in the local area. Thus apart from her own school work, accompanying and tutoring were her main focuses by the time I first met her.

*Orchestra:* Every soloist wants to marry a piano accompanist.

*Solo:* From time to time, yes – especially right before her/his term finals and recitals.

Speaking of which, Cantabile complained about receiving too many last minute accompanying requests in our conversation.

“It happens all the time...at least once every two weeks.” Said Cantabile.

She continued to give me an example of how certain organization contacted her all of a sudden and told her to accompany their solo ensemble, followed by an email with a list of at least 25 music pieces.

“They don't even ask me my schedule or if I'd want to...I don't want to pick up 25 things and drive five hours...” Said Cantabile, hopelessly.

Similar to such last-minute requests, Cantabile is also forced to cope with all kinds of last-minute music sheets. When she kindly agreed to do the accompaniment job, she certainly would hope to receive her part of the music sheet sooner rather than later. However, often times those soloists prefer to wait until the very last hour before handing over her the music.

They are probably expecting a wonder girl who can sight read everything.

*Orchestra:* You mentioned that she is famous for her remarkably large repertoire and her accompanying skills, and that is probably why people believe she can deal with last-minute music or even sight reading.

*Solo:* Yes, and that is the most interesting part. Not only some soloists believed so deeply, some of Cantabile's professors – predominantly white – also believed in her infinite potential and attributed her capabilities to her racial background.

When Cantabile is working on something, some of her professors will say, "I know it's pretty hard, but you're Asian you can do it." Always those words – you are Asian; you can do it.

Although Cantabile said that she has gotten used to such requests and remarks after a while, she still sounded frustrated to me, "I'm good at sight-reading not because I'm Asian, but because I practiced a lot. I can do it not because I'm Asian, but I spent time and effort practicing it..."

Unfortunately, the "Asian-ness" of Cantabile has surpassed other qualities she possesses under some of her professors' ideology.

In retrospect, Cantabile recalled countless stereotypical moments when she was a little girl. People made assumptions before having a chance to really know her. "They're like 'Oh yeah you are Korean. Of course you play the piano and are good at mathematics'. I wish I could tell them that there's zero correlation." Said Cantabile.

Nobody is naturally good at something. As a young girl, Cantabile was confused why people cannot see such a clear fact - the only reason she became good at playing the piano was that she was practicing while most of her young schoolmates were out there playing.

“Things are harder when you’re younger. You don’t understand why people just don’t understand.” Said Cantabile.

“Does it get easier when you get older? Do people understand better?” I asked.

“I don’t know... Either they understand better, or I’ve gradually gotten used to it.”

What complicates the situation is that sometimes her friends find her genetically hard to pin down. “People likes to stereotyping, perhaps because that makes them feel superior.”

A group of Cantabile’s friends was commenting on Asian people’s “slanted eyes”, right in front of her. It took these friends quite a while to realize the awkwardness before apologizing to her, saying “Oh I’m sorry, I didn’t realize you are also half Asian...”

Meanwhile, on the flip side, she is not *minoritized* enough to convince some of her non-white peers that she earned her reputation through hardworking. “I also get comments like, ‘well you’re white, so you clearly enjoy more privileges...’”

Stuck in the middle of such double-targeted condition, Cantabile chooses to “take it easy” and “brush them off,” “I’m a very easy-going person. I’m not good at confrontations...” Said Cantabile.

*Orchestra:* I guess she did not get a chance to tell people the zero correlation between being an Asian and being good at mathematics or musical instruments while she was younger, and eventually grew up into an easy-going person who lacks the interests in any confrontations. What does this duo identity regarding her racial background mean to Cantabile herself then?

*Solo:* Remember those demographic questions they ask when you apply to schools? Cantabile said that she always clicked both “Asian” and “Caucasian.” However, deep down she feels closer to Korean culture from her mother’s side. According to Cantabile, her mother’s family stays closer compared to her father’s, so that she maintains a stronger relationship bond with all the Asian relatives, though she has never actually lived in Korea.

When Cantabile first joined the master program in one of the state universities in the U.S., she was immediately recognized and included into the school’s Korean students’ organization. Cantabile recalled, “those older girls were like mama birds! They would approach and said, ‘you’re Korean, right? Stay away from those bad influences and come join our organization!’”

I am not sure what bad influences those mama birds are referring to, but Cantabile said it felt really nice to be included and find belongings.

Moreover, family bond is not the only reason that Cantabile feels closer to the Asian culture. According to Cantabile, Asians have very strict work ethics. She prefers to teach Asian students in her own studio due to their humble manners and strict discipline. “Asian parents take the classes more seriously, generally speaking,” Cantabile comments, “and that makes my job a lot easier.” She commented that sometimes she could not really say what she wants to say to the western students – nothing seriously except for “yeah you’re doing really good,” or “I’m glad you’re having a good time.”

Compared to this playful attitude, her Asian students would receive comments a lot more serious if they failed to reach her expectations. Cantabile said that most of the Asian parents not only allow, but even encourage her to act strictly and set clear boundaries. “I’ll call on the kids if

they didn't do well, and said directly, 'it doesn't seem like you've practiced. What were you doing?'"

*Orchestra:* Tiger parents...

*Solo:* I kind of had the feeling that you would bring up this topic. The fact is that this time, Cantabile mentioned the *Tiger Mom* book first before I had a chance. She asked if I had read the book, and said regretfully that it did not come with a Korean translated version. She said she wishes her mother could read it. I am assuming she saw her mother from time and time while reading the book. She did seem happy talking about the topic and perceive the idea "tiger mom" as positive and encouraging.

*Orchestra:* Will Cantabile become a tiger mom herself in the future?

*Solo:* Speaking of which, Cantabile was very certain that she would not get married or have any baby before graduating from her current doctoral program.

I, as usual, asked her opinions regarding the gender (in)equity in her piano division. Similar to Capriccio, Cantabile admitted that physically females bodies do not correlate well while playing this particular musical instrument. She sometimes feels powerless as her shoulders get tired after a while. But the good thing about her current program is that her piano teacher is very understanding and supportive. "He won't give the girls only Mozart and reserve Brahms just for the boys." Said Cantabile.

In terms of her institution, on the other hand, faculties are predominantly white males, while female doctoral candidates are clearly also the minority.

Once you have more guys than girls in the DMA (Doctor of Music Arts) programs, you will certainly see fewer females in faculty positions. In addition, according to Cantabile, some girls would start and quit in the middle of the doctoral program due to inevitable family obligations if they got married or were having babies. Such family obligations, however, do not affect male candidate. “They can still focus on their study and graduate without worrying about their pregnant and nursing wives,” Cantabile stated in our first meeting three years ago, and stressed, “I’m not going to have any babies before getting my degree.”

*Orchestra:* What did you say?

*Solo:* I said, “Me, too.”

*Orchestra:* And remind me, where does this Mr. Claude come from?

*Solo:* Don’t ask.

## **Brillante**

*Solo:* What Brillante, a “1.5-generation” Korean American violinist reminded me was the images of those *elite* Korean Americans in Lee’s (2002) book – well-disciplined, punctual and deeply devoted to her profession. However, I probably should not feed you too many subjective descriptors of her, so let us just focus on what she has said for now.

Brillante is a Korean-American violinist. By the time we first met, she was in the last semester of her doctoral study. When I first approached her in introducing this research project, Brillante was both supportive and skeptical. She was the only one who requested that I sent over all the relative documents including consent forms and the interview protocol prior to her participating this study. Although I had heard so many good things about Brillante from the people who connected me to her, and would very much hope that she could be part of the study, I was a little bit hesitated about the interview protocol part due to some of the languages involved. I certainly would not hope that I unintentionally lead any participants through terms such as “model minority,” or self-reminders under topics of gender issues and boundary-crossing travel experiences. So I modified my protocol by deleting some of the keywords that could potentially (mis)lead her thinking and responses before sending the documents over. An hour later, I got an email reply from Brillante confirming her willingness to join this study.

*Orchestra:* I have a question, what is the definition of this “1.5 generation” Korean American?

*Solo:* Brillante moved from Korea to Silicon Valley, California with her family at the age of two, and have spent most of her childhood in the West Coast area. Thus technically, she is a first-generation immigrant. However, she was immersed in the Western culture ever since she has

memory, so 1.5-generation Korean American is how she self-identified at the beginning of our conversation.

Brillante recalled that life on the South Coast has always been diverse. Considering the large number of Asian immigrants –either from East Asian or India – working in the computer science and technology at Silicon Valley, people tend not to over-react while encountering another Asian American in their community. However, not get over-reacted does not necessarily mean that Asians do not experience stereotypes. As a matter of fact, Brillante has gotten used to various stereotypes people placed on Korean Americans - “I’ve heard it throughout my career, with regard to music; with regard to mathematics. Because Koreans tend to be pretty good in techniques as well as musicality and artistry, they usually stereotype us as very passionate. Those things I have heard...but it hasn’t been a negative thing.”

*Orchestra:* Somehow it sounds to me that she takes a lot of pride in the stereotypes?

*Solo:* For me, it sounds more like she takes a lot of pride in the professionalism of Korean American classical musicians. The bottom line is, during the first twenty minutes of our conversation, she did not express any negative feeling towards her living status, until I accidentally brought up the topic of “traveling.”

Brillante said that both music and academic settings tend to be more inclusive. As long as she was under the shelter of music, she does not feel any dissonance. According to her, when musicians collaborate, they often time value the compatibility of each other’s work ethics more so than racial or cultural backgrounds. Only when she is out of such shelter does she sense inharmonious nuances – and because musicians constantly travel, either for school, for

competitions, or for performances, it is almost impossible for them to hide under any shelters for good.

“When I’m not at a music setting or an academic setting, things sometimes tend to get offensive to me.” said Brillante, “I still remember people got called ‘Orientals’ when I first went to college in a South West city years ago. As soon as I step outside of the music building, I become the only Asian from quite a distance. Things have improved over the years but even nowadays, I can sense things. Once in a while, I still notice that when I go into a supermarket, and if I don’t open my mouth and just do shopping silently, people are, frequently enough, not expecting that I can speak English. And when I do open my mouth and sound intelligent and outgoing; when they see that I’m not really shy and quiet, like that kind of stereotyped Asian, they are shocked.”

Travel around has exposed Brillante to multiple situations, and doing grocery silently is definitely not the only situation that bothers her. She then recalled a recent gathering at one of her friends’ home. Invitees are mostly white, and only a small portion of them are professional musicians. “I do feel some of them feeling uncomfortable around me,” Brillante said.

*Orchestra:* If possible, will Brillante choose to stay under the musical shelter for good, just to dodge any potential dissonance?

*Solo:* On the contrary, she loves traveling. In her original words, “I appreciate traveling – it is such a great deal because it constantly reminds me to appreciate our music sphere. It really does.” I guess for Brillante, experiences through traveling across the country reinstates the important “inclusive” and “enlightening” role of practicing music.

*Orchestra:* I see. It makes sense.

*Solo:* In talking about her career pursuit, Brillante would like to balance between teaching and performing. She values teaching violin and music theory as much as she values her own performing career. “Music is international,” said Brillante, “I am enjoying teaching music because I believe the more people learn it, the more culturally open they will be. And that is for the best.”

She also mentioned how inseparable teaching and learning are, “Another reason I love to teach so much is that I love to learn.” From teaching beginner to intermediate and advanced courses, from teaching one-on-one private lessons to college-level lectures, Brillante said that she could always learn something through the teaching-learning interactions.

*Orchestra:* Inside the professional shelter, people communicate in the universal language of music; while once stepped outside, people judge your forever foreignness by assuming you do not speak their default language. That is quite interesting. I am curious, has she ever worked with Asian Americans students?

*Solo:* Yes, and interestingly, according to Brillante, those second-generation Asian American students in her studio are quite the opposite of whatever those Model Minoritized standards suggest. Instead of working proactively, they are “laid-back”; and instead of showing unparalleled talents in music and mathematics while limping in sports, they evenly spread their energy on a bit of everything.

*Orchestra:* No more tiger moms involved?

*Solo:* I guess. Tiger or not, they are less involved in these ABCs' (American-born Chinese, see Mov.1) business in Brillante's studio.

*Orchestra:* Is Brillante OK with their laidback attitude?

*Solo:* Not really, but apart from "feeling strange," she did not do anything to admonish them.

Brillante said that those kids were taking lessons as a hobby; and if they do not progress much they are perfectly fine with it. "For me personally that's kind of strange," Brillante continued to comment, "because if I'm investing my time and money into something, I would want to see, at least some level of, improvement. There should be a minimum requirement for myself."

*Orchestra:* You were right, she does sound like an elite Korean American in Lee (2002)'s study.

*Solo:* For the record, Brillante also compared those ABCs in her studio to other Asian international students that she knows in her current institution. Unlike ABCs, Asian international students (FOB/Fresh off the boat), according to Brillante's observation, tend to mingle more with people from their own racial/ethnic background, and that the level of language proficiency has little to do with such phenomenon. Brillante said, "Language can be a reason, but I would say it's more because of their culture and personalities. The younger an international student is, the more frequently that she/he tends to seek comfort from the culture she/he is more familiar with."

*Orchestra:* Does that mean those more mature Asian international students tend to adjust better to a new culture?

*Solo:* Not according to Brillante. Though older international students do not express home-sick feeling as frequent as the younger ones and mingle well both with the local students and people of their own culture, the – direct quote – “level of assimilation” can never be as good as those younger internationals. Brillante said this is because the older you are, the harder it becomes for you to get rid of your original accent, and, at the same time, the deeper your original cultural identity is rooted.

Personally, I believe the first part of her reasoning can be true since linguistic acquisition is very much like music training in a way that the early you start, the better your potential result will be. However, I am not so sure about the way she justified the second part.

*Orchestra:* You are not sure about how deeply rooted one’s cultural identity is, or you are not so sure about the part that achieving assimilation should be the main purpose of any boundary traveling activities?

*Solo:* You already have your answer. Why bother asking.

*Orchestra:* What about 1.5 generations of herself?

*Solo:* When I first asked her, Brillante said that she definitely mingled more with locals because she was not like any “typical” Asians. But at some point when I asked her again, she admitted that all her closest friends are Asian, although, she stressed, that “they are all very much Westernized”.

*Orchestra:* Why is she so afraid of being a less Westernized Asian?

*Solo:* Just as she said earlier in the supermarket story, she has, subconsciously, connected the image of an Asian American to someone “shy and quiet,” and maybe even “don’t speak the local language.” The more eager she tries to prove her being a well-educated, out-going, and highly assimilated social member, the more she wants to get rid of any stereotyped Asian images by setting boundaries between her – together with anything/anyone around her – and the rest of less Westernized Asian community in general. There is something in her own cultural background that she does not like (Kaplan, 1993), so instead, she turns to a different culture and accommodates enthusiastically to it. From time to time, nostalgia kicks in that draws her towards other Asians. To remediate the conundrum of being caught up in between the emotional needs of Asian cultures and the political superiority of being highly assimilated, the least she can do is to find someone who looks like her while equally Westernized.

Let me tell you something else.

I shared some personal experiences of how I tend to dress nicer and keep my passport reachable in my pocket at any time before heading to the airport just to save myself some troubles with Brillante (Oleksiyenko, cite), and she was very glad that I mentioned that. She commented, “I do feel I’m judged all the time. I do have to work harder to keep a nice appearance.” And she continues,

“But unfortunately, sometimes I go around in public, and I see Asian persons...they are dressing terribly; they are speaking in their own language. They’re doing something socially not

really the best thing. It makes me feel, wow, no wonder people treat me that way because they must have had experiences with that...so that they look down on Asians.”

*Orchestra:* Was she seriously ashamed by some random people in public, Asian or not, thus believed that her being targeted in a racist way as justifiable?

*Solo:* I believe so. As a result, she blames harshly on other targeted victims and sees herself as not only a witness but also a cultural role model. She said,

“I do feel that we are responsible as a whole. When people see me following the basic etiquette, they are surprised, probably because, you know, they have had experiences that Asians talk loudly in public and speaking in their own languages. Some Asians have certain manner issues, like forget to chew with mouth closed or no talking when their mouths are full...So in that sense, I do want to make sure that I am presentable every time I go out in public. I just feel it’s just best for everybody. It’s more of the right thing to do. Not because I’m trying to bring up the Asian stereotype, it’s for other personal reasons – I personally just want to be a good witness, and a good example.”

*Orchestra:* I see.

## **Dolce**

*Solo:* Amongst all the featured musicians in this performance, Dolce is the only one married and blessed with two children by the time we had our first meeting that, by the way, would have gone deeper had I been a bit more mature at that time.

*Orchestra:* Tell me about that.

*Solo:* She told me if I chose to marry a musician, I must know it meant no financial security, and I needed to know what it takes to be a Chinese wife. She said I did not have a child yet, but I would know how things could get terrible when I got home tired, yet still needed to take care of the child. She said there would be many, many choices ahead of me. Thus I needed to think things through and through, and make my own decisions; and once I made my decisions, I should not look back...

In retrospect, I thought I fully understood her. However, what she said to me during our very first meeting means so much more now. How fascinating. Think about this – I have been collecting inspirations from various musicians while preparing on and off for this performance for, let us see, almost three years. And that was the first time I realized how my life had changed dramatically. I was Claude-less, very creative, and happily – at least so I thought – married to a musician. Now, I am Claude's mom 24/7, very single, and trying hard not to be too boring.

*Orchestra:* Yeah... that is indeed an enticing movie trailer, but you will have to be a whole lot more specific about, well, everything. Try starting from the very beginning.

*Solo:* Fair enough.

Dolce and I first met in her office. She was born in Taiwan and moved to the U.S. as a middle school girl together with her parents and her younger brother. She started to practice piano at an early age and has won numerous international awards before she graduated with a Doctor of Music Arts degree from one of the best schools of music affiliated to an institution in the American Midwest.

*Orchestra:* Was the degree in performance or pedagogy?

*Solo:* In performance and theory.

*Orchestra:* Is Dolce still enjoying performing as a soloist?

*Solo:* From what I can tell – definitely, but we will come back to that later. I asked how she got her current part-time teaching job in the college, and she told me that she got the position mainly because of her husband who accepted a tenure-track faculty position offer beforehand. The college was looking for a candidate teaching in their prep division where she then started her teaching career. A couple of semesters later, she started to teach theory courses as an adjunct to the music major undergraduate and graduate students.

*Orchestra:* Did she say anything about the music field and being a musician?

*Solo:* Dolce said, as a suggestion to her students – especially those who have an East-Asian background, that they need to know how to push themselves, break the comfort zone, and learn

how to communicate effectively because they have picked this unique business. Without good communicative skills and good personalities, you cannot survive in the business even with superb techniques and incomparable musicality. She also said that she appreciated music deeply because she could just be herself and do everything she wanted to within the field.

*Orchestra:* I understand her statements but exactly where does the “could just be herself” part come from?

*Solo:* Right after we had the conversation about how she got her current teaching position, Dolce told me that gender discrimination in this field is much severer compared to discriminations based on race and ethnicity. She stressed the magnificent “women power” in the field, and said, firmly, that she “could do anything better” than her other half.

“I have been making hard choices at different life phases.” Said Dolce. As a wife of another world-renowned professional musician, a mother of two young children, and a college instructor who takes great pride in her identity as a professional pianist, Dolce sees her own music as her shelter and her last resort where freedom is what she could get.

*Orchestra:* How did she meet, in her words, her other half?

*Solo:* She said they were schoolmates, and went to different graduate schools and dealt with a long-distance relationship for a period. Speaking of which, I did not expect the trajectory of our conversation at all after I asked the same question as you just did, and whatever is included in that part of the conversation explains her comments on making hard choices at different phases.

Dolce said, she started her endeavor in this country at a very high point. She was ambitious, competitive, and undefeatable. Her parents supported her pursuit of music wholeheartedly. “I felt they had the same big goal as I did.” Dolce said, “The told me to go all the way up, and get the highest possible degree.” However, the moment she achieved her big goal also became her moment of the deepest disappointment when she found out the real reason why her parents supported her study so was that they expected her to get the degree in order to marry well. “The degree will add to my resume,” said Dolce, “some valuable leverage for me to marry into some big family.”

I was so saddened by her narrative not only because I felt for her, but also because I could not help but start to relate her story to myself’s. She said, for her father, a girl’s destination is to find a family and be a good wife and mother. Her mother might think otherwise at some point in her own life but has already been placed in that position of being an ideal wife and mother for decades. “My mother had sacrificed herself and devoted all she had to the family when she got married.” Dolce said, “unfortunately unlike her, I wanted to make choices for myself.”

Dolce ignored the matchmaking business her parents had been enthusiastic about and the courting line comprised of doctors, lawyers, and bankers. She chose to stay in a relationship with another musician who, on top of his undesirable profession that almost always comes together with the idea “no financial security,” is a white guy – not even an Asian, let alone a Taiwanese.

*Orchestra:* Not even Chinese?

*Solo:* Not even close.

*Orchestra:* ...That sounds like a domestic revolution.

*Solo:* “A Revolution” is exactly the word Dolce used.

*Orchestra:* I want to ask how having two kids might change the situation, but before that – I am just curious – how did her words upset you in a way that you started to relate to yourself?

*Solo:* My dad used to say, “A married daughter is nothing more than an emptied pail of water.”

What he meant by that was the moment a daughter has been married, she no longer belongs to her parents but should live or die together with her husband and her son. The traditional Japanese culture also believes that the philosophy of women should be altruistic-based. Once a girl is married, there should be no more “me” under any conditions. Interestingly, nowadays, most young Japanese girls still believe that the destination of happiness is marriage.

*Orchestra:* Now I am feeling bad for not letting go of my curiosity.

*Solo:* It is really fine. Not being afraid of reflecting on myself is part of my job description in this performance.

*Orchestra:* Let us talk about the kids then.

*Solo:* Yes, the kids. Dolce’s parents were panicked when they found out Dolce was not planning to marry an ideal husband according to their standards. “They’re worried about the mixed babies... for being not pure at all.” Said Dolce. However, when these supposedly horrifying mixed breeds

actually arrived, Dolce's parents were melted. "It changed everything because it brought out the human quality among everyone," Dolce commented.

*Orchestra:* Does that mean Dolce's parents are now happy with her decisions?

*Solo:* "My parents and I have never been equal." Said Dolce, "They're the kind of Asian parents who placed themselves higher than their children. And whenever you need any help from them, you beg them." Dolce and her husband have encountered countless issues regarding child care. Her husband thought that because of his own parents were not retired yet, Dolce's parents should take the responsibly and watch over their kids from time to time. However, because of Dolce's parents complex, she was quite reluctant to ask for extra help from her parents.

Compared to Dolce's younger brother who has been married to a white girl, "they solved the child care issue a lot easier than me." Dolce laughed and said, "They have a nanny who saves everybody's lives."

*Orchestra:* Cannot Dolce hire a nanny as well?

*Solo:* According to Dolce, that is probably the difference between her and her sister-in-law. She just cannot trust a stranger with her babies. She said, "The truth is that children are always more attached to their mothers. It's impossible to balance things. So I wined up with having no life myself."

*Orchestra:* You mentioned Dolce moved to the United States when she was a middle school girl, right?

*Solo:* Yes. People such as Brillante believe that for a dreamer who traveled to the land at such an early age, s/he should have been assimilated entirely, and should not struggle at simple issues such as to hire or not to hire a nanny. However, the fact is that although Dolce said although she was very proud to be an American citizen, and for most of the times her parents and her international students found her way too “American” - “people used to call me a banana, a very derogatory term, when you deal with such things, you will feel very different from others. It takes extra effort to find where you belong, and it takes time to figure out your own identity and philosophy.” She then continues, “Deep inside I feel very foreign... and for some reason I know I am going to be a foreigner here forever.”

There was a moment I did not know how to respond to her comment, but soon she added, “Asian communities are generally making progress though. More and more of us are purposefully making our voices heard in dealing with derogatory labels. So we will see.”

*Orchestra:* We will see.

## Callbacks

*Solo:* All encounters are serendipitous. Encounters through journeys are accidental and inevitable at the same time. I would prefer to believe that encounters, especially some encounters that leave a touch in the whole picture of my entire value system are more of a reunion, destined and inspirational.

In preparing for this performance, I purposefully and unpurposefully experienced various encounters that bring me closer to not only the five featuring musicians but also diverse music contributors. In reading and understanding our encounters, I revisited some of them in achieving multi-layered sound effects. Before wrapping up the first three movements and discuss research questions – I know you have been waiting long enough – let us talk a little bit about these encounters and revisits. Who do you want to hear first?

*Orchestra:* Hello Kitty Vivace, please.

*Solo:* A couple of months later, Vivace and I met again, together with her homestay guardians – a kind white couple – during her seven years in the Southern US. She visited her homestay parents again after a local concert and was enjoying every single minute of their reunion. Although we had not connected directly in between the first and second meeting, I felt like I knew all the details about her personal and professional lives as I had been following all her social network pages.

*Orchestra:* Sounds a bit creepy, but please go on.

*Solo:* Her guardian parents said to her,

“For the past seven years, we have been thinking of a good way to describe the unique and precious relationship between you and us. We are too old to be your homestay ‘parents’, but are still too young (and a bit reluctant) to be your ‘grandparents.’ You continue to bring surprises to us every day. We are marveled by your talent and kindness. We are thrilled to have the opportunity witnessing how you grow to be a great person and a wonderful young artist. We are simply proud of you. So although we are not sure about who we are exactly to you, we love you wholeheartedly.”

For her guardian parents, Vivace is just Vivace, the one of a kind and their forever homestay baby who struggles with a lot of things but never gives up. She is nothing like anything described in Model Minoritized standards. She is diligent at some point (especially before concerts and final exams) but is clueless at almost all other occasions. She seems to be nice and cool on stage, but God knows how clumsy she is in everyday life. She is delightful and insanely talented. She is curious about many things and possesses a pair of eyes that discovers the slightest beauty in the world.

*Orchestra:* As a young international student, Vivace is beyond any doubt lucky to have had such a heartwarming and supporting homestay experience.

*Solo:* Yes, and she is very grateful for it, just like how she is grateful for having the opportunity working with Mr. GA. She is lucky indeed and is worthy of all the luckiness because of her perseverance and open-heartedness.

*Orchestra:* Anything new in her social media status?

*Solo:* Oh yes. She is in a relationship. The fact is although Vivace was clueless about how getting into a relationship would affect her professional career in our first meeting, she also claimed that she would not deliberately refuse any potential relationship if possible. So here she is, Vivace 2.0 in a relationship.

*Orchestra:* That is all you have got after seven months' stalking?

*Solo:* Actually, I knew it before she changed her status into "in a relationship." Vivace used to share her media recordings quite frequently, until one day, she started to share another young pianist's recordings, a lot more frequent than her own. Till nowadays, they no longer fly solo but fly duets all the time whenever and wherever one of them needs to play a concert. They both have a lot more to encounter and to overcome, but so far, they are treating this musical relationship lovingly and carefully as much as they value their music lives.

*Orchestra:* Sounds harmonious.

*Solo:* Do you still remember the first route to becoming successful as a classical pianist according to Chinese parents' rationale when we were talking about Capriccio?

*Orchestra:* The "Step 1, practice; step 2, win a kick-ass competition; and step 3, be successful" thing?

*Solo:* Yes, that thing. A couple of months later after I first met her, Capriccio was selected as one of the finalists in one of the world's hardest and most famous international piano competitions held once every four years. I thought to myself that, how wonderful, Capriccio was finally able to get rid of the negative impact her previous mentor left on her and achieve her professional dreams.

Before I had a chance to officially congratulate her and her mentor at that time, words came that Capriccio withdrew from the competition for personal reasons and, thus, opened an extra spot for a young Korean pianist who originally did not make the cut.

*Orchestra:* I need time to digest... too much information all at once.

*Solo:* In the next couple of weeks, I heard two completely different versions of stories from Capriccio, and her mentor and her mentor's wife. I had a feeling that I was listening to an audio cassette tape that, after I listened to A-side where they have recorded, say, Haydn's sonata, I turned the tape over only to discover that they recorded Death metal music on B-side. Wait, are you too young to know what a cassette tape is?

*Orchestra:* I am old enough to know how to rewind cassette tapes with a pencil, but that is not important.

*Solo:* Right. So from A-side, an innocent Classical pianist told me that nothing was right and that she did not want to embarrass herself in front of the world. She told me her mentor's wife had a significant boundary issue. "If I compete, I compete to be the champion. I don't want to go there and lose to anybody. I don't have another chance due to the competition's age limit. They just don't understand. I have to win, and nothing else matters. I can't do it by myself without my

mentor's 100% support. And if they're not concentrating enough and are considering things other than the competition itself, I stood no chance."

*Orchestra:* I think I am lost.

*Solo:* I know you are. So here is what I have heard on B-side. Capriccio's mentor's wife told me that Capriccio had bad taste in concert dress. She would "meet with the journalists in her t-shirt and jeans. That doesn't look good in pictures." So the nice lady introduced Capriccio her own tailor so that Capriccio would be better prepared for the stage and the cameras. And after thinking over and over again about the whole misunderstanding situation between Capriccio and her mentor, I believe that was one of the issues that made Capriccio feel that people around her were not 100% concentrating on the competition itself.

*Orchestra:* So...this whole A-side B-side mis-communicative thing is, as a matter of fact, about another concert dress?

*Solo:* An expensive one. Capriccio seems to be getting used to her inter-personal relationships. She said that she was very upset about Columbia Records, but after all these years, she started to believe that she probably had already developed conflicts with this agency due to their divergent beliefs. "I just want to have a little space where I could play my music, and they probably would have promoted me in their best ways."

I asked Capriccio what her plan was like since by the time we met for the last time, she already concluded her final document and got her doctoral degree. She said she was thinking of going back to the city where she first landed in the United States twenty years ago. She seemed

to have a soft spot for that city and said she would be happy as long as she could continue to play the piano. “I don’t care for teaching much. I’m very impatient in front of students...but I will do a bit of teaching if that’s the only I can support myself as a performer.” Capriccio said.

*Orchestra:* She is not the kind of ...I mean, she is a true artist.

*Solo:* What were you trying to say? She is not the kind of obediently stay-away-from-troubles kind of Asian in your mind?

*Orchestra:* Unh uh.

*Solo:* My apologies. I did not mean to put words in your mouth. Capriccio has many fans, by the way. One of the audiences who happened to have heard her performance during the preliminary round in that competition in question typed a long email to her in supporting her career. Direct quote from that nice gentleman’s email, “I would be very disappointed by the competition and will never ever be a fan of the competition if they don’t select you as one of the finalists this time due to any stupid political reasons.”

*Orchestra:* It is always a good thing to be recognized and reminded that you have supporters who are able to read the political contexts, and still appreciate what you do.

*Solo:* Indeed. Well, I am ready to move on. Remember Cantabile, the girl who did not want family prior to getting her degree?

*Orchestra:* Of course. What about her?

*Solo:* She got married recently.

*Orchestra:* ...

*Solo:* She seemed to be very happy and believed that she was the luckiest girl in the world.

Meanwhile, her husband and her husband's family were equally thrilled and believed they were the lucky ones. She was happy; he was happy; parents were happy; and even her students in her private studio were very happy. It was a happy story.

*Orchestra:* I am sure it was, but what about not having family...never mind. Forget about it.

*Solo:* You are funny. I asked Cantabile if there were any change of plans regarding her study and career development given the fact that she was now married, and she said that she had decided to hold off the babies till graduation. She would stay longer at home by cutting off her performing and accompaniment hours. She would focus more on her teaching career, and would no longer accept late night rehearsal requests so that she could spend more time with her significant half.

*Orchestra:* Sounds like a good story. I am sorry that she is cutting off performing hours, but I know that would be inevitable eventually.

*Solo:* The revisits to Brillante and Dolce, unlike to the rest of the featured musicians, ended up focusing mainly on their teaching. Brillante's second-generation Asian students in her studio

were exactly like how she has described – laidback and well-assimilated and did not show particular concerns regarding their racial backgrounds in social interactions. Teaching and learning were well-balanced, and Brillante’s passion towards music, teaching, and learning clearly had a great influence on each member in her studio.

Dolce on the other hand, did not have any second-generation Asian students in her class. She did have a group of students who have Asian backgrounds and were either Asian international students or first-generation immigrants.

*Orchestra:* Is there any difference between second-generation, first-generation, and international students?

*Solo:* Yes. None of the first-gens and internationals were “laid-back.” Dolce said that those Asian students in her class worked a lot harder than her white students. “This is not their home...” Said Dolce, “...and instinctively, they work harder out of pressure than the local students to make a living.”

Meanwhile, not all Dolce’s Asian students appreciate her teaching. Some of them were exceptional harsh in evaluating Dolce’s teaching, and Dolce seems to understand why this is the case. She explained that traditionally, students are trained to follow their parents’ and teachers’ instructions in East Asian countries. Originality and creativity were not valued much in teacher-centered learning styles. She said, “Critical thinking is never encouraged in most of the East Asian cultures. And because they are in my class now, I don’t want them to get away with it without taking initiatives and having their own original thoughts. They probably find it very unreasonable because they would prefer to follow my lead, get an A+, and be out. It’s easier to wait for somebody else telling you what to do...and that’s why creativity was largely missing.”

## **Movement IV: Allegretto**

### **Cadenza**

*Orchestra:* The floor is all yours.

*Solo:* Last Christmas, I was warming a bottle while Claude, the little gentleman who just turned one, burst into crying all of a sudden. Although I have known him for only about one year nine months two weeks and three days, I knew immediately that something is going wrong based on the way he cried. In the next 20 minutes, I did all I was capable of to make him feel better until I was convinced that I should probably dial 911. Our first responders showed up punctually. They saw the desperate baby and would like to exam him before taking us recklessly to the children's hospital. I was very grateful for their help and showed them into our living room. My house, at that time, was not in its most presentable way as I had been packing for a move. Among the messiness, Claude's 5'3" Yamaha baby grand looked exceptionally conspicuous.

“You're a pianist?” They asked.

“Yes, sir,” I answered.

“Exactly how old are you?” They continued.

“29, sir,” I answered.

“You look a lot younger though. Why do you spank him?” As I was wondering how such small talk might help with the baby, they tossed another question.

There was a moment I thought they were kidding, but apparently, they were not. They saw Claude's birthmark around his bottom area and started to question my qualification. In the

next thirty minutes, I presented them the picture taken while the baby was born, his pediatrician's as well as my O.B.'s contact information. The baby was crying the entire time.

It has been a while, but every time I recall that experience, I could not help but wonder, exactly what kind of message does an Asian mom who happens to play the piano and unfortunately look like a teenager send to others?

Prior to preparing for this performance, I have had various experiences that left me with some lingering topics including Model Minority, stereotypical labels, and of course, the ruminative thinking and post qualitative inquiry. I commented once that the Confucianist pedagogy is rumination-based. Such pedagogy relies heavily on perennialism that students are first immersed in the classics and the theories before they set out on their voyage of exploring the world with these abstruse theories and abstracted classics in their mind. It is a process of digesting the digested, and sometimes negating the negated. The good thing is, abstruse or not, they are there. All it takes is waiting for the right moment, the right trigger, the right inspiration while they travel to activate these theories. And with such theories at the back of their mind and the vivid travel experience in front of them, some specific theories start to make sense. Such theory->travel experience->rumination>-theory 2.0 process is how I understand the ruminative thinking.

The boundary traveling rumination theory, on the foundation of travel theory, boundary object theory, and ruminative thinking is a theory that stresses rumination and ruminative thinking in the process of boundary and boundary objects recognition and travel tales' interpretation.

When some of the featured musicians in this concerto, Cantabile and Brillante first told me the story of their inner turmoil when others were talking about "slanted eyes" and calling

Asian Americans “Orientals” in front of them, I honestly had no clue what “slanted eyes” or “Orientals” mean, until I suddenly recall the image of Mulan in Disney movie, and how Miley Cyrus insulted her fans when she posted a picture pulled her eyes mocking people of Asian descent. I did not expect, or wish, to have the opportunity ruminate these terms, however, I had the following experience while I was with a group of preservice teachers last semester. We were talking about female representations in a series of Disney princess movie, and encountered Mulan and a coming-up Indian princess, “Princess Ananya” at some point. They asked why I was upset with her appearance, and I expressed my concern of the way her eyes look like being an endorsement of racial stereotyping, and that was when I heard this comment from one of the group members,

“But, isn’t she Chinese? All my Chinese friends have slanted eyes.”

I was shocked enough to ask her/him this stupid follow-up question, “Do I?”

She thought for a while, and said, “Well, not that slanted, but still, yeah, compared to the rest of us.”

The conversation went on for a while when people started to focus on the disparities in between Asian communities. One of them said to another, “Yes we do have a big Indian American community here, and you can’t call Indians ‘Orientals’ because they preferred to be recognized as ‘Asians’. ‘Orientals’ are only for Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese.”

I did not know I was more amused or more offended under such circumstances, but I certainly could not just “brush it off” and let go.

Our travel experiences are all full of paradoxes and boundaries. Dolce longs for personal space where she could just be herself, and the one and only soloist instead of somebody else’s accompaniment. She could easily attain such space if, instead of starting a domestic revelation

that involves an international musician and two mixed babies, she followed her parents' will and married one of those doctors, lawyers, or bankers from their matchmaking list. Brillante felt offended when people assumed she could not speak English, yet has been working hard in finding reasons from herself and other members of Asian American communities. Vivace has been doing remarkable holding up the standards of her professionalism, yet has also been forced to work hard meeting the market demand and keeping shopping for new dresses for each competition and recital. Capriccio said that she never actually liked competitions. However, in order to be able to support herself and continually play her beloved piano, she had to win competitions. From my understanding, live performances and competitions are the most brutal high-stake testing I have even known. Audiences paid to listen to your music – they do not care if you happen to be having cramps on the stage; they do not care if you accidentally hurt your fingers when picking up luggage at the airport an hour ago. Some of them understand that this is live music, whereas many more expect a perfect CD recording level performance from you. One miss, and you are out of business for good.

I, secretly, have never liked writing ideas down. I know it sounds funny considering my career plan. However, Laozu, whom I idolize, once said that the way that can be said out loud is already not the way in-itself or the way that can be generalized. He had plans to run away from the country so that people would stop asking him to write down anything (yet was still ambushed at the border by one of his biggest fans). And that is how we nowadays get to read Tao Te Ching. The entire book has only 5000 words, yet it contains everything in the universe. I have never liked writing, yet still, I am here writing, not only because I am in this “publish or perish” business. There is something I need to convey to a larger audience along with my journey. I am not capable of wrapping up my ideas within 5000 words, but I have tried my best to make it concise.

To endure these paradoxes and to live in between these boundaries are hard, but it is also because of these paradoxes and boundaries, we deepen our thinking, ruminate on our theorizing, and contribute to the society in our own bitter, dissonant, yet harmonious way.

I believe that concludes my improvisation.

*Orchestra:* Thank you for your listening.

### **Coda: From the Guiding Questions to the Methodology**

*Orchestra:* In the first movement, we stated that this performance would be guided by a series of questions, known as,

What are the East-Asian American female musicians' boundary traveling experiences given their identities in the society?

How are their identities formed, and how do the participants perceive their identities within and across boundaries?

What is (are) the meaning(s) of model minority stereotypes regarding participants' teaching and learning activities, career development, and other social interactions?

And what is (are) the role(s) of music and music education in the boundary traveling experiences on both institutional and societal levels?

*Solo:* Let us spend some time and discuss these questions one by one here.

*Orchestra:* What do we know now about these featured musicians' boundary traveling experiences?

*Solo*: Through her traveling experiences, Vivace said what impressed her most was how East and West ideologies created students' different personalities, beliefs and developing trajectories. Simply following instructors' guidance worked well before, but to survive the Western culture, she needed to learn to communicate in a different way. Just like how Evan in her story promoted himself left a huge impact on her, Vivace said that "Asian modesty" sometimes does not do the trick here.

Capriccio loves the piano art wholeheartedly, and have worked exceptionally hard till this day. Because of her competitive personality and incomparable dedication towards her music, she seems to be encountering one obstacle after another in staying in good relationships with her mentors. From her story, we learned that the conflicts were usually engendered due to miscommunications as opposed to cultural differences, or Asian Americans' *unassimilability*.

Cantabile has never had any difficulties finding her belongings as those elder Korean students on campus were protective like Mama birds. What bothered her, however, were those last-minute accompanying requests and music sheets, and of course, the "You-are-Asian-thus-you-can-handle-it" type of assumption behind such last-minute requests and music.

For Brillante, boundary traveling experiences were valuable in a way that they constantly remind her how precious music sphere is. Also, she shows understanding towards stereotypes and labels. What I need to point out here, is that Brillante is the only one in this performance who at some point conforms to the modeled and minoritized standards whereas also expressed concerns in situations that people question her linguistic ability when she travels to places where she was no longer protected by music or academic contexts.

*Orchestra:* In short, for these featured musicians, boundary traveling experiences are an indispensable link in self-identification and meaning-making, and have provided comparative opportunities in epistemological ruminations. In traveling, paradoxically, one is intense and relaxed at the same time. S/he is, on one hand, relaxed because s/he could temporarily avoid those cultural parts that s/he does not like in where s/he is originally from; whereas on the other hand, also intense due to unfamiliarity and the sense of insecurity caused by the unfamiliarity. In traveling across boundaries, to be more specific, these musicians become boundary objects themselves through teaching and learning activities that have opened precious tunnels for encountering new cultures, ruminating on original cultures, self-identification, and professional development.

*Solo:* Since you mentioned self-identification, let us talk a bit about the next question on how these musicians form and perceive their identities through boundary-crossing experiences.

Vivace reflected on her identities as a female and a professional pianist during our second meeting. Being an Asian female can easily become a selling point in the current music industry, and Vivace would like to find a balance between the market and her pursuit of professionalism.

Capriccio valued her Eastern identity as much as she appreciates her US citizenship that entitled her with security and freedom. However, before considering sub-identities such as Chinese American or Asian female, the most important identity Capriccio boasts is being a pianist.

Cantabile said that she always double-click both white and Asian when asked about her racial and ethnic background in any surveys, although personally, she is closer to her Korean identity. She worried about family obligations given her female identity at some point but seemed to have figured out her way to cope with potential obstacles at current phase.

Brillante takes a lot of pride in her Korean background and, to some extent, believes that her Asian background has laid a solid foundation for her superb techniques and musicality. Being a “good witness” that improve the social image of all Asian Americans is also part of her identity.

Apart from being a Classical pianist, Dolce’s identity includes sometimes being a “forever foreigner”, and searching hard for her belongings. She constantly struggles between being too Chinese when she “is surrounded by Americans,” and being too American in front of her parents.

*Orchestra:* In short, the one and only identity all the featured musicians value most and have placed in front of all other personal identities, is their identities of classical musicians. The younger the featured musician is, the less likely she realizes the important roles her identities of being a female and an Asian American play in social activities and professional development. Those who have families are most likely to discuss their female identities in the interviews. No matter whether these various identities have brought positive or potentially negative impact on their teaching and learning activities, career development, and general social interactions, all featured musicians are courageous to travel within and across social and cultural boundaries.

*Solo:* Some of the featured musicians have theorized their own experiences. For example, Dolce and Vivace both adopted the word “purposeful” in their narratives. For Vivace, Asian students are not purposeful because of their less effective communicative and thinking styles, whereas Dolce believes that Asian students are a lot more purposeful compared to other local students, because “this is not their home.” So for Vivace and Dolce, the meaning of purposeful is completely different. In Vivace’s argument, purposefulness is within the scope of pragmatism. Evan is purposeful because he reads the context and knows what he should do on top of being a

splendid pianist. Meanwhile, purposefulness in Dolce's understanding expressed the feeling of impotence. Asian students are forced to work harder because they are placed in an alienated and *minoritized* situation.

*Orchestra:* The next question is about the meaning(s) of Model Minoritized stereotypes in each featured musicians' social activities.

*Solo:* Vivace considered her own travel experience as a treatment combined with Eastern and Western medicine. Stereotypes that come alongside with the treatment is thus one of the side-effects that she must overcome.

Capriccio agreed with Dolce's idea that "foreign" students work harder due to higher pressure. "Asian Americans work harder because of insecurity and their unstable social status." However, she also believes that "discriminations are sometimes understandable" because "they are here first." Those who arrived earlier construct pre-conceived ideas regarding new comers are, according to Capriccio, a way of self-protection and part of human nature.

For Cantabile, Model Minoritized stereotypes are troublesome in a way that myths such as "all Asians have slanted eyes," "All Asians do music and are good at math," and "Asians work harder and can deal with last minute performing requests" become facts in some social members' cognitive system. Once an individual fails to align with these supposedly "facts," s/he automatically becomes abnormal.

Dolce commented that the only way to make changes is to intentionally make contributions to the society. Staying neutral and keeping silent only endorse the legitimacy of these Model Minoritized myths. She said, "Only when we actually start talking will they know that we want to be seen and heard."

*Orchestra:* Although all featured musicians have experienced Model Minoritized stereotypes in various phases and facets of their lives, they perceive stereotypes differently based on their own ideological thinking.

*Solo:* Yes. By the way, I have seen people trapped in critical thinking and jumped at the sight of any clue that links an individual Asian American to any pre-conceived stereotypes, believing that s/he has found yet another proof that endorses that legitimacy of these stereotypes. I would like to point out, once again, the urgency of promoting both general and critical thinking in our education here. When you hear a story, you not only hear truncated information or isolated words. When you hear Dolce says that Chinese students are hardworking. Jumping to the conclusion that “Aha, see? Just like everybody says - Asians are nerds” could be one of your options. However, when you have decided to go with that option, you have lost your focus on her narrative and no matter what she says after this statement bothers you little. If you choose to adopt generous thinking, on the other hand, you will gain more information from the context. Chinese students in Dolce’s class are working hard not because that they were born nerdy, but because given their social background and the current political atmosphere, they need to work harder in assuring the social dominant group their assimilability. Of course, such information can be easily overlooked without critical thinking after the original generous thinking.

*Orchestra:* The other question is about the roles of music and music education.

*Solo:* Yes, music and music education is another big topic in this performance. From their stories, we learned that influenced by Mr. GA’s everlasting personal charisma, Vivace aimed at carrying

the torch for helping more learners in pursuing the classical music art. Teaching music and imparting ideas to students whenever they are lost or stuck in either techniques or musicality is a tribute to – and her way of cherishing the memories of – Mr. GA, her guardian angel.

Capriccio says that our current music education has become a preparational process for the industrial world. Molding music products that the market needs outplays the significance of cultivating real artists.

Brillante appreciates music in general as much as the cause of music education. For Brillante, teaching music is an enabling, empowering, and enlightening process that is of benefit to both the instructor and the learner. Such process provides an open and inclusive platform that improve cross-cultural understanding and cultural diversity.

Dolce perceives music as a sanctuary where she could just be herself. She focuses on encouraging originality and creativity in her teaching and believes that encouraging students' originality and creativity should be as important as teaching them techniques, music theories, and histories.

In conclusion, most of the featured musicians value music education and consider teaching the classical music art to the next generation as their important social and cultural responsibilities.

*Orchestra:* In wrapping up this performance, we would like to talk a bit more about the Componere methodology.

*Solo:* We originally proposed Componere as an answer to the post qualitative inquiry as well as a reflection upon the constant comparative method in data analysis. Lawrence-Lightfoot's portraiture method has laid an artistic and solid foundation for this progression. In applying the

methodology into this performance, in particular, the idea of folksong collection, waiting as a link in data analysis, and composition as part of the methodology worked exceptional well thanks to the theoretical framework that creates spaces for ruminative thinking from both the composer and the featured musicians, and the complexities and paradoxes engendered because of such interactions between these featured musicians' and the composers' boundary crossing experiences. Of course, complexities and paradoxes are positive ideas and are perceived as opportunities here for deconstructing the taken for grants social norms and dominant ideology.

Also, the Componere method emancipated the composer from the feeling of eagerness in locating meaningful data as well as the sense of lost in facing data that fall out of patterns. For example, the word "purposeful" appears repetitively across the study. However, instead of synthesizing the idea of "purposefulness" as an emerging theme, the composer took some time and analyzed why purposefulness has different connotations in each featured musician's narrative.

Finally, the idea of attending to "every fickle play of rainbows" is another element in Componere that I would like to mention. Because of such respect towards nuances, the composer had the audacity of being honest under any circumstances. For example, in Capriccio's story, right after she commented on her mentor's suicide, you heard strange things like "@^~#\$%&!\*" from me. And I believe @^~#\$%&!\*...is not something you would expect to hear in non-fictional work, though @^~#\$%&!\*...is exactly what the composer perceived at that moment. Another example is the presentational style of this performance. Movement III, noted as "Scherzando," was written in a humorous way that not only amuses the composer herself, but also makes it reasonable to include seemingly irrelevant "fleeting visions" into the performance. These transient information, for some reason, was noted in the composer's manuscript and was lingering in her head. Thus she would like to share them with her audiences fairly. These visions

may capture some of your attention, while some of you may find them redundant or totally meaningless. However, the visions were indeed there, as real as @^~#\$%&!\*...that the composer has once heard.

*Orchestra:* What visions have you heard in this synesthetic experience?

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## Vita

Personal Background	Mila Zhu Born July 1, 1987, Shanghai, China Daughter of Hongchun Zhu and Hao Tang Mother of Claude Van Duet
Education	Bachelor of Arts, Japanese Language and Literature, Fudan University, Shanghai, China, 2009 Master of Education, Education Administration and Management, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 2010 Doctor of Philosophy, Educational Studies: Curriculum Studies, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas, 2018
Experience	Assistant Managing Editor, Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, 2015-2016 Adjunct Professor, College of Education, Texas Christian University, 2014-2017 Graduate Assistant, College of Education, Texas Christian University, 2011-2016
Professional Membership	The Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice American Educational Research Association American Educational Studies Association American Association for Teaching and Curriculum American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies

## Abstract

BOUNDARY TRAVELING WITH MODEL MINORITIZED SHACKLES IN A COMMON  
LANGUAGE OF MUSIC:  
A CONCERTO FOR THE EAST-ASIAN AMERICAN FEMALE MUSICIANS IN THE U.S.  
HIGHER EDUCATION

By Mila Zhu, Ph.D., 2018  
College of Education  
Texas Christian University

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. M. Francyne Huckaby, Professor of Curriculum Studies

Dissertation Committee: Dr. Gabriel Huddleston, Assistant Professor of Curriculum Studies

Dr. Jo Beth Jimerson, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership

Dr. Don Mills, Distinguished Professor of Educational Leadership

Dr. Mikhail Misha Galaganov, Professor of Viola

*Boundary Traveling with Model Minoritized Shackles in a Common Language of Music: A Concerto for the East-Asian American Female Musicians in the U.S. Higher Education* is written in a style of a music score. Presented in the form of a concerto that created spaces for a dialectical dialogue between the *Soloist* and the *Orchestra*. The two parties sometimes complement each other and sometimes contradict each other. The score is composed of four movements. The first movement of the Concerto mainly focuses on the social and cultural backgrounds of this project, and related literature review such as Model *Minoritized* ideology, social dominant discourses, and intertextual situations that complicates topics including race, gender, and the field of classical music. The second movement emphasizes the theoretical framework and methodological thinking of this concerto. Under the framework of travel theory and boundary objects theory, I have proposed “boundary-traveling rumination theory” in this section. In addition, building on Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot’s portraiture method, this concerto is

based on *Componere*, a method I proposed that involves the rumination based interactions among composers and travelers. The third and the fourth movement tell stories of each featured musicians and reflect on the questions that guide the entire performance.

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HIGHER EDUCATION

Dissertation approved:

  
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For The College of Education