

# The Creative Approach for Promoting Violin Performing Arts in China in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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## Abstract

The composer Mr Chen Gang is one of the creators of Chinese violin music. Through literature research, this study learned about Chen Gang's living environment during the creation of The Golden Furnace. He combined Chinese national music materials with Western composition techniques and integrated western traditional violin playing skills into the Chinese nationalized music language, which played an essential role in exploring the road of Chinese violin nationalization. This paper also explains and reveals the steps involved in the creative work of the violin master that remains very popular in China. The violin tune "Golden Furnace" was adapted and created by the famous composer Mr Chen Gang. Although this tune has the brand of the times in the unique historical period, its beautiful melody, gorgeous technique and full of passion all make it worthy of further study.

**Keywords:** Violin Performing Arts; Chinese Creative; playing techniques

## Introduction

The violin is the most widely used bow-stringed instrument in the Western violin family. It has been one of the essential instruments in western music since the 17th Century and is known as the queen of Musical Instruments. The violin has a beautiful tone, a wide range, close to the human voice, and a rich performance.

Real, genuine music must be experienced, felt, divined—and then created (Leopold Auer, 2012). In the trend of “Western learning spreading to the east” in the past hundred years, as an “imported” art, Chinese violin performance and academic teaching and research have experienced a historical process from scratch, from humble beginnings to remarkable achievements. These classical works not only have the charm and style of Chinese traditional music but also absorb the playing techniques of Chinese traditional instruments to enrich the musical expression of the violin and reflect the unique national style in the aspects of artistic aesthetics and musical language expression, to promote the process of nationalization of violin art. In "The Golden Furnace", Mr Chen Gang has carried on the communication and fusion of Chinese and Western music culture, using western composing and performing skills. The melodies are more beautiful and full of passion.

## Objectives

1. Study Mr. Chen Gang's adaptation and re-creation of violin music work.
- 2 Understand the characteristics of Chen Gang's music style in Chinese violin works

## Literature Review

The violin, a Western musical instrument, was created by Mr. Chen Gang with exquisite western techniques. He always adheres to the concept of music creation to serve the people, for the development of violin art, nationalization, and multiculturalism. Instead of simply transferring the work to another instrument, the adaptation is a kind of re-creation, adding its new language. Moreover, absorbing Chinese folk music materials extensively reflects a strong Chinese national flavor.

In Zhang Jing's "Chen Gang 'Red Violin' by Research Works", she conserved: The Cultural Revolution music is a peculiar musical phenomenon in the history of Chinese music and even in the world's music. "Quotation's songs", "model operas", "educated youth songs", and the musical forms such as "Zhongzi Dance" came into being with the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. Except for the model shows, most of them died out with the end of the Cultural Revolution. But during the Cultural Revolution Chen Gang's "red violin" Chinese violin solo not only injected fresh blood into the dead music scene in China at that time, and became a few successful examples of music created during the Cultural Revolution. For more than 40 years, it still has not exited the historical stage. the more widely (Zhang, 2014). In recent years, Chen Gang's "red violin" concert in many cities across the country successfully held the line, and achieved good results, much the music industry attention. In March 2007, he published by Shanghai Music Publishing House published the publication of *The Red Violin - Chen Gang Violin Works*; Chen Gang created nine violin solo works to gather into a book during the Cultural Revolution in China. At this point, Chen Gang's appellation of "red violin" is regarded as "dust settled".

This article takes Chen Gang's *Red Violin* creation as the macro context of the Cultural Revolution. It uses the perspective of music history to examine the development of violin art during this period and the causes and historical evolution of the "red violin" creation (Zhang, 2014). The connection between the music policy and the composer revealed the influence of Chen Gang's *Red Violin* in the country at that time. Finally, he looked at the spread, influence and value of the "red violin" in history from the perspective of history and development. These studies provided theoretical support and time reference for my research on violin performance art in the 20th Century.

In Jiang Hui's "violin music *golden furnace* performance analysis", according to the famous violinist Carl Frye's related theory, we from change with intonation, in situ broken bow, string, and the choice of colures for the violins golden mantelpiece parsing, this research from the aspects of performance technology to provide theoretical and technical support. Jiang Hui pointed out in her article: "The Golden Hearth depicts steelworkers with both hardness and softness. In terms of the pronunciation of bow technique, it requires not only fortitude but also rich and bright without roughness" (Jiang, 2012). Continuous bowing is a difficult playing skill. It is necessary to relax the right hand and control the bowing smoothly. If it is not well controlled, many redundant noises will be generated, and the sound quality is not clear.

The development of violin art during the Cultural Revolution is an inseparable part of the research on the development of violin art in the 20th Century. The "red violin" is one of the dozens of violins' works created by Chen Gang during the Cultural Revolution. Although the Cultural Revolution ended 44 years ago, these works still profoundly impacted the violin in China's music creation, performance and teaching.

## **Research Methodology**

The performance of musical works requires not only the performance technology but also the transfer of emotion and the intercommunication of the mind. One must comprehend the social connotation and emotional expression of music works and understand the creative thoughts of composers more deeply. Golden of furnace is a violin, affectionate, passionate melody lines through the mind, even if let works also want to have their understanding and sublimation, one thousand readers will have one thousand Hamlet, the deduction of work need to own age elements and values is blended in among them, to interpret the past, to the architecture in the past, only in this way that the reading and appreciation will continue to advance with the times, and continue to climb the peak of music.

### **Historical Method**

Through historical methods, this study found that “General’s Order” originated from the Tang Dynasty royal music, spread over 1,000 years. The music shows the majesty and solemnity of the ancient generals when they raise their salaries, the agility and lightness when they go to battle, and the intense tension when they fight. The General's Order is often used as the opening music and accompaniment for scenes such as the formation of the opera. The wind is blowing, and the wind is retreating. The desert smokes straight, holding the tube peeping into the sky.

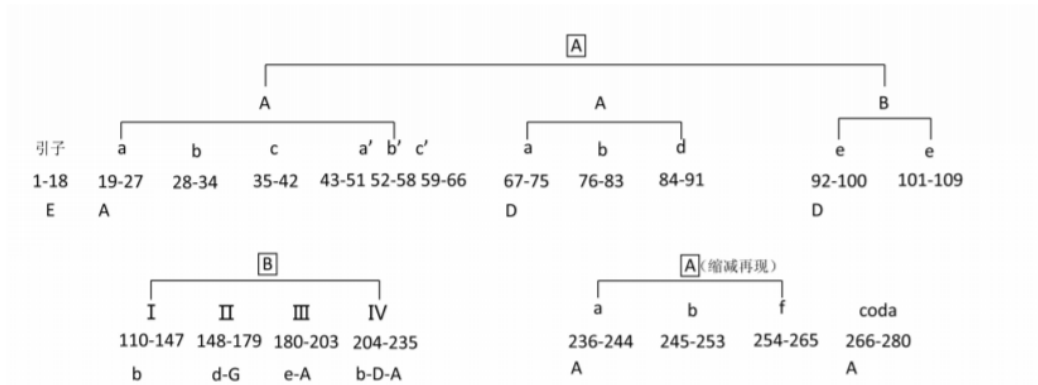
### **Literature Method**

Through the literature method, this study learned about Chen Gang's living environment during the creation of The Golden Hearth. During the Cultural Revolution, stage performances were mainly model operas adapted and transplanted from modern Peking Opera. Through his efforts, Chen Gang pushed the violin, a product of western music culture regarded as "bourgeois", to the broadest masses of ordinary Chinese people and popularized and revived the Chinese violin art during the "Cultural Revolution" to the greatest extent with his musical innovation.

## **Research Results and Discussions**

Renowned violin composer Chen Gang adapted music on the Golden Furnace for solo violin in the 1970s based on the song “The Glory of Chairman MAO Illumines the Music on the Golden Furnace.” This song takes place in Chairman Mao inspecting the steel mill to talk to the steelworker.

In this work, Mr Chen Gang has carried on the communication and fusion of Chinese and Western music cultures, using western composing and performing skills. The violin solo "The Golden Furnace" comprises the main song, the introduction and the epilogue, a double trilogy with reduced reproduction.



### The introduction to the Work

After the introduction of the theme of the singing, in the high octave after the repetition of a tune, and then change and repeat, this “head and tail” (the violin plays the vice melody, the main melody to the piano) creation technique not only to strengthen the theme but also to change the colour.

### The Golden Furnace

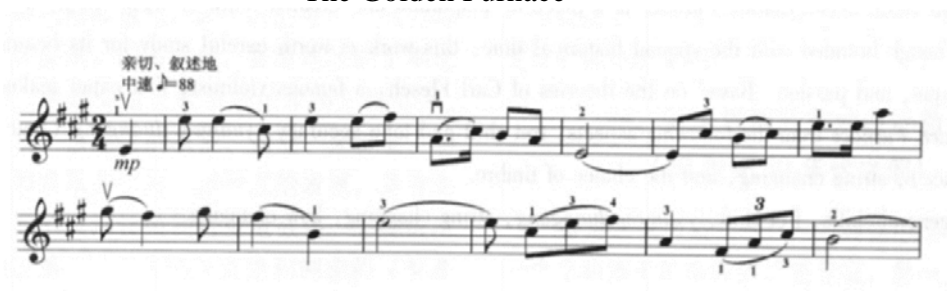


*The Golden Furnace* is from *A Century of Violin Works by Chinese Composers (1919-2019)*.

### The Theme of the Work

The theme appears in the beginning and reproduction part of the work, showing the passion of the steel workers' labour and the indescribable pride of dedication to the motherland. After the introduction of the theme of singing, in the high octave, repeat after turning a key, and then change and repeat, this kind of "head and tail" (the violin plays the sub-melody, the main melody to the piano) creation techniques not only strengthen the theme but also change the colour. The theme in the first two presentations is complete, folded repetition, forming an open structure, "forcing" it into the second part. After a singing theme, we need a contrasting middle part, a flexible and dynamic middle part that differs from character to material and tonality.

### The Golden Furnace



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### From the national percussion music "General's order" to absorb the creation of material

Based on absorbing different musical styles, Chen Gang inherits his musical concept and absorbs the traditional national instrumental work "General's Order" as the musical material for his creation.

The "General's Order" is divided into four sections: loose board, slow board, allegro board and urgent board.

1) Introduction of Loose board: The music simulates beating three drums before an ancient war. The solid and robust rhythm of drums, from slow to fast, is constantly repeated, which highlights the tense atmosphere that the battle is about to start.

2) Adagio section, with solemn and steady melody, adopts a "sentence double" style repeated rotation, with a low octave setting off, more shows the inherent power of melody, just like the dignified and commanding mood of the general when he is on his way up.

3) Allegro section is the variation of the second section, which mainly adopts the fast sixteenth-note rhythm. The beat's forte position shows the magnificent scene of soldiers.

4) Urgent board, continuous sixteenth note rhythm, so that the melody without pause, the momentum is fierce and urgent.

### Folk music "The General's Order."

Different materials to support the new image. Chen Gang drew the "nourishment" from the "General's Order" of our national percussion music with ingenuity and wrote a flexible "motive", which formed a bright color contrast with the previous central theme of the minor key subtitle. This "motive" is angular, weak to vigorous, like an iambic in poetry. At the same time, it is short and decisive, sonorous and powerful, just with the front lyric singing line to form a sharp contrast. This technique is often used in Chinese opera, just like the syncopation in jazz music, in which the weak beat is changed into a solid tone to make it move forward, vividly depicting the revolutionary enthusiasm and the passionate scene of labour of steelmakers in that era.

## The Golden Furnace

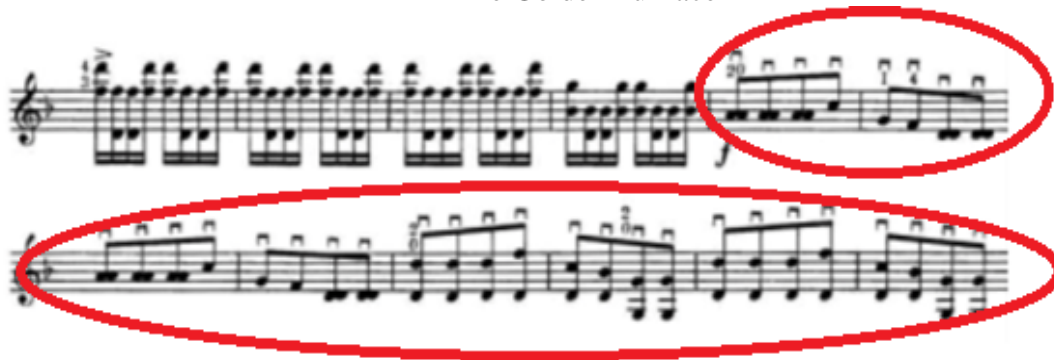


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Using the continuous bow drawing technique of the violin, Chen Gang expresses the hot working scene and revolutionary enthusiasm of the steelworkers with passionate emotions. Through literature research, example score analysis and performance technology analysis, I found the characteristics of applying Western performance techniques in Chinese works.

This piece is based on the use of western violin playing techniques for innovation - continuous lower bow playing. In this work, Chen Gang boldly uses the continuous lower bow of the violin to play many bars, which is the sublimation of the violin bow handling skills. This clean and explosive continuous lower bow is particularly rough and influential in the sense of hearing. It vividly depicts the red fire scene of the intense labor of the steelworkers, but it is also challenging to play.

## The Golden Furnace



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**Performance skills: continuous lower bow**

For this determined continuous bow performance, the player first needs to control the bow strength of the right hand and bow force. It cannot show the firmness and explosive power of continuous bowing if it is too light. If it is too heavy, it will look clumsy and depressed. Therefore, the players need to control the bow's strength to play according to the needs of the

music. Secondly, each tone of the continuous lower bow should maintain the same sound effect, requiring the performer to control a certain amount of strength.

Line playing but maintaining the same continuous movement simultaneously will cause tension to the right hand and easily cause fatigue. Continuous bowing is not as easy as the score looks. Continuous bowing needs scientific methods. In the process of bowing, the circular bowing action is used to cushion the bow. Continuous bowing is neat, requiring the melody to be coherent, not because bowing performance breaks the original melody lines. A continuous lower bow or continuous upper bow is a critical bowing technique for the violin.

The use of continuous downbow is relatively rare, and only one or two bars of continuous downbow, such as "Prelude and Allegro" by Chryslar. In 1935, Kreisler adapted the theme of Pugnani's works and created prelude and Allegro, which have classical and romantic colors. Prelude part of classical meaning, slightly tragic and powerful andante, making people relaxed and happy. The lively Allegro has a romantic style, and variation and showmanship are memorable. The work is both implicit and imposing, delicate and grand.



*Praeludium und Allegro* is from *Kreisler Praeludium Allegro in Style of Gaetano Pugnani*.

### Performance skills: continuous upper bow

Continuous upper bow is typical in western music, such as Beethoven's Violin Spring Sonata, Mozart's Violin Concerto in G major, etc.

Beethoven's "Spring Sonata", created in 1800, is Beethoven's early stage of creation. Because of the rippling youth of the first movement of this piece, which is appropriately called "spring sonata", the work is full of confident and optimistic spiritual beliefs, expressing the thoughts and feelings of the growing middle class and spiritual outlook.



*Violin Spring Sonata* is from *Beethoven's Sonatas for Piano and Violin Volume*.

Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 3 in G major, 1775, in which he completed five violin concertos. This piece and violin Concerto No. 2 in D Major are influenced by French violin music, and the adagio of the second movement is influenced by The French colours of Gavanillas and Alexander German. The Third Violin Concerto in G major and the Fifth Violin Concerto in A Major are the two most beautiful of Mozart's violin concertos.



*Violin Concerto in G Major is from Mozart's Violin Concerto.*

### Reappearance of the theme

The structure of music is composed of "points", "lines", and "planes". Among them, "point" is the most important; you must determine your starting point, end point, turning point and breaking point. Otherwise, the whole music is like a walk, with no direction, goal, or center. Furthermore, precisely this "burst point" makes a piece of music move people at the last moment. It is the reproduction part of the whole song and the climax part simultaneously. The climax part in "The Hearth" finally appears after successive layers of progress. It is in the violin's high note area, with the speed of the broad board, broad rhythm, and enthusiastic and unrestrained reproduction, to reach the climax of the whole song. Representation as is expected in the western composing technique, but reappear with orgasm does not see more, the creation of the Chen gang will "reproduction" western composing techniques to further expand, reappearance are arranged by topic high-pitched pitches, high brightness is full of enthusiasm and passion, based on the accelerated slightly in orgasm, the line is clear, a more emotional, Corresponding to the "surface", "point, line, surface" seamless combination, in line with the theme of The Times, inspiring progress.



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## Conclusion

Chen gang with rich national style, the selected songs, instrumental music and opera melody fragments as a material for creative, for western violin to join the Chinese national music element, expand the violin in the application of Chinese national work, the Chinese violin performing arts got the reform and innovation, and the beauty of harmony of Chinese traditional music is symmetrical performance incisively and vividly.

The “Golden Furnace” is more extensive at the beginning of the arpeggio span, and the tone is demanding. The Allegro part of the right hand is high, and the long-term unremitting exercises can be quickly completed. The difference between the bow is different to achieve a full pronunciation.

That golden era seems to be carved in the heart of the generation; it is difficult to die, as well as carved in the long river of the years, never fade, and the violin song made by it, in the melody, festival. The song has particular personalized difficulty in content grasp, skill treatment, and emotional needle, and it needs to be able to study and focus.

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