

On the Artistic Characteristics of Friendship-themed Tang Poems Set to Music

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Abstract: *Tang dynasty is recognised as the classic era with the highest quality and greatest quantity of poems in the history of ancient Chinese literature. Friendship-themed Tang poems make up a huge proportion of these poems, and when combined with music, they take on an even more remarkable artistic value. However, it is a great pity that no scholarly work has been done to date in Chinese and English scholarship to study the artistic characteristics of friendship-themed Tang poems set to music from a genre perspective. This article uses a typological approach to focus on the category of friendship theme in Tang poems set to music, revealing their importance, historical background, cultural value, musical and literary characteristics in a scientific manner, and making an effort to grasp the laws of artistic creation in the field of poems set to music, so as to realise the integration of the ancient and the modern, the East and the West, and to discuss, build and share a community of human destiny in culture and art.*

Keywords: *friendship; music; Tang poems; Artistic characteristics;*

Introduction: Research theme and current status of the research

The Tang dynasty was one of the most glorious dynasties in Chinese cultural history, and poems were the literary genre in which the literati of this dynasty excelled, or rather, the Tang dynasty is recognised as the classic era with the highest quality and quantity of poems in the history of ancient Chinese literature. In a narrow sense, Tang poems refer to poems composed during the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD) of China, and in a broader sense, it can be extended to refer to poems composed by later generations in imitation of the Tang style. To avoid ambiguity, this article defines the concept of „Tang poems” in a narrow sense.

For over a thousand years, Tang poems and music have been inseparable artistic phenomena, like a pair of flowers in parallel, independent of each other and complementary to each other. Since Tang poems were first written, they have been set to music and sung. Some of the classic masterpieces have been set to music in different styles by subsequent generations, to the extent that there may be many musical pieces corresponding to the same Tang poem.

For this study, we have sought to take a scientific approach to artistic phenomena, using typological techniques to classify Tang poems set to music into genres such as love, family affection, friendship, homesickness, depiction of sceneries or things, narrative and nostalgia by subject matter, thus contributing to the exploration of the laws governing Chinese activity in the world of emotion. Tang poets showed great concern not only about their emotions and ideals but also the changes in the natural world and interpersonal communications. The popularity of Tang

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poems set to music on a variety of themes reflects both the diversification of the content and creative style of Tang poems and the maturation of creative techniques and means of expression. Among the many themes of Tang poems set to music, friendship is an important and common one. Tang poets often used poems to express their respect, pity, regret, sympathy and blessings for their friends, showing the light and warmth of humanity. As a product of interaction, the theme of friendship in Tang poems set to music expresses the thoughts and actions of knowing, cherishing, thinking and accompanying each other between poets and friends, containing emotional exchanges, clashes of ideas, moral support and following each other in life and death, reflecting the social ethos of Tang dynasty and showing their understanding and pursuit of friendship. Such works are not only expressions of the poets' and composers' thoughts and feelings but also collective cultural phenomena reflecting social customs and historical changes, and are closely linked to the social background, ideological ethos and cultural traditions of the Tang dynasty, and thus have not only high artistic value but also profound humanistic significance. There are different styles and genres of Tang poems on the theme of friendship, some bold and generous, some fresh and elegant, and some subtle and ebullient, reflecting the vast knowledge and exquisite skills of Tang poets. Given this, this article focuses on the artistic characteristics of Tang poems set to music on the theme of friendship.

However, as far as the current state of the research on the subject is concerned, no scholarly article has yet been published that examines the artistic characteristics of friendship-themed Tang poems set to music from a genre perspective, which does not match the huge proportion and outstanding value of friendship-themed Tang poems, and this is a great pity. If we take a step back and look at the scholarship closer to the subject, from the 1980s to the present, some of the more representative works in Chinese scholarship include Wang Qixing's „Tang Poets and Music - a Preliminary Exploration of the Relationship between the Flourishing of Tang Poems and Tang Art”² and, in English, Maja Lavrač's „On Parting, Separation and Longing in the Chinese Poetic Tradition”³.

As one of a series of essays, this paper will analyze and discuss the artistic characteristics of friend-themed Tang poems set to music from four aspects: historical backgrounds, cultural values, musical characteristics and literary characteristics, in the hope of providing readers with a deeper understanding of the individual cultural temperament and overall cultural styles of the Chinese people in the Tang dynasty, and thus providing key cultural clues to reveal the consistent patterns of Chinese activities in the field of friendship from ancient times to the present day.

1. The historical backgrounds and cultural values of the friendship-themed Tang poems set to music

In terms of historical contexts, the development of the friendship-themed Tang poems set to music was linked to two main factors:

On the one hand, the popularity of the friendship-themed Tang poems set to music was related to the great political, economic and cultural developments of the society in the Tang dynasty. The Tang dynasty was a period in Chinese history of political openness and tolerance,

² Wang Qixing. 1988. "Poets and Music in Tang Dynasty - One of the First Explorations into the Relationship between the Prosperity of Tang Poetry and Tang Art". *Journal of Wuhan University (Social Science Edition)* (5): 45-52.

³ Maja Lavrač. 2015. "On Parting, Separation and Longing in the Chinese Poetic Tradition". *Interlitteraria* 20 (2): 105-122.

economic prosperity and cultural splendour, with frequent external contacts, unrestrained thinking, a more relaxed situation for literati, and a higher status for women, even as a woman, Wu Zetian was able to become emperor. In such an environment, it was easy for the literati to make friends with similar interests, talent and character, to appreciate, encourage and support each other, to advance and retreat together in times of hardship, and to share in the joy of good times. This kind of friendship is not only a spiritual pillar in life but also a source of inspiration in creativity. For this reason, writers often used poems to express their feelings and thoughts about their friends or gave them to them as gifts and souvenirs.

On the other hand, the popularity of the friendship-themed Tang poems set to music is related to the characteristics and laws of poems composition in the Tang dynasty. The poems written during the Tang dynasty were mainly in the close style poems, which refers to a style of poems in which Chinese characters are arranged into verses according to the rhyme scheme matching both sound and sense in two poetic lines. They are suitable for expressing fresh and light, subtle and meaningful emotions and moods, and this fits the characteristics of the friendship theme. Most Tang poems on the theme of friendship use similes, borrowing from natural scenery or historical allusions to allude to or send up feelings and thoughts of friends. For example, in Wang Wei's „At Parting”, he writes: „Dismounted, I drink with you. And ask what you've in view. I can't do what I will; So I'll do what I will; I'll ask you no more, friend, Let clouds drift without end!”⁴ This is an expression of his reluctance to let go of his friend by drinking wine to send him off, and the endlessly drifting white clouds are used to refer to the free and carefree life of seclusion and his blessing for his friend to obtain such a life. Li Bai writes in his „Gift to Meng Haoran”: „O Master Meng my friend! How I love thee. Whose spirited ways to all the world are known! White-head'd thou seek'st to lie beneath pine tree, As in fair youth thou spurned Rank and Gown.”⁵ The phrase „White-head'd thou seek'st to lie beneath pine tree” is used to describe Meng Haoran's non-seeking career from his youth, while the phrase „As in fair youth thou spurned Rank and Gown” depicts his noble style of living in seclusion in the mountains in his later years. All these lines use vivid language to express the sincerity and nobility of friendship in the best possible way.

In terms of cultural value, friendship-themed Tang poems set to music are a bright landscape in classical Chinese culture, not only for the exchange of emotions and spiritual communication between poets but also as artistic treasures for future generations to study and appreciate. They show us a moving picture of friendship, giving us a sense of the noble sentiments and broad-mindedness of Tang literati, and they also show us various ideal models of friendship, allowing us to understand what a true friend is and what true friendship is. Specifically, the friendship-themed Tang poems set to music have the following three cultural values:

Firstly, is that a musical score can enable people to get a better appreciation and understanding of the aesthetic features and connotations of friendship-themed Tang poems. The music setting can help people grasp the rhythm, rhyme, tone and inflection of such Tang poems, and feel their emotions, moods and temperaments. Music and poems reflect and complement each other, making the artistic appeal of Tang poems even more prominent.

⁴ Wang Wei. 2007. "At Parting". In *Chinese-English 300 Tang Poems*, tr. by Xu Yuanchong, 99. Beijing: China Translation & Publishing Corporation.

⁵ Li Bai. 1988. "To Meng Haoran". In *Chinese-English 300 Tang Poems: A New Translation*, tr. by Zhang Longxi, ed. by Xu Yuanchong, Lu Peixian & Wu Juntao, 99. Beijing: China Translation & Publishing Corporation.

Secondly, the music can bring people closer to and more familiar with the culture and history of the Tang dynasty. Music can reflect the social style, ethnic characteristics and regional customs of the Tang dynasty, as well as the ideology, value orientation and aesthetic interests of the Tang dynasty. Music and poems complement and corroborate each other, making the culture and history of the Tang dynasty more vivid and realistic.

Thirdly, because of the isomorphic nature of art and life, as well as the fact that Chinese is a universal language of the past and present, Tang poems set to music by previous generations can inspire contemporary interests and enthusiasms in Tang poems, allowing contemporary people to enjoy more the pleasure of using Tang poems to interpret contemporary life and express contemporary emotions in their composing, adapting and performing activities.

2. Musical characteristics of the friendship-themed Tang poems set to music

In the Chinese context, the content of a „score” is divided into two aspects: „music” and „instruments”. Each instrument has its strengths; an inappropriate combination of instruments is tantamount to making noise, while the right combination of instruments with the right playing and singing can perfectly interpret the soul of the score and the poem. Even from a musical philosophical point of view, each singer is a special vocal instrument in his or her own right. Next, we will analyze the musical characteristics of friend-themed Tang poems set to music from the perspective of both the musical forms and the musical elements:

3. Musical forms and elements

3.1. Musical forms: chanting, singing, qin tunes

Ancient Chinese poems and music are closely linked, and this link is mainly manifested in two intertwined and complementary ways: Firstly, each Chinese character is monosyllabic in pronunciation and has a specific tone, and in the verses of poems, especially those of metrical poems, the pronunciation of several Chinese characters is often arranged and combined according to the rhyme scheme matching both sound and sense in two poetic lines, making the Chinese characters and verses inherently musical. Secondly, composers and singers composed and sang the poems according to their own colourful and varied styles, which in turn could greatly enhance the expressive and infectious power of the poems. Among how ancient Chinese poems was performed, musical forms such as chanting, singing and qin tunes all occupy an important place, and they are all related to each other in some way and have their characteristics. Each of these three musical forms will be briefly described and analyzed below:

Chanting is a way of reading a poem aloud according to a certain tone and rhythm, which can express the meaning, structure and rhetoric of the poem, and can also rhyme in a way that facilitates the memorisation and understanding of the poem. The tone of the chant can be either a rhyming tonal pattern or free rhyming, cadential or orthographic, official or dialectal. Chanting also has a long history, with a tradition of chanting classics and literature dating back to the pre-Qin period, and later developing into an important part of private education and literary affairs. Chanting also has different methods and techniques, such as shaking one's head and body, light and heavy emphasis, and changing tones. As a form of art combining poems and music, it has the following three characteristics: Firstly, it is normative: the interpreter is required to have an

accurate understanding and mastery of the poem, to follow the rules of grammar, logic and rhythm of the poem, and not to change or delete the content or form of the poem at will. The interpreter should pay attention to the clarity, accuracy and fluency of the voice in the process of interpretation, and refrain from errors such as misreading, omission and broken sentences. Secondly, it is interpretative: the interpreter is required to be able to use their voice to interpret the ideas, emotions and imagery expressed in the poem, enabling the listener to understand and appreciate the connotations and beauty of the poem. The chanters express the emotions of love, hatred, sorrow, joy, prayer, anger, doubt and fear through techniques such as fast, slow and strong breath, intonation and staccato voice, thus giving the recitation the power of emotional expression and logical persuasion. Thirdly, it is educational: as a traditional teaching method, chanting helps to enhance learners' interest in and memory of poems and to develop their linguistic and aesthetic abilities. The chanters can choose or adjust the content and manner of chanting according to different purposes and objects in the process of interpretation, making chanting adaptable and changeable.

⊖—⊕ ⊖—	岐王宅里寻常见，
⊕ — — ⊕ —	崔九堂前几度闻。
⊕ ⊖ — —	正是江南好风景，
⊖—⊕ — —	落花时节又逢君。
	(杜甫《江南逢李龟年》)

Fig. 1. Level and oblique tones of Du Fu's

„Coming across Li Guinian on the Southern Shore” in Chinese

Coming Across Li Guinian¹ on the Southern Shore

Du Fu

At the palatial residence we often met;

In Courtier's Hall for many times I heard you sing.

The Southern scenery is now not to forget,

But I meet you again when flowers part with spring.

Tr. X. Y. Z.

Fig. 2. Du Fu's „Coming across Li Guinian on the Southern Shore” Translated by Xu Yuanzhong from Chinese to English

Singing poems to a certain tune and rhythm can express the mood, emotion and atmosphere of the poem, as well as add to its beauty and communication. Singing has a long history and a variety of tunes, which can be classified according to different criteria as fixed or improvised, traditional or new, single or multiple, folk or courtly. As a form of art combining poems and music, it has three characteristics: **Firstly**, it is creative. Singing requires not only a deep understanding and perception of the poems but also the singer's ability to choose or create tunes and rhythms that suit the content and style of the poems according to his or her own emotional and aesthetic preferences. The singers can change and adjust to the actual situation in the process of interpretation, making chanting flexible and versatile. **Secondly**, it is expressive. Singing requires the singers to use their voice to express the meanings, emotions and atmospheres of the poems so that the listener can feel the message and beauty of the poems. The singer controls and coordinates the relationship between language and music through the height, strength, speed and length of the voice, making the chant rich and lively. **Thirdly**, it is communicative. As a form of oral literature, singing relies on the voice to influence the listener and spread the poem. Like chanting, singers can choose or change the content and manner of singing according to different occasions, audiences and purposes, making chanting adaptable and changeable.

赠 卫 八 处 士

(唐) 杜 甫 诗

人生不相见， 动如参与商。 今夕复何夕， 共此灯烛光。

少壮能几时， 鬓发各已苍。 访旧半为鬼， 惊呼热中肠。

焉知二十载， 重上君子堂。 昔别君未婚， 儿女忽成行。

怡然敬父执， 问我来何方。 问答未及已， 驱儿罗酒浆。

夜雨剪春韭， 新炊间黄粱。 主客会面难， 一举累十觞。

十觞亦不醉， 感子故意长。 明日隔山岳， 世事两茫茫。

Fig. 3. Du Fu's „To Hermit Wei, the Eighth Among His Brothers”

A qin tune is a music played on plucked instruments such as the guqin, guzheng or pipa. It can express natural scenery, historical stories, the emotions of people, etc., or it can convey the poet's state of mind and philosophy of life. It can be performed as a solo or an ensemble, traditional or new, purely as music or in conjunction with poems. It also comes in different types and styles, and has a long history, with the qin tune recorded from the pre-Qin dynasty period and later developing into an important way for literati to cultivate their moral character and communicate their emotions. As an art form combining poems and music, it has the following three characteristics: Firstly, it is profound. It requires the player to have a deep understanding and appreciation of the poems and to be able to use the instrument to express the hidden meaning, allegory and symbolism of the poems so that the listener can feel the profundity and breadth of the poems. The player should pay attention to the variations, contrasts and layers of sound in the process of playing the instrument so that it does not become superficial or monotonous. Secondly, it is beautiful. The instrument requires the player to use the sound of the instrument to express the beauty, harmony and elegance portrayed in the poem so that the listener can appreciate the beauty and flavour of the poem. The player should pay attention to the rhythm, rhyme and melody of the instrument in the process of playing, so as not to lose its charm or flavour. Thirdly, it is inherited. As a traditional cultural heritage, qin music helps to preserve and disseminate the content and form of poems, and to cultivate the cultural literacy and aesthetic sensibilities of listeners. In the process of playing, qin players should pay attention to the use of the past for the present, balancing the inheritance of techniques with timely innovation.

3.2. Musical elements: mode, rhythm, timbre, pitch

Mode is an organic system in which the tones used in music are linked together according to certain principles. The tones in a mode are arranged from low to high, starting from the main tones, to form a scale. Major, minor and pentatonic modes are commonly used in Tang poems. The major and minor modes are commonly used in Western music and can be adapted for use in modern times. They are based on the major and minor thirds respectively, forming seven different scales of different pitches. The major scale usually expresses a cheerful, bright and positive mood, while the minor scale usually expresses a melancholy, dark and negative mood. For example, Wang Wei's „The Three Stacks of Yang Guan” has long been set to one of the ten most famous Chinese guqin pieces, but it is now perfectly possible to set it in the minor mode to show the sadness and farewell of a friend parting. The five-tone mode is common in Chinese folk music, based on the five different pitches of Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi and Yu, and usually expresses a simple and natural state of mind. For example, Du Fu's „Receiving a Guest”, which depicts the poet entertaining his friends and neighbours with wine and food, can be set to music in the five-tone mode to show the joy of feasting and laughing when the friends visit. In addition, the Chinese have been practising the philosophy of Yin and Yang and the unity of heaven and man since ancient times, and there have even been attempts to correlate the five tones with the five elements and the five organs to aid in the management of physical and mental illnesses.

Andante 充满表情地 *mf*

渭城朝雨浥轻尘，客舍青青
柳色新，劝君更尽一杯酒，西出阳关无故人。

The image shows a musical score for Wang Wei's poem 'The Three Stacks of Yang Guan'. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Andante' and the mood is '充满表情地' (with expressive feeling). The dynamic is 'mf'. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: '渭城朝雨浥轻尘，客舍青青' (Morning rain in Weicheng drenches the light dust, the guesthouse is so green). The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: '柳色新，劝君更尽一杯酒，西出阳关无故人。' (The willow color is new, I advise you to finish one more cup of wine, for west of Yangguan there is no old friend).

Fig. 4. Wang Wei's „The Three Stacks of Yang Guan”

客至

(唐) 杜甫诗
钟明奎曲

舍南舍北皆春水，但见群鸥日日来，花径不曾缘客扫，蓬门今始为君开。
盘飧市远无兼味，樽酒家贫只旧醅。

The image shows a musical score for Du Fu's poem 'Receiving a Guest'. It features a single melodic line in a 4/4 time signature. The key signature has two sharps (F-sharp, C-sharp). The tempo is marked 'Andante' and the mood is '充满表情地'. The dynamic is 'mf'. The lyrics are: '舍南舍北皆春水，但见群鸥日日来，花径不曾缘客扫，蓬门今始为君开。' (South and north of the house are all spring water, but only see a group of gulls come every day, the flower path has never been swept for a guest, the thatched door is only now opened for you). The second line of lyrics is: '盘飧市远无兼味，樽酒家贫只旧醅。' (The food is simple because the market is far, the wine is old because the family is poor).

Fig. 5. Du Fu's „Receiving a Guest”

Rhythm refers to the length and intensity of tones in musical movement. Rhythm is one of the most basic and important elements in music, which determines the speed, rhythm and form of music. The rhythms commonly used in Tang poems set to music are two-beat, three-beat and four-beat. Two-beat refers to every two beats as a group, with the first beat being the strong beat and the second beat being the weak beat. Duple beats usually express a sense of stability, balance and symmetry, but can also express a sense of lightness, liveliness and joy. For example, Meng Haoran's „Visiting an Old Friend's Cottage” depicts a scene in which the poet is received by his friends in the countryside, and can be set to music in duple meter to highlight the joyful mood. A triple meter is a group of three beats, with the first beat being a strong beat and the second and third beats being weak beats. Triple meter usually expresses a beautiful, mellow and soothing feeling, but can also express a rousing, mournful and majestic feeling. For example, Li Bai's „Seeing Meng Haoran off to Guangling”, which depicts the poet sending his friend Meng Haoran off to Yangzhou down the Yangtze River at the Yellow Crane Tower in later spring when flowers are in full bloom, can be set to music in triple meter to show the poet's love for the

beauty of the river and his longing for Yangzhou as he bid farewell to his friend. A four-beat piece is a group of four beats, with the first beat being the strongest, the second the second strongest and the third and fourth the weakest. The four-beat piece usually expresses a sense of uniformity, regularity and neatness, and can also express a sense of solemnness, serenity and majesty. For example, in Gao Shi's „Farewell to a Lutist”, the poet can use a four-beat setting to express his relief at Dong Tinglan, a famous luthier of the time, as he bid farewell to him in a miserable scene of dark clouds, howling north winds, flying wild geese and heavy snow.

The musical score is for the piece "Farewell to a Lutist" by Gao Shi. It is written in G major and 4/4 time. The score consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern in the right hand, characterized by a series of eighth notes and sixteenth notes, and a more melodic line in the left hand. The score includes dynamic markings such as *m. d.*, *m. s.*, *rit.*, and *mp*. The lyrics "故人西" are written above the vocal line.

8

辞 黄 鹤 楼

11 *Lento*

烟 花 三 月 下 扬 州

13

孤 帆 远 影 碧 空 尽

15
唯 见 长 江 天 际 流

17
唯 见 长 江 天 际 流 *poco mosso*

The image shows two systems of a musical score. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are in Chinese characters. The first system starts at measure 15, and the second system starts at measure 17. The tempo marking 'poco mosso' is placed below the vocal line in the second system.

Fig. 6. Li Bai's „Seeing Meng Haoran off to Guangling”

千里 黄 云

白 日 曛, 北 风 吹 雁 雪

纷 纷。 莫 愁 前 路

The image shows three systems of a musical score. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are in Chinese characters. The first system starts with the lyrics '千里 黄 云'. The second system starts with '白 日 曛, 北 风 吹 雁 雪'. The third system starts with '纷 纷。 莫 愁 前 路'. The dynamic marking 'mp' is placed below the piano accompaniment in the second system.

Fig. 7. Gao Shi's „Farewell to a Lutist”

Timbre is determined by the overtone structure of a tone, and different instruments and voices have different timbral characteristics. The tone is one of the richest and most expressive elements in music, and it determines the style, atmosphere and emotion of the music. The tones commonly used in setting music for Tang poems are vocal, string, woodwind, brass and percussion. All these timbres can be selected and matched according to the contents, emotions and styles of the poems to achieve the best sound effect. The human voice is the voice of a human being and is generally divided into male and female voices, which are also divided into soprano, alto and bass according to their range. The human voice is usually intimate, sincere and touching, but can also be loud and clear, majestic and generous. For example, to set music to Gao Shi's „Farewell to a Lutist”, the low human voices can be used to match the dark clouds, the dusky sun, the north wind, the flying wild geese and the heavy snow, making the bleak and miserable setting more effective and reflecting the poet's optimism, generosity and heroism by contrast. String music refers to instruments that produce sound by plucking strings with a bow or fingers, and generally includes the guqin, guzheng, yangqin, pipa, violin, viola, cello and double bass. String music usually expresses a sense of elegance, flamboyance and romance, but can also express a sense of tension, intensity and excitement. For example, Li Bai's „Parting at a Tavern in Jinling” depicted a farewell in a beautiful spring in Jinling, where local friends saw him off to Yangzhou. The strings can be used to reflect the joy of drinking with friends and the reluctance of parting. Woodwind is a musical instrument made of wood or bamboo and blown through the mouth to produce sound, usually including flute, clarinet, oboe and bassoon. Woodwinds usually express a fresh, bright and lively feeling, but can also express melancholy, sadness and desolation. Brass instruments are generally made of metal and sounded by blowing through the mouth, and usually include trumpets, horns, trombones and tubas. The brass usually expresses a sense of solemnity, majesty and grandeur, but can also express a sense of joy, relaxation and humour. For example, Wang Bo's „Farewell to Prefect Du” can be set to music with woodwinds or brass to highlight the poet's boldness and optimism. Percussion instruments mainly refer to instruments that make sounds with sticks or hand strikes, and generally include timpani, gongs and cymbals, etc. They usually express a sense of rhythm, movement and power, but can also express delicacy, tenderness and mystery. For example, Meng Haoran's „Visting an Old Friend's Cottage” can be set to music with percussion instruments to reflect the joyful scene of a rural friend warmly entertaining his guests.

The pitch determines the melody, harmony and modulation of the music. The pitches commonly used in scoring tangos are high, medium and low. Soprano usually expresses a bright, crisp and exciting feeling, but can also express a delicate, soft and warm feeling. For example, Meng Haoran's „Visting an Old Friend's Cottage” can be set to music with percussion instruments to reflect the joyful scene of a rural friend entertaining his guests warmly. The alto voice usually expresses a smooth, calm and balanced feeling, and can also express a deep, calm and quiet feeling. For example, Wang Wei had high artistic achievements in poems, calligraphy, painting and music, so his poems often bring a sense of picture and music. His poem „A Parting” is unique in that it did not focus on the time of farewell, but rather depicted the sentiment of looking forward to a reunion with friends in the coming spring when the grass becomes green again after the farewell. When setting music to this poem, the use of the alto voice will create an atmosphere of more natural and peaceful than other voices, giving a sense of beauty called „enjoyment without indulgence and grief without excessive distress”. The bass is usually heavy, thick and solemn, and can also express a sense of sorrow, melancholy and sadness. For example,

Du Mu's „Parting” can be set to music in the bass to express the poet's sorrow at parting from his friends.

4. The literary characteristics of the friendship-themed Tang poems set to music

4.1. Poetic forms: seven- or five-character quatrains or ottava rimas in Tang poems

Tang poems generally have five or seven Chinese characters per line and generally rhyme at the end of even-numbered lines, of which the poems with the most formal and rhythmic beauty are the metrical ones. Each metrical poem usually consists of eight lines, which can be called „ottava rima of the Tang dynasty of China”. In terms of rhyme, the same rhyme is usually used at the end of the second, fourth, sixth and eighth lines, while the end of the first, third, fifth and seventh lines may be left unrhymed. If the third, fourth, fifth and sixth lines are cut out of the eight, they can form a quatrain. In this case, each two lines is a couplet, with the corresponding Chinese characters in the first and second lines being of the same lexical nature and having opposite tones. There are very few modern Chinese who have mastered the vocalisation of ancient Chinese characters, and only a few experts in ancient Chinese can do so. However, this set of rules for combining the lexical nature and pronunciation of Chinese characters has been passed down to this day. Therefore, it can be used as a reference that in the four tones of modern Mandarin Chinese, the first and second tones are regarded as the flat tones and the third and fourth tones as the oblique tones, both of which are regarded as opposed to each other.

There are many famous poems on the theme of friendship, such as Li Bai's „To Wang Lun”. All of these poems use simple but profound language to show the deep friendship and unrequited love between the poet and his friend. This poem was written by Li Bai when he was bidding farewell to his best friend, Wang Lun. „However deep the Lake of Peach Blossoms may be, It's not so deep, O Wang Lun, as your love for me.”⁶ This poem uses natural scenery as a backdrop and uses contrast to express his gratitude to his friend and his feelings of farewell.

There are many famous poems on the theme of friendship, such as Wang Bo's „Farewell to Prefect Du”, Li Bai's „Farewell to a Friend”, Meng Haoran's „Parting from Wang Wei”, Du Fu's „To Hermit Wei, the Eighth Among His Brothers”. All of these poems show, in beautiful language, the mutual understanding and blessings and prayers between the poet and his friend. Take Wang Bo's „Farewell to Prefect Du” as an example. This poem was written when Wang Bo was bidding farewell to his friend of the surname Du, and the whole poem reads as follows: „You'll leave the town walled far and wide. For mist-veiled land by riverside. I feel on parting sad and drear, For both of us are strangers here. If you have friends who know your heart, Distance cannot keep you apart. At crossroads where we bid adieu, Do not shed tears as women do.”⁷This kind of optimism and open-mindedness is extremely valuable.

4.2. Elements of poems: rhyme, length, rhetoric

In terms of rhyme, most Tang poems on the theme of friendship take the form of five- or seven-character lines, expressing the poet's feelings and thoughts in rhyming couplets. For example, in Li

⁶ Li Bai. 2007. "To Wang Lun". In *Chinese-English 300 Tang Poems*, tr. by Xu Yuanchong, 105. Beijing: China Translation & Publishing Corporation.

⁷ Wang Bo's.2007. "Farewell to Prefect Du". In *Chinese-English 300 Tang Poems*, tr. by Xu Yuanchong, 91. Beijing: China Translation & Publishing Corporation.

Bai's „A Farewell to a Friend”: „Green mountains bar the northern sky; White water girds the eastern town. Here is the place to say goodbye, You'll drift out, lonely thistledown. Like floating cloud you'll float away; With parting day I'll part from you. We wave and you start on your way, Your horse still neighs: 'Adieu! adieu!'"⁸ In the original Chinese text, this poem is a five-character poem about the scene and emotions of bidding farewell to a friend, with each line rhyming with a flat tone. The first two lines describe the place of farewell, and the second two lines express the mood of farewell, using natural scenery to convey the poet's feelings of departure and sorrow.

In terms of length, Tang poems on the theme of friendship are mostly short, usually not more than 20 lines to express the poet's feelings for his friend in a concise and clear manner. For example, Wang Wei's „At Parting” has only six lines, totalling 30 words.

In terms of rhetoric, friendship-themed Tang poems often use metaphor, simile and metonymy to vividly and imaginatively express the poet's understanding and evaluation of friendship. For example, in Tang poems, the floating clouds in the sky can be used to decorate an idle life, a grand landscape, or as a metaphor for a wandering person.

5. Conclusions

In summary, we have used a typological approach to focus on the categories of friendship themes in Tang poems set to music, revealing their importance, historical backgrounds, cultural values, musical and literary characteristics in a scientific manner, and making our efforts to grasp the laws of artistic creation in the field of the art of poems set to music to achieve the merging of the ancient and the modern, and the integration of the East and the West. In the future, we will further explore other categories of Tang poems set to music.

Our work is of particular value in building a community of human destiny in arts and culture. We now have a global information society based on the international internet, and it is no longer a problem to communicate in high-quality audio or video between friends who live thousands of miles apart, and it is usually beyond imagination to say goodbye to friends and never see them again, as was generally the case more than 1300 years ago in Tang dynasty. However, looking back to 1300 years ago, those precious friendships can still warm and touch our hearts through Tang poems set to music. For today's Chinese, Tang poems set to music can be used to understand the behaviours and thoughts and feelings of our ancestors, so that we can understand the origins of China's excellent cultural traditions, and add to our cultural consciousness to better promote Chinese traditional cultures. For today's foreigners, they can learn about the origins of Chinese behavioural logic through Tang poems set to music, and work together to discuss, build and share a community of human destiny with the nationals of the world's largest industrial nation, China, in arts and cultures, and to work together for lasting peace and common prosperity for all mankind.

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