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**Dziedzina sztuki, dyscyplina artystyczna: sztuki muzyczne**

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**Od muzyki narodowej ku szerokiemu światu:  
badania nad muzyką kameralną  
na współczesny mongolski instrument Morin Huur  
i fortepian**

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## **Summary: From National Music to the Wide World. Research on Chamber Music for Morin Huur and Piano**

The Morin Huur is an important traditional instrument, characteristic of the Mongolian nation. It is the unique timbre of this instrument and a long history of its existence that have become a recognizable symbol of this country's music, particularly folk music. Interestingly, due to the fact that Mongolia and China have undergone many historical changes over the centuries, there is also a number of differences related to the customs of both countries; this instrument is often known under different names, or one name may describe several instruments, which hinders research. The concept of chamber music is also very vague in Mongolia, mainly due to the performance and composition techniques that have accompanied the culture of this country for many centuries. Mongolian music still remains largely traditional and national music; it is still difficult to classify and name most of the existing works in terms of international music, or rather 'internationalized.' Many of the scores available on the market do not come originally from the authors, as they are adaptations from different periods, and they contain errors on numerous occasions, which affects the quality and manner of performance. Interestingly, now the combination of the piano and the Morin Huur has become a common form of performing pieces composed for this very original instrument. However, it is not easy, because in the places inhabited by ethnic minorities, musicians playing Western instruments and those playing the national ones usually do not perform together. Pianists tend to focus on their specialty and rarely engage in performance of ethnic music. In turn, Morin Huur performers often simply ignore the piano. However, integration of this instrument with the piano does exist. The Author of this work attempts to show the essence of ensemble music for traditional Mongolian instruments and seeks forms of better integration of the piano and the already modern Morin Huur by trying to initiate research on the development of performance techniques, musical style and characteristics of ensemble performance on traditional Mongolian instruments. Since the Author is a pianist, and it so happened that she has repeatedly performed a number of pieces together with this extremely interesting instrument, it is an important life task for her.

The current state of research on the discussed issues can be characterized as follows: the Morin Huur used to be employed as an accompanying or solo instrument; it is only in the last two decades that a group of composers developing chamber music

with the use of this instrument has emerged. This group includes Alten Uul, Bayar, Xin Huguang, Duan Zexing, Song Huilin or Qi Boleg from Inner Mongolia and Zanjnorrb, Bimb Bayar, Cogt Saihan from Outer Mongolia. Due to its relatively late appearance, although the traditional national music was aware of the concept of chamber music, it has not yet been sufficiently refined. Many problems and ambiguities remain. This also applies to the concept of chamber music or ensemble music. How is that different? Chamber music, or rather its performance, requires excellent concert halls, presentation of original works written in a way known from the classics of this specialty; it is enough to delve into the oeuvre of outstanding composers of Romanticism or Classicism and of the modern times, too. How wonderful was the chamber music of Robert Schumann, W. A. Mozart or Johannes Brahms! In turn, the music written for Morin Huur with piano and often other instruments is ensemble music. Interestingly, the performers, apart from executing the score, improvise intensively, so they also have the opportunity to show their improvisational skills and to stylistically implement national music. Nowadays, there is quite a lot of books or articles on Mongolian music. Unfortunately, few of them concern the Morin Huur. Since there are only a few of them, it is worth mentioning them, and these are: *East Asian Instruments* by Lin Qiansan, *History of Chinese String Instruments* by Xiang Yang, *Rules of Playing the Morin Huur* by Bai Dawa, *Steppe Folklore* by Dong Xiaoping, *Mongolian Musical Instruments* by Liu Zhuyinga or *Morin Huur and the Mongolian Steppe Culture* by Li Hongmei. Little research has been devoted to chamber music involving this instrument, yet there are several studies in this field, e.g. *Analysis of the Morin Huur Playing in Quartets* by Arbin Dalai or *Research on Creative Concepts of Morin Huur Music* by Ba Jin. However, the above works, as well as several articles on this instrument combined with other instruments, do not analyse the combination of Western instruments and traditional national instruments, which mainly applies to the cooperation of a pianist with the Morin Huur. For they are instruments created in a large interval of time; they are separated by centuries. Particularly now, when the piano is a contemporary instrument, produced by excellent companies, while the Morin Huur is still a folk instrument. However, the Author decided to focus both on presenting the history of this interesting instrument, which the Morin Huur undoubtedly is, and showing possibilities of combining it with the piano and chamber music. Both these instruments complement each other perfectly

and are able to express and masterfully show many emotions accompanying the performance of both classical and folk music.

### **Definition of chamber music**

The concept of chamber music has a long history. Originally, it referred to the music played and sung by several people at the courts of Western aristocrats, performed for a small group of listeners, which differed from the then church and theatre music. In modern times, it refers to a small instrumental ensemble consisting of two or more instruments, which differentiates it from large-scale orchestral music. Since each part of a chamber ensemble should be independent and individual, the compositional technique of this type of music is quite complicated. The emotional expression of chamber music is subtle and delicate. It is crucial to emphasize the technical and expressive ‘potential’ of each instrument. The combination of individual instrumental parts requires great meticulousness; therefore, not only does a good performance of a chamber piece require great skills and music experience from the performer but, more importantly, also perfect coordination between individual instrumental parts.

Contemporary forms of instrumental ensemble music, apart from symphonic music, include accompaniment, unison or ensemble music and chamber ensemble. Here are the differences between these concepts:

In Chinese, the word ‘accompaniment’ means ‘to accompany, follow, cooperate or collaborate.’ The accompanying part is always secondary to the main part. In music, accompaniment is a kind of a colourful background, landscape, stage decoration, expression of mood and other factors, perhaps even more than the melodic line itself. However, it must always be consistent with the main melodic part, triggering and guiding the melody and remaining in a flowing relationship with it.

Ensemble performance in unison is a melody performed by many instruments from the same family or sometimes by completely different instruments. During the performance, the harmonies of the individual parts differ in only a few places. This type of performance is most often found in the early stages of development of musical instruments. As the instrumental performance evolved, playing in unison gradually transformed into ensemble performance. The biggest difference between ensemble performance and unison is that an ensemble usually consists of several instruments

from different families. For example, a small chamber ensemble in Mongolian music has a specific performance form consisting in different instruments from different families performing improvisations while maintaining a determined melodic pattern. Sometimes, apart from the instruments, there is also a vocal part. However, due to great interpretive freedom, or even randomness, this type of music does not meet the standards of chamber music.

The Chinese term for ensemble music includes a sign meaning ‘overlapping, multiple layers.’ Singrov’s *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* interprets the word ‘ensemble’ in French as ‘By expressing an entire work, a universal musical effect is obtained, which means that everyone must participate in the performance or singing.’ The French word ‘ensemble’ (meaning ‘together’ or ‘whole’) has gained musical popularity thanks to the expression ‘morceau d’ensemble,’ meaning a piece in which everyone plays or sings. Thus, it can be understood that the word has at least two meanings: richness of musical lines and collaboration of various performers. Therefore, each part appears in the leading role while maintaining a perfect harmony with the other parts; together they make up the entire instrumental or vocal piece. In one of his articles, Polish pianist Jerzy Marchwiński drew attention to the problem of the pianist in chamber music: ‘Basically, the term chamber piano music, as I understand it, covers all activities related to the performance of piano music, except for playing solo.’ Although the Author does not agree with this way of defining chamber music, in a sense, this manner of thinking is very important in the process of educating pianists, both in the course of learning and teaching. For there are only two forms of piano playing: playing alone and playing with others; it is learning to listen that plays a key role in this process. When playing with others, it is necessary to pay attention to whether our own timbre, tempo or musical intuition harmonize with the other performers; when playing solo, you also need to be able to listen to whether the music you play brings the effect you want. This is hard to understand at the elementary level of education. It is much easier to feel it when we collaborate with others.

Referring to the understanding of a performance manner with two or more people, the Author believes that although we take into account the same number of performers, they can be divided into three types:

The first type is unison or ensemble performance. Unison is the most basic form of coordinated music (this type of performance was most common in playing Chinese national instruments 20 years ago). The composition is relatively simple, and

the musical layers are not of utmost importance if the synchronization is good. There is no coordination between the individual parts. Although in ensemble performance there is a clear division into parts that cooperate with each other, and individual voices allow the sonic characteristics of the instruments to be expressed, it is impossible to make each instrument gain an equivalent position. Moreover, such works are often early court music, passed down in the oral tradition, adapted by folk artists, often from early folk songs, and not by composers specializing in works for specific musical instruments or voices, which leads to certain problems. Firstly, the harmonic effect of many instruments playing the same melody is very imprecise; secondly, the lack of planning for multi-part phrases causes the melody to disappear and the layers of music to be chaotic.

The second type is accompaniment. Although the piano part is very important, it always remains in a subordinate position. Its task is to launch, support and guide the main or vocal part, but it cannot come to the fore. Famous Italian pianist Michele Gioiosa included the following observation in his article 'Unknown Piano Accompaniment:' 'In short, as a qualified piano accompanist you must be humble and serve others with all your outstanding knowledge and proficiency in musical notation. You need piano proficiency to be able to accompany each performance, a perfect musical intuition as well as an understanding and mastery of the musical styles of composers from different periods of history.' In addition, from the point of view of the performance content, piano accompaniment often appears in operas or instrumental concertos. These pieces were originally written for a symphony orchestra, and the current piano part is a transcription of the orchestral part. This raises numerous technical problems, e.g. it is extremely difficult to convey the fast bow technique of string instruments in its original form and it requires far-reaching changes. If there are too many parts or the range is too broad and the melody that needs to be underlined cannot be emphasized in the accompaniment part, the pianist must know which choice to make. Therefore, a professional accompanist, in addition to the above basic traits, must have a thorough understanding of the performer's needs. This proves that accompaniment and chamber ensemble are two completely different forms of artistic expression.

The third type is a chamber ensemble, i.e. proper chamber music, which, according to the Author, constitutes the pinnacle of cooperative musical expression. This type of work must include the following characteristics:

1. it consists of two or more parts (instruments or human voices);
2. the score was very precisely marked by the composer and leaves very little room for improvisation;
3. the number of performers is generally smaller than a small symphony orchestra, and the piece may be played in a small concert hall;
4. the rank of each instrument or part is equal in importance;
5. each section of the work is dedicated to a specific instrument or human voice and allows for presentation of specific techniques and timbre of the musical instruments or voices.

Each performer needs to have a good understanding of the instruments and parts of the co-performers in order to be able to capture the music from the perspective of the work as a whole, achieving perfect coordination with all other parts. In fact, in chamber music, individual parts constantly switch roles between solo parts and ensemble parts. So how should these natural and constant transformations be interpreted to guarantee beauty and completeness of the performed piece in order for it to become a masterpiece of chamber music? This is one of the most important questions that we pianists have been asking ourselves for years, deciding to work as soloists, chamber musicians but also accompanists and coaches working at the opera.

### **Brief description of the Mongolian traditional culture**

The Mongolian nation is one of the members of the great multi-ethnic Chinese family. It boasts a long history and great culture. The Mongols have their own language and script, they profess shamanism and Buddhism, which is why an important part of their traditional music is ritual music. They are known for their singing and dancing skills, and in the long history of their existence they have preserved admiration for heaven and earth and respect for their ancestors in a unique way.

Mongolian music is mainly divided into three categories: folk music, court music and ritual and religious music. It is characterized by beautiful melody, wide breath, deep emotions and a characteristic steppe style. Since music has always been closely related to life, the nomadic lifestyle gave Mongolian music the mood of horses galloping across vast steppes. Adagio in a slow rhythm, with an unrestricted mood, in a quite slow tempo and with a wide range of sound; moderato in a sustained marching tempo, with a beautiful melody; allegro with a distinct, regular rhythm, full of life.

In China, Mongolian music is commonly associated with Urtyn duu, Khoomii and Morin Huur. So, how the evolution and development of the Morin Huur as a representative of traditional Mongolian musical instruments has looked like up to its contemporary position and importance?

In modern times, along with social development, the national culture has begun to attract more and more attention. As a traditional national musical instrument of the Mongolian nation, the Morin Huur has also undergone a radical transformation in the new social environment. Solo, ensemble and concert pieces have been appearing in an increasing number in all corners of the land inhabited by the Mongolian nation.

### **Development of Mongolian music**

The music of each ethnic group is closely related to its lifestyle. The Mongols are no exception. For a long time, their ancestors inhabited the virgin forests of the Great Khingan. Leaving the forests and moving to the steppes, they gradually moved from the hunter-gatherer lifestyle to the steppe lifestyle, eventually becoming a nomadic nation.

The Great Khingan in Inner Mongolia is the cradle of the Mongol ancestors and the starting point for the development of Mongolian music. The ancestors of the Mongols inhabited the Ergun River basin for a long time, creating their own music bearing characteristics of the mountain hunting culture. These were hunting songs of ancient Mongol tribes, shamanistic songs and dances and early heroic epics. At that time, the music was very simple, even primitive. It consisted of simple keys and uncomplicated rhythms with a short structure. However, since these are distant times, of which no historical records have survived, little is known about the music of this period. We can find traces thereof only in very few documents.

The period of the nomadic musical culture of the Mongols lasted almost a thousand years – from the mid-9th to the end of the 18th century. The culture of the steppe nomads went a full development cycle. It was not until 1206 that Chinggis haan (Genghis Khan) united the Mongol tribes, establishing the Mongol Khanate. The Mongol society underwent a transition from a tribal clan society to a nomadic feudal society, which also entailed an acceleration in the development of musical culture. The songs from the reign of Genghis Khan recorded in the book *The Secret History of the Mongols* were mostly shamanic sacrificial songs and hymns with a short rhythm,



numerous words and much less emphasis on the melody. The simplicity and stylistic conciseness of the period of living in the mountains of the Great Khingan had not completely disappeared at that time. In 1260, Huvlai (Kublai Khan) proclaimed himself Emperor of China in Kaiyuan, changing the name of the country from Genghis Khan's 'Great Mongol Empire' to 'Dayuan' (or the Yuan Dynasty) in 1271, thus establishing one of the most powerful empires in human history. During nearly a century of the rule of the Yuan Dynasty, the Mongolian culture achieved unprecedented development, creating its own immensely rich and original steppe musical culture. At that time, shepherd songs, hymns, banquet songs and longing songs became popular. At the same time, traditional musical instruments such as the Huqin and the qobuz also matured and acquired their final form. In terms of themes and musical style, the Urtyn duu shepherd melodies, characterized by their prolonged nature and high-pitched tone, can be considered a symbol of the style of the steppe music of that period. They had a strong influence on the development of later Mongolian music and even music of other ethnic groups in China and in many areas of Eurasia. Along with the historical development, after the unification of Mongolia by the Qing Dynasty, the society clearly stabilized under the rule of the feudal lords. The Mongols of the southernmost part of Inner Mongolia were culturally influenced by the Central Plains Han (Chinese) nation, gradually abandoning their original nomadic lifestyle and switching to agriculture and manufacture.

As the changes in the system of manufacture and work occurred and the living conditions improved, in the middle period and decline of the Qing Dynasty, Mongolian music entered the third stage of its development – the period of the semi-agricultural and semi-shepherd musical culture.

The theme and style of Mongolian music has thus undergone two major periods of changes in its history: from music-dance forms represented by shamanism and archaic collective songs to the stage of lyrical music represented by the Urtyn duu shepherd song; after successive centuries of stable development, it evolved towards narrative music represented both by short melodies and long narrative songs.

### **Origin and development of the Morin Huur**

The name of the instrument commonly known in China as 'Matouqin' is 'Morin Huur' in Mongolian, which is usually spelled in English as 'Morin Huur' or

‘Morin Khuur.’ The Chinese term ‘matouqin’ has only become popular in modern times. In the past, this instrument was known by various names and took various shapes. According to the relevant documents, the Huqin or the Huer appeared already during the reign of the Tang Dynasty (618–907 AD). The meaning of the term ‘Huqin’ during this period was very broad and vague. It could be Pipa, Qobuz or Huuli (big and little Huuli) or some other type of plucked or bowed string instrument. In Mongolian, all instruments are collectively called Huer. The Huqin of the Song Dynasty (960–1127 AD) is essentially a continuation of the Huqin of the Tang Dynasty; it developed later – a Huqin with a neck in the form of a horse’s head appeared (Healligsen Huur, Horqin Healligsen Choor), which then evolved into the Huer and the Choor, which are two string instruments of different shapes, while the plucked Qobuz changed over time into a Qobuz played with a bow. We can find a detailed description of the Choor in the book *Yuan Shi · Liyuezhi*, describing its form as of the reign of the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368 AD). During the reign of the Ming and Qing Dynasties (1368–1912 AD), the Choor was used not only at the imperial court, but it was also widespread amongst the steppe inhabitants. The continuous improvement of and innovations introduced to the Huer later on led to the creation of the modern-day Morin Huur, which is still played today.

### **Types of modern Morin Huur**

At the beginning of the 20th century, although the shape of the traditional Morin Huur had already been defined, it was still quite primitive compared to the modern Morin Huur, because it was used only as an accompanying or ensemble instrument. The reform and innovation in the manufacture of the matouqin instruments in the new era began in the early 1950s. They were initiated by the first generation of matouqin performers, Sangdu and Zhang Chunhua, a senior technician at the Hohhot National Musical Instrument Factory at the time. After much effort on the part of the authors, trial and error and much research, the most important elements of the Matouqin reform are as follows: instead of cow, horse or python leather, full-grain leather instruments cannot be played normally due to weather changes. Problems such as deformation under the influence of moisture and too soft leather to provide support; changing the outer bend of the bow to the inner bend greatly increases the flexibility and manoeuvrability of the bow, resulting in various new matouqin playing techniques;

replacing the string material will remove the original ‘noise,’ increase the volume and quality of the sound and the endurance of the strings; all these actions will improve the performance skills.

### **Modern Morin Huur playing techniques**

There are various playing techniques on the modern Morin Huur. After centuries of evolution and development and many new artistic trends, more and more borrowings from vocal and instrumental techniques of other nations or Western bowed and string instruments are present in China and Mongolia in contemporary times. As a result, a complete system of an original Mongolian style of play developed.

In general, it can be broken down into basic performance techniques of the modern Morin Huur, including: combining playing with real tones and overtones as well as the use of special playing techniques, including: three types of portamento playing, sliding finger change playing and ornaments in unison with striking the string, vibrato, playing with the finger left on the string, combination of portamento and vibrato, etc.

Playing with real tones, in Mongolian ‘tubuur darleg’ (‘darleg’ means the performance method, whereas the word ‘tubuur’ in Mongolian means ‘picking, taking out, sorting out,’ so using these words means ‘picking out individual notes on a string’), is also called the ‘monophonic playing technique.’ It is one of the most important and basic methods of playing the modern Morin Huur; at the same time, it is the playing technique that distinguishes the Morin Huur from other musical instruments. Four fingers are used when playing, except the thumb. From the index finger to the little finger, they are marked consecutively with the following digits: 1, 2, 3 and 4. Four fingers touch the strings in different ways.

Most bowed or plucked instruments are usually played by pressing down the strings with fingertips – this applies to the violin and cello as well as the guitar. However, since the Morin Huur strings are made up of hundreds of silk fibres and the bridge is quite tall, it would be difficult to press down the strings with a fingertip to make them vibrate as a whole to achieve a real tone. Taking into account the separability of the bow and the body of the instrument, it is possible to play dyads, which significantly enhances the tone colour and expressiveness of the music.

The techniques of playing the Morin Huur can be divided into two types: those used when playing real tones and when producing overtones. This overtone production is very important in the technique of playing the Morin Huur. Mr Sumbuur, PhD, a young Morin Huur performer, believes that ‘the overtone technique may account for nearly 50% of all Morin Huur playing techniques.’ He also believes that ‘if a Morin Huur performer cannot play overtones, he or she will not be able to perform any contemporary piece.’

### **Special playing techniques on the modern Morin Huur**

Portamento is a technique that is often used in string instruments and vocal music. However, portamento on the modern Morin Huur is very typical and characteristic of Mongolian music. When Mongolian music is played on the Morin Huur, it very rarely starts directly from the first note of the score. It is much more frequent that a piece starts with portamento up or down to reach the first note of the work. There are three common types of portamento: up, down and back and forth.

Portamento with a change of grip is a technique typical of all string instruments. However, the change of grip on the Morin Huur differs from that performed on other string instruments, since it is not only a way of changing the grip but also a way of playing Mongolian music, which is a manifestation of the Mongolian national style. In terms of the speed of changing the grip, we can distinguish two types: fast and slow, depending on the content of music and the needs of emotional expression. Slow finger switch is usually used in more lyrical music, while fast – in cheerful music.

A sound ornament in the form of striking the strings in unison is one of the specific techniques of playing the Morin Huur and also one of the specific expressive means of Mongolian music. This technique involves playing with the second, third and fourth fingers in the position of second and third. Therefore, if we play a melody with the first finger, we can use the second, third and fourth fingers to strike the strings at different tone positions; if we play the melody with the second or third finger, then we strike the strings with the fourth finger.

When striking the strings in unison, unlike performing ornaments in unison, the sound obtained is not an ornament but a basic tone in the melody. The playing technique is the same as for playing ornaments in unison.

The finger tremolo playing technique is borrowed from Western string instruments. It is usually used when performing contemporary and folk music of other nations.

The above list contains only some of the most representative playing techniques on the modern Morin Huur. Some of them are a heritage of traditional music and continuation of ancient Mongolian music while others are borrowed from other musical cultures. It is the primary means of expression in the musical language of the contemporary Morin Huur.

### **The concept of tradition and modernity**

The word 'tradition' has different meanings. Here, the Author uses it only with reference to traditional music, i.e. music inherited from ancestors, passed down by members of the nation and closely related to its customs. Especially to the musical culture being a heritage of the shepherd and agricultural people. It is a musical cultural tradition bearing the characteristics of a local or regional community, functioning within a larger, complex society. This category includes various folk songs, vocal and dance music, traditional spoken word, religious and ritual music.

Traditional music is characterized by the following: firstly, it is often a kind of cultural heritage with a long history and deep accumulation; secondly, it is oral and improvisational in relation to the process of creating music; thirdly, there is a verbal transmission of the process of creating traditional music: inheritance, transmission and variation; fourthly, traditional music is associated with a specific 'time and spatial' group life and folk and customs traditions, and its performance depends on the customs and folk context;

The difference between the traditional and new music is manifested mainly in the difference between the form of inheritance and the form of music, not in time. For example, the uprising of Gada Meiren lasted from 1929 to 1931. Therefore, the song 'Gada Meiren' was created in the 1930s. Considering the matter in terms of time, it belongs to contemporary music, but considering the elements of folk music it contains and traditional oral transmission, the verbal character of its creative techniques, the musical structure and features of musical language, we have to classify it as traditional music.

In the same way, the traditional Morin Huur referred to in this work was derived and developed from the characteristics of the ‘traditional music,’ boasting a long history, often improvised and transmitted orally, in close association with the social life and culture of its time. The modern Morin Huur, compared to the traditional one, is slightly changed and improved with other Chinese and Western creative and performance techniques characteristic of bowed and string instruments.

### **Traditional pieces for Morin Huur and vocal part**

#### **Urtyn duu – long song**

The term ‘long song’ is a free translation of the Mongolian term ‘Urtyn duu’ (‘urto in daguu’ or ‘ordo in daguu’). The word ‘urtyn’ means ‘long, long-lasting, eternal,’ referring to both ‘time value,’ ‘duration’ and ‘eternity.’ In other words, ‘Urtyn duu’ means, firstly, the long and relaxing rhythm of these pieces and the characterization of broad and ‘stretched’ melodies; secondly, it signifies longevity and therefore antiquity of this musical form. Moreover, it finally means their ‘eternity,’ hence ‘a song that never changes.’

Urtyn duu is a lyrical folk song composed by the steppe nomads from the North of China, accompanying them in their everyday life and work in animal husbandry as well as sung during traditional holidays, everyday activities and herds grazing. It is characterized by a long and soothing melody, an open artistic concept, a long breath and emphasis on the melody with a fewer number of words.

#### **Qogor un daguu**

Qogor un daguu, also called qogor, is one of the most valued techniques in Mongolian singing, widely regarded as a relic of the Mongolian court music. This term means ‘echo’ or ‘harmony,’ among others, and is an ancient Mongolian polyphonic choral form, unique to the Mongolian tradition. Usually it comprises the tenor part of the leading voice, accompanied by other male voices performing the basso continuo part in the form of qogor, and jointly performed turleg parts.

There is as yet no consensus in academic circles as to the origin of qogor. Some researchers believe that this form of singing derives from hunting songs,

sacrificial rituals and war chants of the archaic period. Before the ancient Mongols fought each other, the opponents first sang loudly to raise their own morale and to intimidate the opponent. This singing included leading parts, and all the soldiers, wielding swords and spears, sang a part resembling basso continuo, thus creating a powerful wave of sound. Irregular ‘mixed singing’ is probably the oldest, primitive form of qogor, which was then being incorporated into court music, transforming into an increasingly systematic vocal form.

### **Khoomii**

Khoomii is a unique ‘guttural’ singing of the Mongolian people in which one person sings simultaneously with two voices using special sound techniques, thus creating a rare polyphonic form. By using a special breathing technique, the performer violently hits the vocal cords with a stream of air, making a strong, gurgling sound constituting the bass part. Then, through the appropriate resonance of the oral cavity, overtones are strengthened and concentrated, thanks to which the voice becomes transparent, high-pitched and its tone colour metallic, which, with appropriate technical proficiency, allows for achieving very beautiful and original sound effects.

### **‘Wulger’ from the middle Qing period and ‘holvoo’ and long narrative song from the decline of Qing**

Wulger, also known as ‘Huren Wulger,’ is a form of melodeclamation popular in eastern Inner Mongolia, in the regions Korqin, Zhaowuda, Hulunbuir, eastern Xilin Gol and some provinces in Northeast China inhabited by larger Mongolian communities. ‘Hu Ren’ is Huqin, which is the predecessor of many Mongolian string and bowed instruments, which gradually evolved into the sihu accompaniment. ‘Wulger’ is a ‘tale’ told by a special storyteller called Huurqi, accompanied by the Huqin, played by the storyteller himself. The repertoire is extremely diverse; it features many characters and has a complex plot, and the tale itself may last from several to several dozen days or even several months.

Holvoo is a form of improvised melodeclamation popular in eastern Mongolia. Holvoo means ‘combination,’ ‘junction’ or ‘link.’ According to Mongolian

Ming literature, the Mongols called this form improvised 'Holvoo' verses, which eventually became an independent melodeclamation form 400 years later.

Long narrative songs of the decline of the Qing Dynasty were a new form of folk song emerging in the semi-agricultural and semi-shepherd areas of eastern Inner Mongolia. They were usually composed and performed by professional Huurqi artists accompanied by the sihu or the Morin Huur. They were characterized by a complex plot, multitude of characters and a considerable length of the piece itself, which was often sung throughout the entire day and night. The melodies were short, the rhythm was standardized, the range of voice was moderate, the words were simple, similar to the colloquial language, and they were clearly recited. Huurqi would always use the same melody when developing various characters and expressing different emotions, creating different musical images by changing the timbre, range, tempo and dynamics. The performer could also add various comments. The form was very flexible, the language was lively, close to colloquial and easy to perceive.

### **Combination of the traditional Morin Huur and the human voice part**

The traditional Morin Huur and its predecessor Choor and the horse hair Huqin have always played an important role in the traditional Mongolian vocal music as an accompaniment. Thanks to the popularization of this type of art, more accepted by wider social circles, the Huqin type instruments are also becoming better known and are gaining more and more sympathy, and thanks to combining them with vocal music, their performance techniques and emotional expression have enriched significantly.

### **History of the development of chamber music for contemporary Morin Huur and piano**

Prior to the 1950s, the Morin Huur in Outer Mongolia was still in the development phase of the traditional instrument. At that time, much of it was still made of leather. There were no special tuning and playing rules. The shepherds relied only on their own sense of rhythm and melody. It was only cellist and Morin Huur performer Ge Camuya, who returned to China from his studies in Russia, that combined the cello playing technique with the Mongolian Morin Huur, using it to perform European



classical music, which opened up new development prospects for the Mongolian Morin Huur. In 1959, the Mongolian Middle School of Music and Dance was the first to open enrolment in the Morin Huur specialization, employing Ge Camuya as the Morin Huur teacher. At that time, most of the school curricula featured output of local composers for Morin Huur with the accompaniment of piano. Over time, the collaboration between the piano and the Morin Huur has become a very important link in the music written for this instrument. Although at the beginning the piano was used only as an accompanying instrument, as the technique of playing the Morin Huur gradually evolved and matured, the repertoire and performance style also became more complex and a large number of chamber and ensemble pieces written specifically for Morin Huur and piano were created.

The Morin Huur was becoming one of the most important solo instruments in Mongolian music, which resulted in a series of pieces composed for Morin Huur with piano accompaniment. In Inner Mongolia, the musical output featuring Morin Huur began with the piece for Morin Huur solo entitled *Spring in Ordos*, composed by Mr Sangduureng in 1965. Although experimental adaptations of folk songs such as *Little Mongolian Melody* or *Lost Horse* existed before, it was only in *Spring in Ordos* that the Morin Huur found its rightful place. For a long time afterwards, the output for Morin Huur was influenced by the socio-cultural environment of the time, and the musical style and artistic concepts bear clear marks of their time. Especially the works of the '1966–1976' period such as *Thousand Galloping Horses*, *From the Steppes to Beijing*, *New Song of Wushen Zhao*, *The Steppe Hymn*, *The Steppe Blossomed with Dazhai Flowers* or *The Borderland Blossomed with Flowers of Happiness*. These works and their titles perfectly reflect the embarrassing situation and the overwhelming influence of politics that the culture and art were under at that time.

After the period of reform and opening in 1978, the output for Morin Huur also entered a new era of development. A number of new pieces, which also captured the spirit of those times, appeared. These include *Destiny* (composed by Qi Baoligao in 1978), *The Joyful Steppe* (composed by Rash Gaw in 1978), *The Voice of the Korqin Piano* (composed by Chen Bayar in 1979), *Dawn* (composed by Na Huhe in 1984) and many others. They embodied the enthusiasm following the political changes and the opening of the country as well as the awakening faith and joy of the people of that time. The first ever concerto for Morin Huur by famous composer Xin Huguang, adapted to a chamber version by the artist himself, is especially worth mentioning. Its

appearance is of great importance for the development of the Morin Huur in Inner Mongolia. Xin Huguang once wrote about his solo album: 'During ten years of unrest, the unique Mongolian art of the Morin Huur also suffered severely. The famous matouqin artists Serasi, Sangduureng and Balgen are gone. No one dared to play the Morin Huur, considered an instrument of the feudal lords. The Morin Huur performers were forced to play the viola and cello.' In this dark period, when folk art was frozen, Xin Huguang began working on a piece for Morin Huur, making it sound with its unique and unparalleled voice. After years of pondering, he began to compose it in 1978, and he completed his first draft of *The Steppe Musical Poem* in 1980. In September 1983, the Second Edition of the Jinqiu North China Art Festival saw the world premiere of the piece; the event was hosted by the Ministry of Culture and the Chinese Music Society. Morin Huur performer Qi Boleg played twice with the Beijing Symphony Orchestra and the Inner Mongolia Song and Dance Orchestra, with great success. In May of the following year, a version with piano accompaniment was released in Beijing. Although the concept of chamber music was completely alien to Mongolian music back then, since the appearance of the piano version of *The Steppe Musical Poem*, chamber music has become a form of expression of Mongolian music.

The 21st-century audience is presented with more and more elaborate ensemble pieces, because since the 1980s, when the Morin Huur entered universities and the Morin Huur education became more and more formal, the form of cooperation between the piano and the Morin Huur has changed.

### **Creative difference and characterization between Western chamber music and developing Mongolian chamber music**

The definition of 'chamber music' in the West now includes two types of small instrumental ensembles, one of which performs privately at home (without audience), and the other performs in public in a concert hall. In its essence, the term 'chamber music' means a close combination of individual instruments into groups in order to execute music and play. One of the most important factors in chamber music is joint performance, mutual communication and the joy of making music. In current usage the term 'chamber music' generally denotes music written for small instrumental ensemble, with one player to a part, and intended for performance either in private, in a domestic environment with or without listeners, or in public in a small concert hall

before an audience of limited size. In essence, the term implies intimate, carefully constructed music, written and played for its own sake; and one of the most important elements in chamber music is the social and musical pleasure for musicians of playing together.

Burney defines chamber music as a ‘choir, solo song, solo instrumental piece, trio, quartet, concerto and some symphonies’ (Burney, H.), and Castil-Blaze classified cantatas, sonatas, scenes, single songs, quartets, romances, bolero, barcarolles and nocturnes as ‘light pieces’ (Modern Music Dictionary, J.-H. Mees, revised edition 3/1828).

Starting from the 19th century, as the bourgeoisie emerged, music moved from aristocratic palaces to public concert halls, and the audience size was gradually growing. Many composers, such as Brahms, Tchaikovsky and C. Debussy, devoted themselves to creating chamber music, composing outstanding works. In the 20th century, chamber music was still an artistic field valued by composers, and many works used modern compositional techniques.

There were elements of sound effects, such as in Stockhausen’s *Sirius* (for electronic synthesizer, trumpet, bass clarinet, soprano and bass), *Amicizia!* by Henze (for clarinet, trombone, cello, percussion and piano). Unlike those mentioned above, the Mongolian chamber music is relatively simple. In the particular historical milieu of the Mongolian nation, the entire process of emergence, development, continuation of tradition of the instrument and of introducing innovation to the modern Morin Huur, as well as the subsequent emergence of its various types, is less than seventy years old. It is only the time the Morin Huur started being taught in Baiyinhar that we can consider the beginning of this instrument in chamber music. At that time, the ensemble output for Morin Huur was created by the performer himself. In the absence of a theoretical basis of composition, in the majority of the cases the method was to add harmony to existing solo or folk melodies and then adapt them as ensemble music; this is why these pieces often lack depth of thought and musical concept. Since the beginning of the 21st century, more and more professional composers have begun paying attention to the Morin Huur in chamber music, and with the advent of professional music output, chamber music for Morin Huur has significantly expanded.

The Morin Huur has evolved from an instrument accompanying the human voice or performing in an ensemble with other national instruments to a solo instrument. It can be said that it has always been a musical instrument close to entertainment, and in

a way similar to popular music. Therefore, the form of its stage presentation is very arbitrary and variable. Sometimes it is improvised piano accompaniment that is used, or vocal part and dance elements are simply added to enrich the stage expression. However, in the Western sense, chamber music is a kind of extremely subtle and delicate music that you have to feel and perceive in peace, almost in a contemplative state, which resulted in the emergence of new forms of Mongolian chamber music performance, definitely different from the Western ones.

When creating the orchestral part in a concerto for Morin Huur, some composers also take into account the timbre and performance techniques of the piano as well as the musical effect of cooperation and interaction between the Morin Huur and the piano, hence such pieces can be performed in large concert halls. They can be performed with orchestra or as chamber pieces in small concert halls, only with piano accompaniment (e.g. the piece *The Steppe Poem* belongs to this category of works).

### **Performance issues**

The piano was created over 300 years old. Whether it is used as a solo, ensemble or accompanying instrument, it occupies an extremely important place in the classical music considered as a whole. Its complex playing technique, rich expression and endless possibilities of changing the timbre make it the undisputed ‘king of musical instruments.’ However, being one of the most important musical instruments in the West, the way it is played and musically arranged differs significantly from Mongolian music. In addition, as a percussion instrument, and at the same time the most cohesive string instrument, it certainly requires many modifications.

The Morin Huur, on the other hand, as a symbol of traditional Mongolian musical culture, has a meaning and specificity that no other instrument can replace. Its sound is soft and dense, simple and melodic, unconstrained and lively in performance, flexible and changeable, with a strong sense of narrative and excellent possibilities of emotional interpretation.

### **Influence of the characteristics of the Morin Huur’s musical style on the piano part**

The Morin Huur was created on a steppe. The characteristics of the geographical environment give this national musical instrument unique national characteristics, namely a distant, passionate, uninhibited and free sound. Its strong rhythmicity, melodiousness and beauty make it difficult to resist the charm of its sound.

As for the tempi, there are three in the pieces for Morin Huur: the slow and unconstrained tempo of Urtyn duu, the lyrical medium or slightly slower tempo of the 'short melody' and a very rhythmic allegro.

In Urtyn duu, the rhythm is extremely free, somewhat similar to an operatic recitative. Here, the Morin Huur uses various performance techniques featuring strong characteristics of Mongolian music such as portamento, vibrato and striking the strings. The melodies are long and deep, sometimes beautiful, sometimes tragic. In order to convey this mood, the piano part often includes broken chords, vibrato and fragments imitating the 'short melody.' The difficulty is that many of Morin Huur's scores do not reflect all the sound effects. Also, unlike an operatic recitative, which is governed by the laws of the language, these passages are not governed by any fixed rules that should be followed. Performers rely on their own musical intuition, resonating with the audience. Each performer deals with this issue in their own way, so the pianist has to accurately capture the co-performer's playing style in order to be able to support him or her at the right moment.

The 'short melody' is best suited to lyrical and narrative music. Mongolian music has always been accompanied by the rhythm of horse riding. Natural breathing makes the rhythm more flexible; rubato is noticeable at almost every moment. Moreover, the piano and the Morin Huur respond to each other like an echo, and there are often situations of transmission between the instruments, of imitation of the same or a similar melody and of a multi-line phrase. The piano must arrange full phrases with the greatest possible coherence, keeping the breath consistent with the Morin Huur.

Fragments of the allegro are often upbeat or fierce, and the features of the Mongolian style with the rhythm of the horse riding are evident thanks to special performance techniques such as strokes of the bow, which is fast or double. In the passages of the allegro, it is the rhythm that dominates, and the progression of the bass and the rhythmic layout of the piano are particularly important. Due to an extremely fast tempo, the piano has to take into account the bass and the melodic line in order for the musical direction of each of these parts to be clear and distinct, which poses a considerable challenge for the pianist in terms of playing technique.

Due to the completely different performance effects and playing methods of the Morin Huur and the piano, some types of piano sounds need to be modified and adapted to the playing style of the Morin Huur. The most common situations include:

There are several ways to deal with Urtyn duu chords. When the melody is soft and long, the chord is often replaced with a broken arpeggio; when the mood is a bit more dramatic and a longer chord is needed, some important chords in the accented places are turned into a tremolo; sometimes, just before the emotional climax, the piano part features a quick arpeggio harmonizing with the chord.

In ‘short melodies,’ in order to emphasize the impression of a horse’s gallop, the semiquaver rhythm in the piano part often appears in the form of extended quavers, while on the last two semiquavers the tempo accelerates, giving the image an impression of being stronger and increasing the rhythmic element of the painted image. In the very fast allegro, the last semiquaver figurations, especially when there are more than two of them, are sometimes changed into a dotted rhythm to emphasize the clarity of the rhythm.

The three pieces selected for the present study differ in terms of style, but they are all representative Morin Huur chamber pieces bearing strong features of Mongolian culture. When shaping the musical image, we can understand it as follows:

The piece *Far Oter* describes the life of migrating nomads as the seasons change; they lead their herds through the dangers of a snowstorm to finally find new pastures. The piece was written by the composer during his stay in Japan, which required emigration. Therefore, nostalgia and longing for the homeland fill this piece to the core. As a result, we can think of it as looking at the steppe from the perspective of a young man full of passion, purity and vitality. Even in the sadness of parting, it can give the audience a sense of beauty, which must not be forgotten by the performer while playing. The performer must constantly remember the words: the beauty of nature, the beauty of life, the beauty of parting, the beauty of fight, the beauty of success.

The content of the piece *Xiireb* is different. It describes the steppe with the mouth of an old man who experienced different turns of fate; with warmth and passion, with calm and indifference, he talks about fairy-tale beauty and bloody fights, youthful self-confidence that turned into a senile awareness of instability and transience as well as about a centuries-old history, still alive and plain as day. Therefore, one cannot rush

while performing this piece. One has to stay calm and keep the music flowing. Allegro is passionate but not aggressive. The timbre of the piano must go as deep as possible into the low registers, the high-pitch notes must be foggy like clouds and the middle tones must be stable and strong like a wise, experienced old man telling an extraordinary story of his life.

*The Steppe Poem* is a more comprehensive presentation of the life, customs, history, regional culture and other aspects of the existence of the inhabitants of the steppes. The epic description leads the listeners into the depths of open spaces, allows them to immerse themselves in them like in an ocean. Therefore, the piano part of this piece should be enriched with as many tone colours as possible; in addition, it was originally a concerto, later adapted to a chamber version, hence in many places we have to hear the orchestra in order to get a fuller sound and a better effect.

## **Abstract**

Mongolian music has a long history. More than a thousand years have passed since its birth, during which it has spread and developed in a unique and characteristic way. In the present millennium, Mongolian music has evolved from rhythmically simple vocal music, through multi-instrumental ensembles, to comprehensively developed vocal, instrumental music and composition. It went through the period of the mountain hunting culture, the period of the nomadic steppe culture, the period of the semi-agricultural and semi-shepherd culture, up to the period of the modern musical culture. The Morin Huur is a musical instrument representative of the specific Mongolian culture, occupying an extremely important place therein, and it cannot be left out of any Mongolian concert. In stage performances, it is most often accompanied by piano, which is why it is particularly important to adjust these two instruments to each other. For a long time, the piano was treated only as an accompanying instrument, the main reason for which is a particular Mongolian tradition, which has been tone music since time immemorial. In the first decades, contemporary output for Morin Huur was, in its entirety, created by practitioners-performers who, however, lacked knowledge of theory of composition, hence they focused solely on the development of playing techniques, placing extremely low demands on the piano part and often forcing the pianist to improvise or writing an accompaniment part consisting of simple

rhythmic chords. In recent years, however, more and more professional composers have turned their attention to ensemble music with the participation of Morin Huur. Many high-level works have also been created, gaining more and more sympathy of the audience. Requirements on performers have also increased. Now, the performers not only need to demonstrate excellence in their playing technique but also their knowledge of musical instruments and styles as well as general musical knowledge.

The historical significance and evolutionary process of the Morin Huur, whether we consider it to be a descendant of the Qobuz, the horse hair Huqin or other ancestors, remain the same. It praises and describes the eventful history of the Mongolian people of the last millennium. Every Morin Huur performer, the moment he or she takes the instrument in the hands, has great respect for the history and national pride of the Mongols. If the pianist does not understand these emotions, it will be difficult to establish a connection between them. Understanding the playing technique and sound effects of the Morin Huur can greatly increase the silent understanding of the pianist in the co-performance process, not only influencing selection of the appropriate piano timbre, but also allowing for a deeper understanding of how to work with this extraordinary instrument.