

CHAPTER 4

Twice Removed for Clarinet Solo (2000/2002) by Shih-Hui Chen

Introduction

About the Composer¹

Shih-Hui *Chen* (陳士惠) was born on 6 September 1962 in Taipei, Taiwan. She received degrees from the National Academy of Arts in Taiwan (1982), Northern Illinois University (MM, 1985), and Boston University (DMA, 1993). Among her teachers are *Hsu Tsang-houei*, Earl Kim, Shui-Long *Ma*, Joyce McKeel, Marjorie Merryman, and Bernard Rands. In recent years, Chen's works have been performed around the world and received great recognition. She was a recipient of the American Academy in Rome Prize (1999), a Guggenheim Fellowship (2000), a Barlow Commission (2001), and many grants, including those from the Fromm Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Meet the Composer Foundation, the Tanglewood Music Center, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, ASCAP, the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute of Harvard University, and the Bellagio Rockefeller Foundation.

Chen was Composer in Residence at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute (2000 and 2001) and is Assistant Professor of Composition at the Shepherd School of

¹ Most of this biographical information was provided by the composer. The rest was taken from standard reference works.

Music, Rice University. Her music has been analyzed for the Asian music journal *CHIME* by the German ethnomusicologist Barbara Mittler, who also wrote the article about Chen in *New Grove 2*. In the article, Mittler mentions, “A great number of her works, such as her first and second string quartets (1979, 1987), *Water Ink* (1988) and *Moments* (1995), are modernist paintings in sound that do not immediately betray her Chinese origin. Where she employs Chinese traditional techniques she does so with subtlety, but to great effect.”² Besides the works singled out by Mittler, Chen has also written *Little Dragonflies*, a set of children's piano pieces based on Taiwanese folk melodies, and several works for the *pipa*, a pear-shaped, lute-like Chinese instrument. The unique sound and techniques of the *pipa* seem to have inspired the composer more than other instruments. According to Chen, the ideas and articulation of several passages in *Twice Removed* were also inspired by the sound of this instrument.

With respect to Chen’s compositional style, Mittler wrote: “In the melodically charming *66 Times* (1992), Chen applies the Asian techniques of embellishment on a single sound and heterophony. Each of the movements revolves around a small number of notes and motifs which are continually reinterpreted.”³ The ideas of embellishing and reinterpreting a single pitch or motive have long existed in Chinese traditional music. These techniques are also used in *Twice Removed*.

² *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Chen Shihui,” by Barbara Mittler.

³ *Ibid.*

About the Piece

The original version of *Twice Removed* for alto saxophone was commissioned by the Longy School of Music in Boston in 2000 and premiered by saxophonist Kenneth Radnofsky, a faculty member at Longy and the New England Conservatory of Music. Chen finished this work on 9 February 2000 when she resided in Rome. All the musical terms used in this piece are therefore in Italian. The main musical ideas in *Twice Removed* came from *Once Removed* (1999)⁴, a documentary film for which Chen wrote a film score. Although it was originally written for the saxophone, *Twice Removed* works well for the clarinet. According to the composer, this piece was in fact conceived with both clarinet and alto saxophone in mind.

The solo clarinet version was produced by the composer for clarinetist Min-Ho Yeh, the writer of this study, for a concert tour of Boston, San Diego, and Seattle during the Taiwanese American Heritage Week in May 2002. The first performance, however, was given by the writer on 5 April of the same year at Indiana University, prior to the tour. The clarinet version is a perfect fourth higher than the original. It is also modified in order to accommodate the wider range and different sound characteristics of the clarinet. One of the major differences between these two versions, for instance, is the section from mm. 121 to 135, where the clarinet drops down an octave, making a contrast with the preceding altissimo section and expanding the spectrum of timbre in the work. The music is published by Trigon Music Press (Houston, TX) and the length of the work is approximately 8 minutes.

⁴ *Once Removed* was produced in 1999 by filmmaker Julie Mallozzi and premiered at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. It is a documentary about Mallozzi's journey to China fifty years after her mother's immigration to the U.S.

Analysis

Form

The musical design of *Twice Removed* is in essence a continual reworking of the opening theme, focusing on motivic development within certain tonal centers, although it is not a tonal work. It can be divided into four sections with similar musical elements. The formal design of this piece is:

Measures:	1–20	20–57	57–139	140–159
Sections:	A	B	C	D
Sub-sections:		B ₁ B ₂ B ₃ B ₄	C ₁ C ₂ C ₃ C _{3a} C _{3b} C _{3c} C _{3d}	C ₄ C ₅

On the whole, section B is an outgrowth of section A, section C is an expansion of section B, and section D is a recurrence and modification of section A. All the pitch names in the following discussion refer to written rather than sounding pitches.

Section A (mm. 1–20)

Meditativo. The theme, from m. 1 to the first note of m. 9, reveals the basic features of the work: stepwise motion, wide leaps, and embellishment. The stepwise motion, in particular, is the most important feature of the work (see Example 4–1).

Example 4-1 shows the musical notation for the theme in measures 1–9. The score is in treble clef and consists of two staves. The tempo is marked "ca. 60, Meditativo". The music features stepwise motion, wide leaps, and embellishment. Dynamics include *pp* and *p*. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system containing measures 1–5 and the second system containing measures 6–9. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4, then back to 4/4, and finally to 4+5/8.

Example 4–1. The theme, mm. 1–9

The first phrase, mm. 1–4, is delineated by the A–B and C[#]–D dyads, emphasizing the B's and C[#]'s through the longer note values. Also, on a deeper level, the A's and D's can be viewed as neighbor notes to the B–C[#] dyad. The pitch D appears at first as a grace note in m. 3 and then as an octave displacement at the end of the same measure. The pitch content of this phrase (A, B, C[#], and D) can also be represented by the pitch-class set class 4–11 (0135). The intervals resulting from this particular set class include a minor second and two major seconds from the adjacent pitches and a minor third, a major third, and a perfect fourth from the non-adjacent ones. These intervals are in fact the foundation of the entire work. The second phrase (consisting of E^b, F, G, and A^b), mm. 5–9, also belongs to the same set class and is built a tritone below the first phrase.

The phrases in these nine measures imply a structure that is similar to the antecedent–consequent phrases in tonal music. Although there is no harmonic reference in these phrases, the similarity of the melodic contour and the tritone relation between the phrases suggest a question–answer relationship. The second phrase, mm. 5–9, is more active in rhythm, but the two phrases have similar ornamentation and rhythmic structure. The transition in mm. 9–13 (composed of major seconds, minor thirds, and major thirds) brings the focus of the music back to the B–C[#] dyad before a new phrase starts. The ending phrases of the A section, mm. 14–20, are again built on the B–C[#] dyad, with the focus shifting from C[#] to B. The scale in m. 15, derived from m. 9, is more rapid, and its range is expanded.

The final note of this section, B, is the same as the opening one. It not only marks the end of the first section but also initiates the next. The fermata on the note makes a

nice bridge between the two sections. Also, the return of the pitch B and the overlapping phrase structure in m. 20 suggest a tonal center, which is confirmed as the music progresses.

Section B (mm. 20–57)

B₁, mm. 20–30, *Quasi scherzo e improvviso, Tempo rubato*. The melody in mm. 20–25, consisting of A–B and B–C[#] dyads, is developed directly from the first four measures of the opening theme (mm. 1–4). In mm. 26–29, the E^b–F dyads are followed by a scale (mm. 28–29), which is drawn from m. 9. In this section, the more animated rhythm and articulation, the chromaticism such as B's and B^b's in mm. 21–23, and the tempo/expression indications all imply a more lively spirit than the previous section.

B₂, mm. 31–39. Before m. 31, the music has been mostly evolving from the theme. Starting from m. 31, motivic development begins to unfold. A series of ascending scales based on the one in m. 9 is more prevalent than the dyads in this section. Nevertheless, the section still features dyads: B–C[#] in mm. 34–35, B^b–C and E–F[#] in m. 38, and C–D in m. 39.

B₃, mm. 40–44. Although brief, section B₃ is distinguished from the previous section by the different articulation and rhythm and the subtle tempo change. The character here is, according to Chen, inspired by the *pipa*. As in mm. 21–22, the stepwise motion in this section is rendered by means of a clear alternation of half step and whole step. The A–B^b dyads in mm. 42–43 are decorated by the grace notes E^b and E, a tritone above and below the dyads, respectively. Here, instead of dividing the A–B^b and E^b–E dyads into two phrases as in the similar instance in mm. 1–9, the composer combines the

dyads a tritone apart into a single phrase. The fermata on the quarter-note rest in m. 44 marks the end of section B₃ as well as the beginning of the next subsection.

B₄, mm. 45–57, *Dolce*. This part, starting with an ascending scale, is a development of the melody in mm. 10–20. Both parts are marked *dolce*. Also, the two eighth notes in m. 47 clearly echo those in m. 13 in spite of the different articulations. The passage in mm. 45–51, however, dwells on the D–E dyad rather than B–C[#].

Section C (mm. 57–139)

It is clear that the material of section C derives from that of section A. Nevertheless, the structure of this section can be even better described as a development and an expansion of section B.

C₁, mm. 57–66, *Cantabile*. The tritone relationship between the first and second phrases of section A is preserved here, but in reverse order. In other words, the A–B and E^b–F dyads in mm. 1–7 are now stated in mm. 57–64 in the order of E^b–F and A–B. The first phrase, mm. 57–61, reflects mm. 1–4 of section A. Nevertheless, the second phrase of section C₁, mm. 62–66, has a closer correspondence with that of section B₁, mm. 26–30.

C₂, mm. 67–72. This part, consisting of several scales in ascending motion and several dyads (A^b–B^b, D–E, and F–G in mm. 69–70), reflects section B₂ on different pitch levels.

C₃, mm. 73–105. This section originates from section B₃ and is expanded to greater length (C_{3a-d}).

C_{3a} , mm. 73–78. This is a counterpart of section B_3 , with the same tempo and articulation.

C_{3b} , mm. 79–91, *Scherzo e molto rubato*. The more vigorous rhythmic patterns and articulation are transformations of section C_{3a} . The ascending gestures (mm. 79, 82, and 85) derive from those in the previous section.

The predominant wide leaps in this section can also be traced back to the descending major seventh in m. 3. The bottom notes are based on the D^b – E^b and B – $C^\#$ (D^b) dyads; the top notes are based on the C – D dyad.

C_{3c} , mm. 92–98, is another manifestation of section B_3 in a higher register.

C_{3d} , mm. 99–105, is an approximate inversion of C_{3b} . The wide leaps begin on the lower notes rather than the high ones.

C_4 , mm. 106–20, *Ballo/Peasante* [*sic*]⁵. The work reaches its climax in this section through the use of the altissimo register, *fortissimo* dynamic, a weighty dancing style, and a quicker tempo. C_4 echoes the first part of section B_4 both structurally and musically.

C_5 , mm. 120–39, *Giocososo/Allegro/legato*. The abrupt register change brings the music back down to a playful passage in the chalumeau register. It starts with a melody reminiscent of that in section B_2 , then moves on to something similar to the latter part of section B_4 (or the end of section A). The descending gestures in this section (mm. 126, 129, and 134–37) are in contrast with the ascending gestures in the previous sections. The music gradually subsides until the opening theme comes back again in m. 140.

⁵ *Pesante*.

Section D (mm. 140–59)

Lontano/Tempo I. As indicated in the score, the music should resume the beginning tempo and sound far away. The A–B dyad is emphasized again in mm. 140–42, just as it was in mm. 1–3. Instead of moving to the E^b–F dyads, as it did in section A, the A–B dyads then go on to the E–F[#] dyads in mm. 142–45. The contour of the melody keeps ascending until it reaches the C–C[#] dyads, the loudest and highest point of this section, in mm. 149 and 150. It rapidly winds down in mm. 150 and 151 to the middle/low register. The competition between the major and minor seconds (or between the major seconds and the major seventh, the inversion of the minor second) continues until the very end of the piece, where the A–B dyad appears for the last time, mirroring the opening.

Meters

One important feature of this piece is the constantly changing meter. Most of the meters last only one to three measures. The meter that lasts longest is 2/4, in the section from mm. 54 to 61, for eight measures. As in many other unaccompanied pieces, the constantly changing meter gives *Twice Removed* a sense of irregularity and momentum, and provides the performer with more freedom for interpretation. The irregular meter also makes the piece sound more spontaneous, an appropriate approach and a common practice in Chinese music.⁶

⁶ Usually ancient Chinese traditional music is performed by one person only. Music is notated in Chinese characters (referring to pitches) without rhythmic references. Performer may change the tempo and rhythm of a piece of music depending on variables such as location, situation, and the performer's mood.

Intervals/Scales

As mentioned before, the first phrase of section A, mm. 1–4, belongs to the pitch-class set class 4–11 (0135). The intervals resulting from this pitch-class set class, including minor second, major second, minor third, major third, and perfect fourth, permeate the entire work. The major and minor seconds and their inversions (minor and major sevenths) are the most important intervals in the work. Instances of competition between the major and minor seconds are abundant (e.g., mm. 21–23, 40–41, 73–78, and 92–93). There are also many tritones in the piece. They appear not only as adjacent intervals (e.g., mm. 42–43, 65–66, 68–69, 72, 94–96, 146, 148, and 151–53) but also as indications of the relation between phrases and the tonal centers (e.g., the theme, mm. 1–9). The work is therefore unified by these intervallic relations.

Another unifying idea in this work is the ascending and descending scales/gestures. In section B, for example, ascending scales can be found in mm. 28, 31–34, 36–37, 39, 44, 50, and 52. The first clear descending scale does not appear until section C (in m. 68). Nevertheless, there are several short passages before that point (e.g., mm. 16, 29, 32, 53, and 65) that contain descending gestures. More instances of descending scales/gestures can be found in the latter part of the piece, such as the passages in mm. 126, 134–37, 148, and 150–53. A closer examination of the scales reveals that many are constructed on the principle of alternating major and minor seconds, such as that in m. 34, D–E–F–G–A^b–B^b–B–C[#] (known as an octatonic scale). Except for this one, however, the other scales in the piece adopt only the idea of alternating intervals rather than presenting a completely octatonic pattern.

Summary

On the whole, the structure of *Twice Removed* is unified by intervals derived from the pitch-class set class 4–11 (0135). The continuous metamorphosis of the opening theme provides the piece not only coherence but also an ever-changing effect. With respect to compositional technique and musical elements, this piece originates by and large from Western music. What gives the work Chinese character, however, is the internalization of some philosophical ideas that have deep roots in Chinese culture and some stylistic elements from Chinese music. Suggestions pertinent to these interpretive issues and other general remarks are provided in the next section.

Performance Suggestions

General Comments

All dynamic and expression markings throughout the piece should be carefully observed because many nuances are expressed through the subtle changes in volume and tone colors. The contrasts within a phrase and between phrases are vital to performance of the piece. It is also important to maintain a sense of direction throughout the work, especially in long notes. The grace notes should be played quickly and clearly because they provide the music with energy and spirit. The composer wants to transform the opening theme from an introverted character to an extroverted one, and then back to a reclusive spirit. In order to get her ideas across to the performer, Chen suggests, “When you perform, please bear in mind the character changes in each section and, even more importantly, the transformation of the inner/outer states.”⁷ As in most unaccompanied solos, both the pace

⁷ From an interview with the composer in February 2003.

of the music and the control of air have a dramatic influence on presentations of the work. It is important to keep the inward–outward–inward design in mind so the music will not reach the climax too soon.

The work can be likened to a monolog, starting with a monologist contemplating and murmuring off stage without much inflection in tone. The person then slowly walks toward the side of the stage (represented by the transformed theme in m. 20) and starts reciting prose along with some spontaneous gestures. The third phase begins when the person gradually moves toward the center of the stage (represented by the section starting in m. 57). The prose becomes more exciting and intense, and the gestures of the person become bigger. The prose eventually reaches its most exhilarating part (portrayed by section C₄, mm. 106–20) before the person starts moving slowly toward the side of the stage when the story winds down (revealed by section C₅, mm. 120–39). Lastly, the person stands by the exit and quietly recites the prose for the last time before quietly disappearing from the stage (depicted by section D, mm. 140–59).

Section A

The opening part of *meditativo* is well portrayed by the mellow timbre of the middle register of the clarinet. The first note in mm. 1 and 5 should start as quietly as possible. After the *crescendo* in m. 1, the dynamic of the phrase should be *piano*, which is sustained until the C[#] in m. 4. The *diminuendo* in m. 4 should bring the dynamic back to *pianissimo* so the next phrase can start softly. To play the first phrase (mm. 1–4) smoothly, the performer faces an inherent problem of the clarinet—crossing the break between the chalumeau and the clarion registers. The connections between the B₄'s and

A4's are difficult. By keeping most of fingers down for the A's, the player should be able to solve this problem. I suggest using the resonant fingering for the A (—|○●●|○●● B).

Section B

In m. 35, you can hold the B key down while trilling to C[#]. The speed of the trills should be reduced in the second beat. In contrast, the trills in m. 38 should be played with increasing speed and intensity. Here, the regular C fingering might sound better than the side-key trill fingering. The rhythmic pattern in mm. 40–41 (as well as in mm. 73–78) is inspired by the articulation of the *pipa*. The sixteenth notes should be short and bouncy. Nevertheless, according to Chen, it is not necessary to imitate the plucking effect that is common in music for the *pipa*. The subtle tempo changes in section B₄, mm. 45–57, should be observed. The passages in mm. 45–47 and 51–52 (in 6/8 and 5/8) need to be more active and should sound faster than the ones immediately following them (in 4/4, 3/4, and 2/4).

Section C

The A^b–B^b trills in m. 69 can be achieved by lifting the left hand index finger while playing the A^b. The section between mm. 79 and 105 is a preparation for the climax that starts in m. 106. Both the high and low voices from m. 80 onwards should be played with clarity and a sense of linear progression. The character here is playful, and the notes should be slightly detached and rough in character. I suggest tonguing the low notes in mm. 90 and 91 so they can speak on time. The fingering and intonation for the E^b6's in mm. 100–102 might be problematic. I recommend using one of the following fingerings

for the E^b: (register key ●●●|○○● E^b) or (register key + thumb ○●●|○○● E^b). A slight *accelerando* and *crescendo* in mm. 103–4 and a bit of *ritardando* in m. 105 will help to build up the momentum of this passage.

For the section from mm. 106 to 120, Chen provides the following remarks:

It is the most important passage of the piece not only tonally, formally, but also musically. You might also have noticed that this passage hits the very top of an arch shape in terms of register. Musically, it brings an inner meditative state of the opening to an “open and bright” state, then returns to a similar reflecting mood of the opening.⁸

The accents should be stressed and the volume sustained throughout the rustic dance section, mm. 106–20, which represents the peak of an arch-shape formal design. The four-bar phrases in mm. 106–17 need to be carefully carried out. The D–E and E–F[#] dyads at the end of each sub-phrase should have more weight than the other notes in the passage. I suggest using the over-blow (harmonic) of B5 to produce the G6's (register key + thumb ●○○|○○○ E^b) and using the regular fingering for F[#]6's (register key + thumb ○●○|○○○ E^b). If they are flat, you may add the right hand sliver key to raise the pitch (press down only the part near the rod so the rings will not go down together with the sliver key). Section C₅, mm. 120–39, contrasts with the previous *altissimo* passages in register and character. But the energy and intensity should remain strong until m. 129, where the music starts to subside gradually.

Section D

When the theme comes back, the B in m. 140 should be slightly accented. The climax of this section, from m. 149 to the first note of m. 150, could be more assertive and articulated than the rest of the section. The section from the second eighth note of m. 150

⁸ From an interview with the composer in February 2003.

to the end needs to be paced carefully both in tempo and volume. The fermatas in mm. 156–58 should not be rushed. I suggest playing the A in m. 158 a bit stronger than the final note B so the last phrase would sound like a question mark lingering at the end.

Summary

In short, *Twice Removed* is a work that gives the performer lots of room for interpretation. Since it is an unaccompanied work, the clarinetist gets full attention from the audience in a performance. Every note, every pause, and every body movement should be deliberately presented. The main challenges lie in maintaining a sense of continuity and carrying out the subtle tonal changes without losing the spontaneity of the work.