

# ACMR Newsletter

Association for Chinese Music Research

中國音樂研究會通訊

<http://acmr.info/>

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



**Adam Kielman**

It was a pleasure to see many of you at our 2020 virtual meeting last month. Despite a hurricane on top of the pandemic, we had a productive business meeting and enjoyed two excellent paper presentations from members Huan Li and Haiqiong Deng; abstracts of their presentations are included in this newsletter.

I thank the members of ACMR for entrusting me with the role of president, and I look forward to collaborating with members over the coming three years in this role to further ACMR's work as an important international forum for the study of Chinese music. Huge thanks are due to our outgoing president Meredith Schweig, who has steered the association over the past three years, and to Alan Kagan, who has passed the position of treasurer to Alec McLane. We are extraordinarily grateful for Alan's hard work and dedication over the decades, and thank Alec for agreeing to take over the role. We also welcome to the board Shelley Zhang, who was elected as secretary.

Outgoing president Meredith Schweig has moved into the role of member-at-large alongside Sue Tuohy, who we also congratulate on her retirement last spring. We look forward to celebrating all of their contributions and accomplishments in person next year!

Our newsletter editors Shuo (Niki) Yang and Matthew Haywood have produced a rich and informative newsletter, their second issue since taking over as editors last year. Besides the usual reports on activities and publications by members, this newsletter includes two feature pieces by members on their ongoing research. Xi Zhang's piece offers an overview of her work on the interaction of linguistic tones and melody in Chaozhou music. Matthew Werstler discusses the adaptation of Zhuang antiphonal singing practices to WeChat. These two pieces offer a glimpse into the diverse and exciting new research being pursued by ACMR members.

Enjoy the newsletter, and I wish everyone continued health and safety in these trying times.

Adam Kielman

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## People and Places

► **Samuel Chan's** paper "Haunting Vocalities: Sinophone Articulations across Asia/America" was awarded the Hewitt Pantaleoni Prize for the best graduate student paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology.

► **Yuan-yu Kuan** has completed his PhD degree in Ethnomusicology in Dec 2019 from the University of Hawaii at Manoa with the dissertation "Musical Navigation: Cultural Hybridity and Indigeneity among Islands of the Ryukyus and Taiwan." His advisor is Frederick Lau.

► **Yanxiazi Gao** has completed her MA degree in Ethnomusicology in the Summer of 2020 from the University of Hawaii at Manoa with the dissertation "Two Generations of Contemporary Chinese Folk Ballad *Minyao* 1994-2017: Emergence, Mobility, and Marginal Middle Class."

► **Shuo Yang's** paper "In-Between: Perspectives from an International Student on Decolonizing Ethnomusicology" was awarded the 2020 Martin Hatch Prize (Honorable Mention) by the Society for Asian Music. The award recognizes the best student paper(s) on an Asian Music topic presented at the 2019 Annual Conference of the Society for Ethnomusicology.

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## Recent Publications

### Articles

Amar, Nathanel. 2018. "The Lives of Dakou in China: From Waste to Nostalgia." *Études Chinoises* XXXVII-2: 35-60.

Horlor, Samuel. 2019. "Chinese Street Pop and Performing with the Urban Environment." *Etnografie Sonore / Sound Ethnographies* 2 (1): 39-68.

———. 2020. "A Social Aesthetics of Imperfection: Spontaneity and Meaning in Pop on the Streets of China." In *The Aesthetics of Imperfection in Music and the Arts: Spontaneity, Flaws and the Unfinished*, edited by Andy Hamilton and Lara Pearson, 73-85. London: Bloomsbury.

### Edited Books

**Witzleben, Lawrence J. and Mei Xiao, eds. 2019. *Plucked Lutes of the Silk Road: The Interaction of Theory and Practice from Antiquity to Contemporary Performance*. Shanghai: Shanghai Conservatory Press.**

Xiao Mei, Chongjing Kong, and Zhenrui Zhang. "Shaanbei Pipa Shuoshu (Pipa Storytelling of Shaanbei) from the Perspective of Inner Asia." 22-48.

Wen, He. "The Practice of Transition on the Silk Road: Notated Music from the Tang Court Written for a Historical Plucked Lute." 109-126.

Zhang, Xiaodong. "Researching the *Ruanxian* on the Silk Road." 218-226.

### Journal Special Issues

**Amar, Nathanel, ed. 2019. "Sinophone Musical Worlds (1): Circulations of Sounds, Affects and Identities." Special Issue, *China Perspectives* 2019/3.**

Amar, Nathanel. "Editorial – Including Music in the Sinophone, Provincializing Chinese Music." 3-6.

## Recent Publications (cont.)

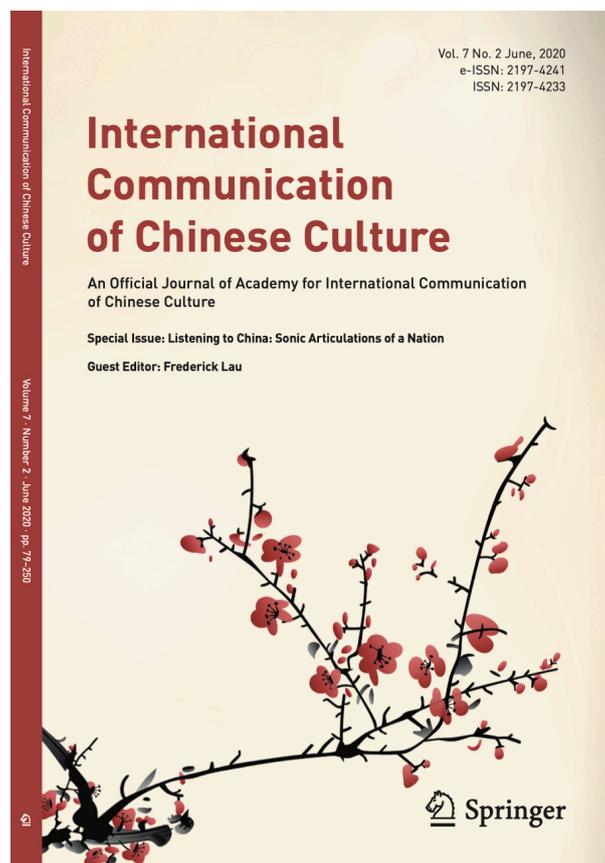
- Lam, Nga Li. "The Song of Selling Olives': Acoustic Experience and Cantonese Identity in Canton, Hong Kong, and Macau across the Great Divide of 1949." 9-16.
- Anderson, Amy and Darren Byler. "Eating Hanness': Uyghur Musical Tradition in a Time of Re-education." 17-26.
- Borel, Eugénie Grenier. "The Shanghai Conservatory of Music and its Rhetoric: Building a World Class Musical Institution with Chinese Characteristics." 27-35.
- Li, Tian. "'Bang Bang Bang' – Nonsense or an Alternative Language? The Lingualscape in the Chinese Remake of I am a Singer." 36-45.
- Zhang, Ge and Xu Jian. "A Brief Genealogy of Hanmai." 63-68.

### **Amar, Nathanel, ed. 2020. "Sinophone Musical Worlds (2): The Politics of Chineseness." Special Issue, *China Perspectives* 2020/2.**

- Amar, Nathanel. "Editorial: Contesting and Appropriating Chineseness in Sinophone Music." 3-6.
- Lin, Chen-Yu. "Relocating the Functions of Chineseness in Chinese Popular Music after the China Wind." 7-14.
- Wang, Yiwen. "Homoeroticising Archaic Wind Music: A Rhizomatic Return to Ancient China." 15-23.
- Amar, Nathanel. "Navigating and Circumventing (Self)Censorship in the Chinese Music Scene." 25-33.

### **Lau, Frederick, ed. 2020. "Listening to China: Sonic Articulations of a Nation." Special Issue, *International Communication of Chinese Culture* 7 (2).**

- Lau, Frederick. "'Listening to China: Sonic Articulations of a Nation": An Introduction." 79-84.
- Yang, Hon-Lun Helan. "Acousmatic Listening and Beyond: Hearing Nationalistic and Cosmopolitan Negotiations in China's Symphonic Music." 85-100.
- Lau, Frederick. "The Sounds of Modernity in Chinese Pop Music." 101-115.
- Wong, Chuen-Fung. "Hearing the Minorities in Modern Chinese Music." 117-131.
- Gibbs, Levi S. "Improvised Songs of Praise and Group Sociality in Contemporary Chinese Banquet Culture." 133-146.
- Kielman, Adam. "Sites and Sounds of National Memory: Performing the Nation in China's Decennial National Celebrations." 147-168.
- Ingram, Catherine. "Localized Listening to State-Sponsored Heritage-Making in Kam Minority Communities of Southwestern China." 169-188.
- Tan, Shzr Ee. "Megaphones Hiding in Trees: Civic Instruction via Mediated Soundscapes in Places of Natural Beauty in China." 189-214.
- Yang, Man Beryl. "From Wild Songs to Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Heritagization of Hua'er in China." 215-230.
- Tse, Priscilla. "Masculinity and Chineseness in post-1950s Hong Kong Cantonese Opera." 231-250.



# ACMR Meeting Presentations

Thursday, October 29, 8-10pm (EST/EDT) online in conjunction with SEM 2020

## Female Qinshi and Gendered Meanings Constructed in Jinghu Performance

**Huan Li, Wesleyan University**

Jinghu, a two-string-bowed Peking opera fiddle, is the lead instrument in Peking opera. Accompanists who play jinghu are called qinshi. Before the 1950s, all qinshi were male because several emperors banned female performers from public stages during the Qing dynasty (1644-1912). Female qinshi first appeared after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. With the formulation and promotion of a new gender ideology during Mao Zedong's era (1949-1976), females were encouraged to learn jinghu and become qinshi. Nevertheless, the virile ethos that underpinned the all-male-performance history has continued to profoundly influence female qinshi's performance activities in reform China (1978-present). In this presentation, I will take two female qinshi as examples to probe the influence of the all-male performance history on jinghu performance,

female qinshi's exploration of innovative jinghu performance styles and techniques, and female qinshi's struggles to achieve career success.

I will argue that with the reconstruction of gender differentiation in reform China, the traditional prejudice that jinghu is a male instrument has resurfaced—a development that has restricted female qinshi's opportunities. Femininity in jinghu performance is discouraged, while masculine virility associated with jinghu performance traditions is still upheld as 'normal' and 'standard.' I will further argue that the contemporary currency of female consciousness has awakened female qinshi to challenge traditional performance conventions established by male qinshi. Throughout this process of negotiation, mass media have played a significant role in promoting and empowering female qinshi.

## Making the Intangible Tangible: Rediscovering Guqin Culture and Wellbeing in Longren, China

**Haiqiong Deng, Independent Scholar**

The guqin is an ancient seven-stringed Chinese zither. It is also a quintessential exemplar of traditional Chinese cultural aesthetics and sensibilities, and these are intimately connected to Chinese conceptions of wellbeing in particular. For millennia, the sound and performance practices of the guqin have served the Chinese people, evoking spiritual qualities such as internal balance, a peaceful, meditative mind, and harmony with nature. It is a delicate instrument that demands sensitivity and it is understood to have the capacity to cultivate mindfulness, virtue, and a harmonious state of being. In the last decade, the guqin has undergone a tremendous transformation from its past elite and exclusive tradition, becoming a popular symbol in mainstream modern culture, this in large part due to national

propaganda efforts and international initiatives aimed at reviving traditional culture and preserving "Intangible Cultural Heritage." On one hand, the guqin is promoted as a living tradition of ancient Chinese culture to epitomize a cultural power both domestically and internationally; on the other hand, a rapidly growing guqin industry caters to the needs of public education, socialization, and cultural expression. Amidst this complex cultural milieu, the heart of the guqin tradition is at risk of being lost. This paper examines how the guqin navigates the various paradoxes and continues to support, contribute to, and generate human wellbeing in modern Chinese culture through a case study of the Longren Guqin Cultural Village in Fujian, China.

# Exploring Singers' Realisation of Tones in Chaozhou

Xi Zhang, University of Cambridge

Chaozhou (潮州, or Chao-Shan, 潮汕, also known as Teochew in the vernacular) is a branch of the South Min dialect in South China spoken mainly by the people in the Chaozhou cultural region. It is a tone language, in which pitch is used to determine the meaning of words. The Chaozhou language has a complex tonal system with eight lexical tones when words are spoken in isolation and a wealth of tone sandhi<sup>1</sup> when words are spoken in connected speech. The lexical tones may be expressed as level tones and contour tones at different tonal registers of high, mid and low. Level tone refers to a tone whose contour remains almost even. Contour tone refers to a tone whose contour may be rising, falling or dipping. These features of the language provide a complex context that can be expected to shape Chaozhou music, in particular the song form.

Tone	Pattern (citation)	Value (Citation)	Value (Sandhi)	Register & Contour	Example
T1	┆	33	23	Mid-level	si – 诗poet
T2	↘	53	24/35	High-falling	si – 死death
T3	↙	213	42/53	Low-dipping	si – 四four
T4	┆	<u>21</u>	<u>54</u>	Low-checked	si – 薛a surname 'si'
T5	┆	55	213	High-level	si – 时time
T6	↗	35	21	High-rising	si – 是yes
T7	┆	11	12	Low-level	si – 逝disappeared
T8	┆	<u>54</u>	<u>21</u>	High-checked	si – 蚀erosion

*Table 1. The eight tones and tone sandhi in Chaozhou language. The citation tones vary slightly from one dialectic area to another in the Chaozhou cultural region. The variety presented here is from the area of Chaozhou City. Chao's tone system is applied to number the lexical tones from 1 to 5. In this system '5' is the highest tone and '1' the lowest. The combinations of two or three figures, e.g. '55', '35', '53', '213', indicate the contours of tones, e.g. level, rising, or falling, or dipping. The underlined '21' and '54' are called Chinese entering tones or checked tones, being shorter in duration than the other tones.*

As a native Chaozhou speaker with a research background in music psychology and ethnomusicology, but currently studying the interaction between speech and music in tone languages, in particular the Chaozhou, I am interested to understand the relationship between linguistic tones and the melody in Chaozhou songs. In a previous study I conducted (with Ian Cross), it was found that there was a high rate of correspondence between tone and melody in Chaozhou songs, with 89% in folk songs and 78% in contemporary songs. Whilst the study based on a corpus of Chaozhou songs effectively showed the general structure of tone-melody matching by emphasising the relation between two successive tones/notes in Chaozhou songs, a further issue was raised - how are tones represented within individual notes in actual performances? The different performances of tones in individual notes, however, is rarely notated. It is assumed that the limits of notation systems, either Western stave notation or the numbered musical notation

## *Singers' Realisation of Tones in Chaozhou (cont.)*

which is widely used in notating Chinese music, as well as composers'/transcribers' oversight of notating ornamentations, may have contributed to the lack of relevant musical details in notated scores. This phenomenon found in Chaozhou songs may not be the only case, as literature involving other tone languages, such as Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, and Vietnamese, suggests that there is a similar lack of attention to tonal contours in music notations<sup>2</sup>. To address this issue, therefore, singers' realisation of the pitch variation within a single tone/note became the subject of my current study.

My exploration of singers' realisation of Chaozhou tones began with a field trip in May 2019 to Chaozhou city and Shantou city, the two main dialect areas of the Chaozhou cultural region. The aim of the field trip was to interview local musicians and, more importantly, to record them singing Chaozhou folk songs. During the interviews, an experienced folk singer, Hu Juan 胡娟 (female, in her 70s), and a local famous musician, Wang PeiYu 王培瑜 (male, in his 60s) reported that words with certain tonal patterns should be sung in certain ways to produce a 'correct' and 'Chaozhou-style' song. One of Ms Hu's examples was specific and straightforward. It was about how the articulations of words with different tonal patterns are processed on the same musical note, e.g. 'G<sub>4</sub>' For example, the rising tone '35' should be differentiated from the level tone '55' by depicting a rising melodic contour that initiated from a pitch onset lower than 'G' to the offset at 'G'. In reverse, words with the tone '53' should be sung with a falling melodic contour begun at 'G'. She added that there should always be a 'space' to clarify the tones for disambiguating the meaning of words in the text and exhibiting the distinction of Chaozhou music.

I then wondered whether this differentiation of tonal patterns is practised by other local singers I interviewed and to what extent the pitch variation of contour tones is different from that of level tones in singing. By segmenting the recordings of the same song I collected from three singers and measuring the FO (fundamental frequency) variation of the target words within notes by semitones, I found that the pitch variation of contour tones in singing, such as the tone '53' and tone '42', varied largely from one singer to another compared with their relatively consistent treatment of level tones. It is difficult to draw a conclusion based on the deviated outcomes from such a small data set, and so it seems necessary to have a bigger data set containing as many of the contour tones and level tones sung by a larger group of Chaozhou singers. Furthermore, it can be assumed that the musicianship and the experience of singing in Chaozhou may have an impact on the singers' realisation of tones. Hence, the field trip was merely the beginning of my journey of exploration which led me to an observational study and then a follow-on production experiment.

The observational study was carried out in January 2020. It aimed to explore the variations in singers' realisation of tones and the effect of vocal training backgrounds and the frequencies of singing on the singers' realisation of tones. Nineteen professional and fifteen non-professional Chaozhou singers were invited to sing a song representing a traditional Chaozhou nursery rhyme. A total of 2448 tokens segmented from the collected data were then analysed. The follow-on production experiment was conducted in August and September 2020 via Zoom. It is assumed that the generic intervals in the context of pentatonic scales that are used in constructing the melodies of Chaozhou folk songs would have an impact on the variability in singers' realisation of tones: the

## *Singers' Realisation of Tones in Chaozhou (cont.)*

larger the generic interval, the more pitch variation the tone would be. Twenty-three singers (twelve professionals and eleven non-professionals) took part in the experiment. The data analysis of my production experiment is now close to completion.

The limitation of musical notations, on the one hand, may reduce the aural experience of a singing practice to a simple written form. On the other hand, it enables Chaozhou singers to fill in the empty space in music with their implicit knowledge of the spoken Chaozhou language. This unwritten information that reflects the cultural-linguistic and stylistic features of Chaozhou music might have passed unnoticed if we rely heavily on a single method of investigation. Therefore, this may be an example of where interdisciplinary approaches can supplement other musicological and ethnomusicological conventions to further enrich our understanding of a musical performance tradition.

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### Notes

1. The term 'tone sandhi' refers to the phonological process whereby the syllable/word tone changes as a result of its position in an utterance. The best-studied case may be the 'third-tone Sandhi' in Mandarin Chinese in which the dipping tone '213' changes to a high-rising tone '35' when it is followed by another '213'. In the Chaozhou case, tones in the non-final position of a phrase generally undergo sandhi, but the word (or the syllable) in the final position of the phrase keeps the value of its citation tone.
2. See Chao (1956), 'Tone, Intonation, Singsong, Chanting, Recitative, Tonal Composition, and Atonal Composition in Chinese'; Yung (1983), 'Creative Process in Cantonese Opera I: The Role of Linguistic Tones'; Kirby & Ladd (2016), 'Tone-melody correspondence in Vietnamese popular song'.

## Membership Reminder

We encourage your new membership and renewal for the 2021-22 period. Current membership dues are \$15 for those in professional positions and independent scholars, and \$10 for students. Please define your status when paying. Please notify us of address and email changes. Payment can now be made through the ACMR PayPal account. If you wish to pay through this method, send Alec McLane a request for a PayPal invoice

and currency type (e.g. Hong Kong Dollars) at [amclane@snet.net](mailto:amclane@snet.net). Otherwise, make your payment by check to ACMR and mail to:

**Alec McLane**, Treasurer  
Association for Chinese Music Research  
418 Pine St.  
Middletown, CT 06457

# Media Connects: Antiphonal Singing on WeChat

**Matthew Werstler,  
Northern Illinois University**

From 2016-2018, I taught English at Youjiang Medical University for Nationalities in Baise Prefecture of Guangxi, China. While teaching in Baise, I had the opportunity to study Zhuang language and music. My studies and research on Zhuang music was mainly on antiphonal singing and *erhu* lessons. I spent any free time I had with musicians in the local park. In the summer of 2017, I went to a friend's village in the town of *Xinhua* (新化镇), Leye county, south of the popular "sinkhole" called *Dashiwei Tiankeng*, north of the border of Lingyun county. During dinner, I was introduced to a family member who enjoys singing antiphonal songs and was told that the family member would sing after dinner. After dinner we continued to chat and drink at the table, while I saw the singer on his phone. I was wondering why we were still in the house. I falsely assumed that we would go outside, as that was what I was used to in the city and at song festivals. As the singer continued to play on his phone, they explained to me that he was trying to find someone to sing with in his WeChat group.



*Figure 1: Audience listening to antiphonal singing at the 2017 Yangxu Town Song Fair about 30 km away from Baise city.*

In Lonan Ó Briain's monograph on music practice of the Hmong in Northern Vietnam, he includes a discussion where the Hmong are connected by technological advances, such as VCD, cell phones, and internet (Ó Briain 2018). This is quite identical to the Zhuang practices. Particularly for an art form like antiphonal singing, singers who may be isolated from physical singing communities need these technological advances help connect. Antiphonal songs are based on a mother tune, often of a geographical region. This is the case of the Zhuang. The high rate of members in urban areas results in singers of the regional tunes being dispersed. In a city like Baise, singers would come into the parks to sing with people that sing similar tunes.

Song fairs, often occurring during the spring, are times when many groups would come together to sing because many song fairs may be losing this element of local singing due to the government

## *Media Connects (cont.)*

organized singing efforts (Qin and Widman 2012). Music Scholar, Qin Jin Dun observed that the elements of the spontaneous singing in song fairs are still continuing but in new areas and times, such as the urban parks. As people move to the city, communities are formed to sing antiphonal songs (Qin 2020). To follow these migrant groups into the city, they also use media, like VCDs so they can continue to listen and be connected to events of the past. While VCD recordings give singers the opportunity to connect with music of home, this does not make up for the opportunity to actively sing.



*Figure 2: Antiphonal singing in the park on a weekday evening in Baise, Guangxi.*



*Figure 3: VCDs for sell in the 2016 Yangxu Song fair.*

Social platforms like WeChat are extensions of what media offers, as it expands the reach of communities beyond the region as they continue to connect members from similar regions in singing their specific tunes with each other. Anthropologist Wang Xinyuan notes the accessibility of WeChat's voice messaging function that allows for older generations to use the technical

## *Media Connects (cont.)*

functions (Wang 2016:39). The ease in sending voice messaging also gives easy access to the singing of antiphonal songs. Singers would sing within chat groups that are regionally based and function more like a virtual community center. People share many different things such as pictures, community updates, and broader news. Sometimes they would use the voice function to do antiphonal singing; at other times they may share videos, such as a singer who shared her songs about Covid-19.

Singers are resilient when isolated even before the Covid-19 pandemic and they find solace in their musical connections through VCD recordings, which allow them to continue to listen, even if they were away from their community. As technology advanced, singers were able to use social media like WeChat to sustain their active participation. With the development of TikTok Zhuang singers even posted TikTok recordings, adding another dimension so the use of technology for disseminating recordings. As for the regional tunes and the communities that sing them, they connected by social media, a place that extends beyond the song fairs and parks in urban space that they are used to singing. From my observations, WeChat is a medium in which singers carried their regionally based tunes beyond their geographical boundaries. Wherever they are, they can continue to sing with each other.



*Figure 4: VCDs for sell in the 2016 Yangxu Song fair.*

## **Work Cited**

- Lonán Ó Briain. 2018. *Musical Minorities: The Sounds of Hmong Ethnicity in Northern Vietnam*. New York: Oxford Press.
- Qin, Jin Dun, and John Widman. 2012. "A Tale of Two Song Fairs: Considering Tourism and Tradition in China & Guangxi Province." *Ethnomusicology Review*. UCLA.
- Qin, Jin Dun覃金盾 . 2020. "Cong ciangtu zouxiang chengshi de zhuangzu shange—chengshi zhuangzu shange biaoan kongjian yu gechang biao shu di dang xia bianqian" 从乡土走向城市的壮族山歌——城市壮族山歌表演空间与歌唱表述的当下变迁 [From the Countryside to the City——The Current Changes in the Performance Space and Singing Expression of the Urban Zhuang Nationality Mountain Songs]. *Art Exploration*. February 2020, p. 111-116.
- Wang, Xinyuan. 2016. "The Social Media Landscape in China." In *Social Media in Industrial China*, 25-56. London: UCL Press.

## ACMR Board

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## Upcoming Events

### **27<sup>th</sup> ICTM Colloquium: Drums and Drum Ensembles of the Silk Road**

**28–30 December 2020**

Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Shanghai, China /  
Online

<https://www.ictmusic.org/node/5491>

### **17<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Music Society for Chinese Ethnic Minorities**

January 2-5, 2021

Minzu University of China, Beijing

<http://www.mscm.com.cn/>

### **Association for Asian Studies 2021 VIRTUAL Annual Conference**

March 21-26, 2021

<https://www.asianstudies.org/conference/>

## About ACMR

The Association for Chinese Music Research (ACMR) serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas and information for anyone interested in the scholarly study of Chinese music. Catering mainly though not exclusively to those living in North America, ACMR holds an annual meeting in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology.

ACMR's online discussion group is hosted by the University of Hawai'i. To send messages to the list, please use the address [acmr-l@lists.hawaii.edu](mailto:acmr-l@lists.hawaii.edu). If you have any questions about the list, write to Ted Kwok at [tedk@hawaii.edu](mailto:tedk@hawaii.edu).

ACMR Newsletter is published twice a year in spring and fall. We encourage ACMR members to submit the following kinds of materials: notices of recent publications and recently completed dissertations or theses, announcements of and reports on scholarly and performing activities, news of institutions and individuals, as well as views and opinions on any matter relevant to ACMR. Please send all materials and enquiries to [ACMRnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:ACMRnewsletter@gmail.com). Back issues are available at <http://acmr.info/>.