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Despite the early presence of Chinese music in the Antipodes in the 1860s, as evidenced by the musical activities of Cantonese miners in the goldfields of Otago1, the active dissemination of China’s rich and diverse musical culture did not go beyond the Chinese diaspora until the 1980s when Jack Stanley Body (1944-2015), composer, ethnomusicologist, impresario, and widely acknowledged as the “leading light in awakening New Zealand’s interest in Asian music,” became the single most powerful force in the introduction of China’s multi-faceted musical culture to New Zealand and, later, New Zealand music to China.2

In this paper I would like to focus on Jack Body’s involvement with China over the past quarter of a century, with particular reference to his ethnomusicological and archival work among China’s minority tribes. I would also like to draw attention to the original compositions he created using the musical material he gathered during his China trips and the audio and visual material he produced.3 The objective is not just to offer an assessment of Jack Body’s legacy in Sino-New Zealand relations but to use his case to argue for the importance of human agency in facilitating cross-cultural exchange as well as a point of reference for understanding where, how, and why China has played an important role in the lives of New Zealanders.

2 Jack Body has been studied by a number of scholars, for background on Jack Body, see Sarah Shieff, Talking Music: Conversations with New Zealand Musicians (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2002).
As far as one can now reconstruct the sequence, Jack Body came to “discover” China’s musical culture through Chinese composers; he came to Chinese composers through a preoccupation with sounds. Jack Body’s acquaintance with Chinese music seems to have started in the early 1980s, if not earlier, when, as a co-organiser of the Asia Pacific Festival and Composers’ Conference, he invited Chinese composers and ethnomusicologists from Taiwan (Hsu Tsang-Houei 許常惠, 1929-2001), the United States of America (Chou Wenchung 周文中, 1923- ), and the People’s Republic of China (Qu Wei 翟维, 1917-2002 and Ye Xiaogang 叶小钢, 1955- ) to Wellington.

![From left: Qu Wei, Douglas Lilburn, Jack Body and Ye Xiaogang (Wellington 1984)](image)

A most original composer, Jack Body’s approach to Chinese music is intuitive rather than cerebral. He came at China from three different perspectives: first, his fascination with Asian traditional music and the contemporary compositional scene, which led him to conduct extended fieldwork in China’s south and northwest and to have frequent contact with Chinese composers of different generations and diaspora; second, his interest in ethnomusicology, which enabled him to accumulate the data that would engender creative outputs; and third, his love of documenting, which would add an archival dimension to his efforts.

Jack Body had all the attributes to enable him to achieve what he has achieved: an insatiable curiosity, an irrepressible urge to make friends; an extremely easy and approachable personality that puts strangers at ease; an inexhaustible fund of energy; and, above all, a passionate and unshakable conviction that what he does is interesting and that we should all know about it.

In the three decades that followed the first Asia Pacific Festival and Composers’ Conference Jack has organised numerous Chinese music-related events and activities --- ranging over the fields of composition, performing arts, organology, and ethnomusicology.
The Chinese composers he has brought to New Zealand over the years include not only the so-called “New Wave” composers (such as the aforementioned Ye Xiaogang, Tan Dun 谭盾, Qu Xiaosong 瞿小松 and He Xuntian 何训田, but also the older mavericks like Gao Weijie 高为杰. In recent years he had also introduced the works of younger composers like Qin Wenchen 秦文琛 (1966-) and Yang Xiaozhong 杨晓忠 to the New Zealand public. As recently as March 2014, despite his illness, he organised the performance of a new concerto for piano and traditional instruments by Gao Ping 高平 and Shi Bian Wu Huas (Ten Changes and Five Variables) by Ye Xiaogang's student Zou Hang 邹航. To a certain extent, Jack Body was also responsible for launching the international careers of some of the Chinese composers mentioned. For instance, it was largely due to Jack's effort that the orchestral work Xijiangyue 西江月(The Moon over the West River) by Ye Xiaogang, who was then a new graduate from the Central Conservatory of Music and now a Vice President of the Conservatory, was premiered by the NZSO in 1984. One must also remember that when Jack organised a Composer-in-Residence programme for Tan Dun in 1988, the latter was yet to become a world celebrity as he is now.

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4 Born in Erdos, Inner Mongolia, Qin Wenchen studied composition at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music with Xu Shuyu and Zhu Jianer in the late 1980s. After completing his degree in 1992 he taught composition at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. In 1998 he studied with Nicolaus A. Huber, thanks to a grant from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and received his diploma from the Folkwang Universität der Künste three years later. He has been teaching composition at the Central Conservatory in Beijing since 2001. Regarded as one of the most important composers of his generation, Qin has been commissioned to write pieces for such leading ensembles as the Ensemble Recherche, L’Ensemble Itinéraire, Ensemble Europa Antidogma, and the RSO Berlin und the Ensemble of Line. He has also composed pieces for Tokyo City Symphony Orchestra.
Composers aside, Jack Body’s fascination with Chinese music saw him bring Chinese ethnomusicologists, story-tellers, ballad singers, Peking opera troupes, and instrumentalists to New Zealand. He also edited, authored, or co-authored a booklet on Chinese music and produced Chinese music CDs. One can confidently assert that the kind of work he has done has been unprecedented in New Zealand.

I am able to vouch for Jack’s tremendous contributions to Sino-New Zealand musical exchange because I have been involved in some of the major projects Jack initiated over the years between 1986 and 1997.

I met Jack Body in November 1986 when he arrived in China for the first time to record the folk music of minority tribes. As his guide and interpreter for three months I was fortunate enough to have worked closely with him from December 1986 to March 1987, at which time we shot a film “Big Nose and Body Music”. It was Jack Body who helped open my eyes to different ways of thinking about my own society and instilled in me, apart from other things, a deep respect for cultures that were different from one’s own. In 1988, Jack Body was instrumental in enabling me to come to New Zealand to work as his research assistant for the preparation of the recordings and translations of Chinese courtship dialogues from Guiyang. This project resulted in a publication entitled Aspects of Chinese Music – The Art of Negotiation: Teahouse Courtship Dialogues from Guiyang and Transcriptions of Vocal Polyphony of the Dong, Buyi, Zhuang, Yi, Mulao, Yao and She Minority Nationalities of China (Wellington: Asia Pacific Archive, 1991) and a CD, Music of the Open Air. In these publications Jack has provided valuable data for the study of China’s ethnic minorities whose music had hardly been studied by the Chinese themselves at the time. As a creative composer, Jack Body has also benefited from this intimate and extended engagement with Chinese music. A number of pieces appeared in the following years, in particular the first movement (Long-ge) of his internationally acclaimed Three Transcriptions.
Although Jack Body’s next field trip to China did not come until 1997, his interest in all aspects of China’s musical tradition led him to organise the Tianjin Chinese Opera Troupe’s New Zealand tour in 1992 and the residence of Professor Zhang Xingrong张兴荣 of the Yunnan Arts Institute at Victoria University of Wellington in 1994-1995. As the Auckland co-ordinator of the Tianjin Opera tour, I witnessed the incredible patience
and humility Jack had shown towards these temperamental performers and the heavy financial sacrifices he had made in order to make the tour a success. As a translator and research assistant for Professor Zhang Xingrong during his residency at VUW, I was immensely touched by Jack Body’s single-minded dedication to documenting China’s multi-musical traditions, as evidenced by the resultant recordings, *South of the Clouds: Instrumental Music of Yunnan* (4 CDs, Ode, Auckland 2003), *Songs of the Minority Nationalities of Yunnan* (Pan 2038CD). In my last involvement in Jack’s major project in 1997, I worked once again as Jack’s interpreter and research assistant during his research trip to China’s northwest for the preparation of his opera *Alley*. I saw at close hand in Langzhou and Zigong how Jack Body put his illiterate interviewees at ease by treating them with utmost courtesy and kindness. Apart from the staging of *Alley* at the Wellington International Arts Festival in 1998, Jack Body’s energy and resourcefulness also saw him oversee the production (with Professor Du Yaxiong 杜亚雄 of the China Conservatory of Music) of *Shaonian: The Courtship Songs from Northwest China*. 
Jack Body's fascination with China's musical culture is not confined to recording the music of the minority tribes or operatic traditions. Like a long line of Westerners before him, Jack Body was fascinated by the timbre and infinite sonic possibilities of the Guqin, the most celebrated classical instrument of China. In 1993, he arranged Professor Li Xiangting 李祥霆, the celebrated Guqin master then stranded in London, to give a lecture and recital tour in New Zealand, and I was asked to be Li’s interpreter and tour coordinator. During Li’s time here, Jack Body, with his usual resourcefulness and energy, also arranged a recording to be made and a CD (Soul of China-Guqin Recital) (Ode, Auckland 1993), produced.
Li Xiangting’s Concert Tour in New Zealand (1993)
In China’s musical circle, Jack Body is sometimes spoken of in the same breath as Rewi Alley (1897-1987), whom Jack Body admired so much as to have made him the subject of his opera. Compared to Alley, who had devoted sixty years of his life to China, Jack Body's engagement with China is neither long nor exclusive, yet his work is equally appreciated in that country today. Apart from the articles published in China's leading musical journals praising his role in facilitating Sino-New Zealand musical exchanges, his name has also appeared in Chinese daily newspapers. As a composer, his works have been studied by graduate students at conservatories of music all over China.