

# Musical Convergence in Cross-Cultural Jazz Composition: *An Analysis of “Spring is Back”*

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## Abstract

This research analyzes “Spring is Back,” a cross-cultural jazz composition rooted in the traditional Chinese folk song “大地回春” (“Earth’s Rebirth in Spring”). Through examining its formal structure, thematic development, and harmonic content, the study sheds light on its artistic significance and global resonance. The composition’s carefully orchestrated structure and thematic transformation blend elements of folk melody with jazz-inspired rhythm and harmony. Utilizing reharmonization techniques, “Spring is Back” enriches its chord progression with extended chords, quartal and quintal harmony, and contrapuntal bass movement, contributing to its vibrant sound. This research illuminates the transformative power of cross-cultural musical convergence in “Spring is Back,” offering insights into creative processes underlying the fusion of musical traditions. Overall, the study deepens understanding of cross-cultural musical fusion and its potential to bridge cultural divides and foster global creative dialogue.

**Keywords** Musical Convergence, Cross-Cultural, Jazz Composition, Chinese Folk Song, Thematic Development

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## Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of contemporary music, cross-cultural jazz composition stands as a testament to the power of musical convergence and creative exploration. “Spring is Back,” a composition commissioned by the Taipei Jazz Orchestra, serves as an exemplar of the fusion between Chinese folk music and contemporary jazz. Rooted in the traditional Chinese folk song “大地回春” (“Earth’s Rebirth in Spring”), this composition embodies the rich tapestry of cross-cultural musical convergence, blending thematic transformation, jazz harmony, and rhythm to create a unique and evocative musical experience. As cross-cultural musical fusion continues to evolve, “Spring is Back” emerges as a compelling case study, offering insights into the interplay between diverse musical traditions. Through an exploration of its formal structure, thematic development, and the integration of musical elements, this research seeks to unravel the complexities of “Spring is Back,” shedding light on its artistic significance and its capacity to resonate with audiences worldwide.

Moreover, the widespread appeal of “Spring is Back” is underscored by its performances by jazz orchestras at international festivals including Taichung Jazz Festival, Thailand International Jazz Conference, and Roar Now Bangkok Festival in Taiwan, highlighting its ability to transcend cultural boundaries and captivate diverse audiences. The fusion of jazz with elements of different cultural music has opened new avenues for creative expression, offering musicians a platform to delve into and express cultural differences and similarities through their compositions. In this context, cross-cultural jazz compositions serve as a testament to the dynamic exchange and merging of cultures that occurs when diverse musical traditions intersect. By sharing ideas, techniques, and musical idioms, composers and musicians alike contribute to a vibrant tapestry of cross-cultural musical expression, enriching the global musical landscape and inspiring future generations of artists. Through an analysis of “Spring is Back,” this research aims to uncover the underlying mechanisms of cross-cultural musical convergence, illuminating the transformative power of music in bridging cultural divides and fostering creative dialogue on a global scale.

“Spring is Back” is scored for a standard jazz orchestra instrumentation, comprising two alto saxophones, two tenor saxophones, a baritone saxophone, four trumpets, three tenor trombones, bass trombone, an electric guitar, piano, bass, and drums (see Figure 1). This ensemble configuration allows for a rich and diverse sonic palette, with each instrument contributing to the overall texture and color of the composition. The saxophones provide melodic and harmonic support, while the trumpets and trombones add brass brilliance and depth. The rhythm section, consisting of electric guitar, piano, bass, and drums, provides the foundation for the groove and rhythmic drive of the piece. Overall, the instrumentation of “Spring is Back” is carefully balanced to maximize the expressive potential of each instrument within the jazz orchestra.

This musical score is for the song "The Sound of Silence" by Simon & Garfunkel. It is a full orchestration for a large ensemble, including vocalists and a wide range of instruments. The score is written in 12/8 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The tempo is marked "Moderato".

The vocal parts are arranged for Alto 1, Alto 2, Tenor 1, and Tenor 2. The instrumental parts include Bari. Sax., Tpt. 1-4, Tbn. 1-3, B. Tbn., Gtr., Pno., Bass, and Dr. The score is divided into measures, with a repeat sign at the beginning of the instrumental section. The key signature changes from one flat to two flats (D minor) in the instrumental section.

The score includes various musical notations, such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings (e.g., *ff*). The instrumental section begins with a key signature change from one flat to two flats (D minor). The score is divided into measures, with a repeat sign at the beginning of the instrumental section. The key signature changes from one flat to two flats (D minor) in the instrumental section.

Figure 1. "Spring is Back" for Jazz Orchestra, transposed Score, mm. 112-116.

## Objectives

- To conduct an examination of cross-cultural jazz composition, using “Spring is Back” as a case study, with a focus on understanding how this composition exemplifies the fusion of traditional Chinese folk music with contemporary jazz.
- To analyze the formal structure of both the original Chinese folk song “大地回春” and the jazz composition “Spring is Back,” unraveling their organization and the interplay of various musical elements.
- To explore the thematic development within “Spring is Back,” including the process of thematic transformation and reinterpretation.
- To investigate the harmonic content of “Spring is Back.”

## Literature Review

In the realm of music composition, cross-cultural fusion has emerged as a vibrant and dynamic artistic practice, bringing together diverse musical traditions from around the world. Christopher Adler's study (1998) investigates the phenomenon of cross-cultural hybridity, particularly focusing on American composers who incorporate elements from Southeast Asian musical traditions into their works. By examining the process of merging Southeast Asian musical styles with Western techniques, Adler sheds light on the creative journey that unfolds at the intersection of different cultural traditions. Nathinee Chucherdwatanasak's thesis (2014) explores the innovative contributions of composer Narong Prangcharoen to cross-cultural fusion in contemporary composition. Through analysis of Prangcharoen's compositions, Chucherdwatanasak deepens our understanding of how traditional Thai musical elements are seamlessly blended with Western classical and contemporary techniques, resulting in compelling musical expressions that bridge cultural divides. Wiboon Trakulhun's composition (2020), “String Orchestra and Flute,” serves as a tribute to the longstanding diplomatic relations between Korea and Thailand. By merging elements from both cultures, including Thai rhythmic patterns and melodies with Korean musical modes, Trakulhun's composition creates a rich and expressive musical landscape that celebrates the beauty of cultural diversity. Complementing these perspectives, Amornmas Mookdamuang and Narongchai Pidokrajt's study (2024) presents Khaen melodies adapted for solo piano using Western compositional methods while preserving their folk essence, offering another model of cross-cultural musical reinterpretation.

The intersection of jazz, cultural globalization, and cross-cultural musical fusion has paved the way for dynamic and transformative developments in the world of music. Stuart Nicholson's “Jazz and Culture in a Global Age” (2014) explores the intricate connection between jazz and cultural globalization, revealing how jazz has transcended borders to become a global phenomenon. By examining the impact of cultural exchange and blending on the genre's evolution, Nicholson provides valuable insights into the transformative power of music in today's interconnected world. Meanwhile, Hwajoon Joo's study (2008) focuses on the pioneering work of Yoon-Seong Cho in Korea, highlighting Cho's innovative approaches to cross-cultural musical fusion. Through analysis of Cho's compositions and performances, Joo underscores the profound intertwining of cultural influences with musical creativity, offering a compelling glimpse into the vibrant landscape of Korean jazz. Additionally, Mo Li's dissertation (2018) traces the evolution of jazz in China, shedding light on its deep-rooted connection with Chinese cultural identity. By exploring how jazz has been embraced, adapted, and reimagined within Chinese society, Li's research offers valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between music, culture, and society. Lastly, Runkun Li's research

(2020) proposes innovative approaches to jazz education in China by synthesizing jazz with traditional Chinese folk songs. By promoting cross-cultural understanding and musical diversity in jazz education and performance contexts, Li's work exemplifies the transformative potential of cross-cultural musical fusion in shaping the future of jazz education and performance.

The relevant literature on jazz analysis and composition reveals key findings and insights that are crucial for understanding the intricacies of jazz composition and arranging for large ensembles. Ted Pease's "Jazz Composition: Theory and Practice" (2003) explores the theoretical foundations of jazz composition, offering practical guidance on the creative process. Pease emphasizes the importance of melody, harmony, rhythm, and form in jazz composition, providing aspiring composers with valuable tools for crafting original jazz works. Additionally, Pease offers insights into arranging for large ensembles, exploring techniques for orchestrating jazz compositions effectively. "Arranging for Large Jazz Ensemble" by Ken Pullig and Dick Lowell (2003) focuses specifically on the art of arranging for large jazz ensembles. This resource covers a wide range of topics, including voicing, instrumentation, and ensemble balance. Pullig and Lowell's book offers practical techniques and strategies for arranging jazz compositions for big bands, providing aspiring arrangers with valuable tools for creating dynamic and engaging arrangements. Richard Lawn's "Jazz Score and Analysis" (2022) provides a detailed exploration of jazz compositions, offering insights into formal structures, harmonic content, and thematic development. Lawn's approach allows for in-depth analysis of jazz scores, enhancing understanding of the compositional techniques employed by jazz composers.

These studies offer valuable insights into the processes, challenges, and implications of cross-cultural musical convergence, providing a rich foundation for the analysis of "Spring is Back" and its role within the broader context of cross-cultural jazz composition.

### Form and Analysis

To understand the essence of "Spring is Back" and its utilization of thematic materials from the Chinese folk song "大地回春," it is essential to analyze the formal structure of the original folk song. By examining how "大地回春" organized its motifs and patterns, the analysis can unveil the components that form the groundwork for "Spring is Back." It will offer insights into how the composer blends and reshapes these elements in "Spring is Back," shedding light on the artistic techniques and innovative processes used to merge traditional folk melodies with contemporary jazz influences. Subsequently, the analysis will examine the thematic material, exploring how the original folk melodies are reinterpreted and developed within the jazz composition. Furthermore, the section will delve into the harmonic content, uncovering the rich and colorful palette of chords and progressions that contribute to its vibrant musical tapestry. Through this analysis, a deeper understanding of the creative processes and cross-cultural fusion evident in both compositions will be achieved, illuminating their artistic significance and cultural resonance.

Score reduction is employed in this research to facilitate music analysis by simplifying the composition into more manageable forms. By reducing the number of parts or simplifying the arrangement, the researcher can focus on the essential elements of the music. This process allows for a clearer understanding of the composition's structure, thematic development, and harmonic content.

### Formal Structure of “大地回春”

The Chinese folk song “大地回春” adheres to a structured musical form known as AABA. This form delineates the song into distinct sections, each with its unique characteristics. The A section (theme A), spanning 10 measures, serves as the foundational thematic material of the song. Within this section, recurring motifs are evident, further divisible into two-measure phrases, denoted as “a-b-b-b-b.” These motifs repeat multiple times, instilling a sense of familiarity and continuity throughout the composition. Melodically, the A section predominantly employs quarter notes, imparting a steady and grounded quality to this part of the song. The melodic range in the A section comfortably spans from the note B3 in the lower register to D5 in the higher register.



Figure 2. “大地回春,” A Section.

In contrast, the B section (theme B), comprising 8 measures, provides a distinctive departure from the A section’s characteristics. Here, the rhythmic dynamics are more pronounced, featuring eighth notes. The B section consists of two discernible motifs, divisible into one-measure phrases, represented as two sets of “c-c-d-c,” introducing rhythmic and melodic diversity into the composition. Despite these variations, the melodic range in the B section remains within the comfortable register established in the A section, from E4 to E5. The B section contributes to the composition’s overall structure by introducing a contrasting rhythmic and melodic palette.



Figure 3. “大地回春,” B Section.

Notably, the last two measures of the initial A section differ from the subsequent A sections. In the first A section, these final measures conclude on the note C4, while in the second and third A sections, the last notes consistently resolve to C5. This subtle variation in the closing measures adds complexity to the song’s structure, creating a sense of development and progression. In summary, the AABA form of “大地回春” provides a well-structured framework for the song, with the A sections establishing the primary thematic material, steady rhythms, and a tonal center in C. The B section introduces contrast through rhythmic variation and distinctive motifs. The subtle variation in the final measures of the A

sections enhances the song’s overall narrative and contributes to its enduring appeal and adaptability for various interpretations and arrangements.

Formal Structure of “Spring is Back”

“Spring is Back” exhibits a well-defined formal structure, orchestrating its musical narrative with distinct sections and motifs. The composition’s formal structure can be outlined as follows:

Measures (Rehearsal Letter)	Sections	References
1-8	Introduction	Fragments of motif ‘a’ from “大地回春”
9-42 (A, B)	Primary Theme	“大地回春,” A Section
43-54 (C)	Secondary Theme	“大地回春,” B Section
55-65 (D)	Primary Theme	“大地回春,” A Section
66-101 (E, F, G, H)	Improvisation Section	The harmonic progression of the secondary theme in “Spring is Back”
102-113 (I)	Secondary Theme	“大地回春,” B Section
114-124 (J)	Closing Theme	“大地回春,” A Section
125-141 (K)	Coda	Fragments of motif ‘a’ from “大地回春”

Figure 4. Table of the Formal Structure of “Spring is Back.”

Introduction (Measures 1-8)

The composition commences with an introduction characterized by the rhythm section’s medium-tempo, quasi-Latin, straight sixteenths rhythm. This rhythm introduces a loose and broken approach with a non-repetitive pattern, which lays the foundation for the rhythmic feel that permeates the entire composition.

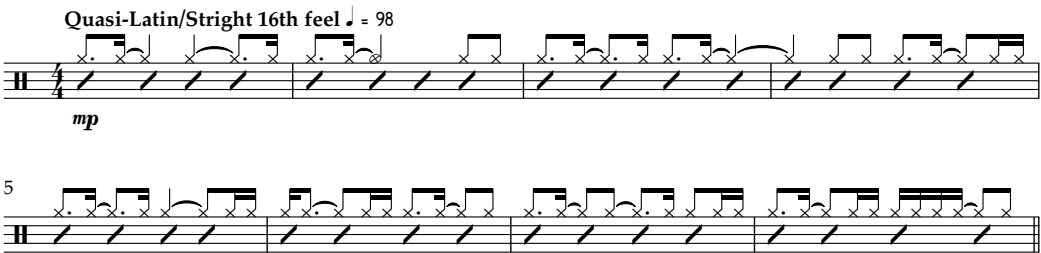


Figure 5. Cymbal Pattern Realization, “Spring is Back,” mm. 1-8.

Primary Theme, Rehearsal Letter A (Measures 9-29)

At this point, the melody emerges, initially voiced by the trombones, tenor saxophones, and baritone saxophone in measures 9-16. Trumpets and alto saxophones join the ensemble at measure 17, while measures 20-29 feature alto saxophones and trumpets 1 and 2 taking over the melody, accompanied by the trombones.

Figure 6 shows the musical score for measures 17-29 of "Spring is Back." The score is written for piano and features three systems of staves. The first system (measures 17-20) includes a piano part and a staff for Trumpets + Alto Saxophones. The second system (measures 21-24) includes a piano part and a staff for Trombones. The third system (measures 25-29) includes a piano part and a staff for Trombones. The piano part is marked *mf* in measure 17. The score is in 4/4 time and features a variety of musical notations, including chords, single notes, and rests.

Figure 6. "Spring is Back," mm. 17-29.

#### Primary Theme, Rehearsal Letter B (Measures 30-42)

This section revisits the main theme but in a shorter and more condensed form. It begins with a single-measure presentation by the trombones, tenor saxophones, and baritone saxophone, answered by a one-measure response from the trumpets and alto saxophones. Notably, measure 33 introduces a meter change to 3/4 time, creating four over three poly-rhythms that momentarily convey a heightened sense of rhythm. Measures 36-42 feature alto saxophones and trumpets 1 and 2 reprising the melody, while tenor saxophones and trumpets 3 and 4 contribute a counter melody, and the trombones offer accompanying support.

Figure 7 shows the musical score for measures 30-42 of "Spring is Back," Rehearsal Letter B. The score is written for piano and features three systems of staves. The first system (measures 30-34) includes a piano part and a staff for Tutti. The second system (measures 35-37) includes a piano part and staves for Alto Saxophones + Trumpets 1 & 2, Trombones, and Tenor Saxophones + Trumpets 3 & 4. The third system (measures 38-42) includes a piano part and a staff for Trombones. The piano part is marked *f* in measure 38. The score is in 4/4 time and features a variety of musical notations, including chords, single notes, and rests.

Figure 7. "Spring is Back," Rehearsal Letter B.



### Secondary Theme, Rehearsal Letter C (Measures 43-54)

This segment initiates with the trombones delivering the melody in measures 43-46, followed by the trumpets in measures 47-50. Concurrently, the saxophones contribute linear counter lines from measures 48-53. Measures 53-54 introduce a complex rhythm in 7/8 time, creating forward momentum that leads into the subsequent section, Rehearsal Letter D.

The musical score for "Spring is Back," Rehearsal Letter C, consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 43-46) shows Trombones and Bass. The second system (measures 47-50) shows Saxophones and Trumpets. The third system (measures 51-54) continues the saxophone and trumpet parts. The music is in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests.

Figure 8. "Spring is Back," Rehearsal Letter C.

### Primary Theme, Rehearsal Letter D (Measures 55-65)

In this section, the trombones majestically deliver the melody in unison (mm. 55-60), welcoming the arrival of "springtime." Subsequently, alto saxophones and trumpets 1 and 2 join in, accompanied by the rest of the orchestra. The rhythm section switches to a quasi-Latin rhythm in measures 60-62, infusing a sense of joy and celebration into the composition.

### Improvisation Section, Rehearsal Letters E, F, G, H (Measures 66-101)

The subsequent sections serve as improvisational opportunities for a soloist, potentially a trumpet, guitar, or piano, depending on the director's discretion. Rehearsal Letter E (mm. 66-73) employs a harmonic progression similar to Rehearsal Letter C, with minor modifications in measures 70-73, featuring an ascending bass movement. As the soloist improvises, background instrumentation gradually enters in Rehearsal Letters F and G, starting with the trombones playing the horn fifths.



Figure 9. Horn fifths by the trombones in mm. 74-75, "Spring is Back."

In Rehearsal Letter H, the soloist's improvisation continues. Simultaneously, alto and tenor saxophones, trombones 1 and 2, and trumpets 3 and 4 perform a repeated rhythmic pattern in thirds, with the baritone saxophone and trombones 3 and 4 introducing a counter line. This section gradually crescendos, leading to the climax at Rehearsal Letter I.

Figure 10. Repeated rhythmic pattern in thirds, "Spring is Back," Rehearsal Letter H.

#### *Secondary Theme, Rehearsal Letter I (Measures 102-113)*

Rehearsal Letter I revisits the melodic and harmonic content of Rehearsal Letter C. However, additional instruments are introduced, enriching the orchestral texture. Measure 113 prepares the modulation to Rehearsal Letter J, transitioning the composition to the key of E-flat. Notably, measure 113 is in 4/4 time, contrasting with the 7/8 time signature at the end of Rehearsal Letter C (m. 54).

#### *Closing Theme, Rehearsal Letter J (Measures 114-124)*

This section, similar in structure to Rehearsal Letter D, transposes the composition to the key of E-flat. This transposition symbolizes a new day and new life, with linear counter lines from alto and tenor saxophones contributing to the sense of forward movement and development.

The musical score for measures 112-120 of "Spring is Back" is presented in three systems. The first system (measure 112) shows a melodic line in 7/8 time. The second system (measures 114-116) is marked with a rehearsal bracket and *ff* (fortissimo), featuring Alto & Tenor Saxophones and Trombones. The third system (measures 117-120) continues the melodic and harmonic development.

Figure 11. "Spring is Back," mm. 112-120.

#### *Coda, Rehearsal Letter K (Measures 125-141)*

The composition concludes with Rehearsal Letter K, during which the drums are featured, providing a solo improvisation. The remainder of the orchestra supports the drum solo by delivering repeated rhythmic figures, culminating in a lively and rhythmic conclusion.

The formal structures of both “大地回春” and “Spring is Back” exhibit meticulous organization and thematic development, offering insights into their artistic complexities and cultural significance. “大地回春” adheres to the AABA form, providing a structured framework characterized by recurring motifs and subtle variations that contribute to its enduring appeal. In contrast, “Spring is Back” orchestrates its narrative with distinct sections, each contributing to the composition's overarching theme of renewal and celebration. From the introduction to the coda, “Spring is Back” navigates through various thematic elements and improvisational sections, showcasing a vibrant musical tapestry that captures the essence of springtime.

#### **Thematic Material**

In the primary theme at Rehearsal Letter A, the melody undergoes thematic transformation by expanding the first two measures of the original melody from “大地回春” into ten measures (mm. 9-18). While the first two notes of the original melody are shortened, the rest of the melody utilizes augmentation, although not in proportionate values (see Figure 12). This augmentation technique elongates the melodic lines, creating a sense of suspension and development. By expanding the original motif into a longer melody, the composer achieves a more elaborate and nuanced expression while still retaining the essence of the original theme. This thematic transformation not only adds complexity to the melody but also allows for greater variation and exploration within the composition.

Figure 12 displays musical notation for the piece "Spring is Back," measures 9-18. It consists of two systems of staves. The top system, labeled 'A', shows the 'Original Melody' and 'Spring is Back' staves. The bottom system, labeled 'b', also shows the 'Original Melody' and 'Spring is Back' staves. Arrows indicate thematic material flow between the two versions.

Figure 12. Thematic material, "Spring is Back," mm. 9-18.

In Rehearsal Letter B, the primary theme undergoes a transformation compared to its presentation in Rehearsal Letter A. The melody in Rehearsal Letter B is truncated and fragmented, with shorter rhythmic values (see Figure 13). This alteration creates a sense of propulsion and forward momentum in the music. Unlike the more expansive and flowing melody in Rehearsal Letter A, the theme in Rehearsal Letter B is characterized by its brevity and rhythmic urgency. The use of shorter rhythmic values contributes to a sense of drive and anticipation, propelling the music forward and adding a dynamic energy to the composition. Despite the truncation and fragmentation, the theme maintains its melodic essence, albeit in a more condensed and intensified form, further enhancing the overall musical narrative of "Spring is Back."

Figure 13 displays musical notation for the piece "Spring is Back," measures 30-34. It consists of two systems of staves. The top system, labeled 'B', shows the 'Original Melody' and 'Spring is Back' staves. The bottom system, labeled 'b', also shows the 'Original Melody' and 'Spring is Back' staves. Arrows indicate thematic material flow between the two versions.

Figure 13. Thematic material, "Spring is Back," mm. 30-34.

The secondary theme introduced at Rehearsal Letter C draws inspiration from Theme B in the original folk song "大地回春." While Theme B in the folk song consists of one-measure phrases, the secondary theme in "Spring is Back" expands these phrases into two-measure phrases (mm. 43-50). This expansion allows for greater development and elaboration of the melodic material, enriching the musical texture. Additionally, the secondary theme incorporates syncopation and sixteenth-note subdivision, which are rhythmic and melodic elements characteristic of jazz composition. These rhythmic features infuse the theme with a sense of vitality and groove, contributing to the overall energy of the composition. By blending elements of the original folk melody with jazz-inspired rhythms and phrasing, the secondary theme in "Spring is Back" exemplifies the fusion of traditional and contemporary musical styles.

Figure 14. Thematic material, “Spring is Back,” mm. 43-52.

In the last two measures of the secondary theme in “Spring is Back” (mm. 53-54), there is a notable shift in both meter and rhythm. The meter changes from 4/4 to 7/8, introducing an irregular and asymmetrical feel. This change in meter creates a sense of rhythmic tension and unpredictability, disrupting the established rhythmic patterns and adding interest to the music. Additionally, there is a simultaneous change in pitch (m. 54), with the melody moving to different notes than those heard previously. This pitch change, combined with the altered meter, contributes to the overall sense of disorientation and unexpectedness in the music. The use of 7/8 meter and pitch change in these final measures of the secondary theme adds a unique and distinctive character to the composition, further highlighting the creative exploration of rhythmic and melodic elements.

Figure 15. Thematic material, “Spring is Back,” mm. 53-54.

Thematic transformation in “Spring is Back” involves the reinterpretation and development of thematic material derived from the traditional Chinese folk song “大地回春.” Through thematic transformation, the composer expands, fragments, and embellishes the original melodic motifs, rhythm, and harmonic elements, while also incorporating syncopation and other characteristics typical of jazz composition. This reimagining of the original theme

allows for the creation of new musical ideas and variations, resulting in a composition that retains elements of its folk music roots while also embracing the stylistic nuances of contemporary jazz. Thematic transformation serves as a key creative device in "Spring is Back," enabling the composer to explore the adaptability and versatility of musical elements across cultural boundaries and genres.

### Harmonic Content

In "Spring is Back," the harmonic content is rich and colorful, employing reharmonization techniques commonly found in jazz. While the original chord progression of "大地回春" mainly consists diatonic chords, the jazz composition reimagines these harmonies to create a more dynamic and expressive harmonic palette. Reharmonization involves substituting or adding chords to the original harmonic framework, resulting in greater complexity and variety. This technique allows for the exploration of different tonal colors, tensions, and harmonic relationships, enhancing the overall harmonic texture of the composition. By employing reharmonization, "Spring is Back" achieves a harmonically rich and vibrant sound that complements its cross-cultural fusion of traditional Chinese folk music with contemporary jazz elements.

In the primary theme at Rehearsal Letter A, where the melody is in the C major scale, the composer employs harmonies that add color and richness to the melody. Instead of simply using basic triadic chords, the composer assigns extended chords to each note of the melody. This technique involves harmonizing the melody so that it lands on the seventh, ninth and eleventh degrees of the chord, creating more complex and colorful harmonic textures. By incorporating extended chords, such as seventh, ninth and eleventh chords, the composer enhances the harmonic richness of the primary theme, adding depth and sophistication to the overall sound of the composition.

**A**

9 Dm<sup>7</sup> Em<sup>7</sup> F<sup>Δ7</sup> A<sup>♭Δ9</sup>

13 Gm<sup>9</sup> Fm<sup>9</sup> Gm<sup>9</sup> Fm<sup>9</sup>

17 B<sup>♭m9</sup> Am<sup>9</sup> Gm<sup>11</sup> D/F<sup>#</sup> F<sup>Δ9</sup>

*mf*

Figure 16. Extended chords in "Spring is Back," mm. 9-20.

At Rehearsal Letter B, the harmony becomes more complex, incorporating upper-structure triads, quartal, and quintal harmony. Upper-structure triads are formed by combining a basic triad with upper chord tones, often resulting in rich and colorful harmonies. Quartal and quintal harmony (and their inversions), based on intervals of fourths and fifths respectively, add a modern and adventurous sound to the composition. Additionally, the bass movement in this section often moves in contrary motion to the melody, creating a sense of tension and forward motion. This harmonic complexity, combined with the intricate interplay between melody and bass, contributes to the dynamic and engaging nature of the primary theme at Rehearsal Letter B.

Figure 17. Upper-structure triads, quartal and quintal harmony in “Spring is Back,” mm. 32-40.

In the secondary theme at Rehearsal Letter C, the harmonic progression undergoes a significant transformation. In the first four measures (mm. 43-46), the bass movement descends in a series of chords, starting with A minor. This descending bass line creates a sense of stability and resolution. However, in measures 47-54, the harmonic progression provides contrast, as the bass movement ascends by half steps. This ascending bass line introduces tension and instability, leading to a sense of anticipation and forward motion in the music. Additionally, the progression concludes with an unexpected cadential six-four chord, where it moves up a half step to A-flat seventh suspended-four instead of the expected five-seventh chord. This unexpected resolution adds a sense of surprise and intrigue to the harmonic progression, contributing to the overall complexity and depth of the composition.

43  $\text{Am}$   $\text{E/G\#}$   $\text{Am/G}$   $\text{D/F\#}$   $\text{F}\Delta^7$   $\text{C/E}$   $\text{Dm}$

47  $\text{A/C\#}$   $\text{Dm}$   $\text{Eb}\Delta^7$   $\text{Em}$

51  $\text{F}\Delta^7$   $\text{F}\#\Delta^7$   $\text{C/G}$   $\text{Ab}7(\text{sus}4)$

Figure 18. Secondary theme with chord progression and bass line, “Spring is Back,” mm. 43-54.

The improvisation section in “Spring is Back” (mm. 66-101) draws on ideas from the harmonic progression in the secondary theme to provide a platform for solo exploration. Initially, the first four measures of the improvisation section mirror the descending bass movement seen in the first two measures of the secondary theme, establishing a familiar harmonic foundation. However, in measures 70-73, the bass movement shifts upward, reminiscent of the harmonic progression in the secondary theme. At Rehearsal Letter F (mm. 74-81), the harmonic rhythm lengthens to four measures per chord, allowing the soloist to explore the modal possibilities of this section, such as F Lydian and F-sharp Dorian, in contrast to the previous eight measures where there were two chords per measure (see Figure 19). The solo continues into Rehearsal Letter G, which revisits the progression from Rehearsal Letter E (mm. 66-73). At Rehearsal Letter H (mm. 90-101), the soloist once again has the opportunity to utilize jazz modal concepts for improvisation, further expanding the expressive possibilities of the composition.



The image shows a musical score for an improvised solo, measures 64-81. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked 'mf' (mezzo-forte). The score includes various chords and melodic lines. The chords are: D $\flat$ Δ9(#11) at measure 65, Am, E/G#, Am/G, D/F#, Am, E/G# at measure 66, Am/G, D/F#, Dm, Em, FΔ7(#11), D/F# at measure 67, G7, G#Δ7, Am, Am/G at measure 68, FΔ7(#11) at measure 69, F#m7 at measure 70, and F#m7 at measure 71. The melodic lines are written in eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets and slurs. The score ends with a double bar line at measure 81.

Figure 19. A live performance transcription of an improvised solo by Taipei Jazz Orchestra's pianist at the 2023 Taichung Jazz Festival, "Spring is Back," mm. 64-81.

In the transition to the closing theme (mm. 112-113) of "Spring is Back," there is a harmonic shift from the key of C to a new key. The cadential 6/4 chord in the key of C moves upwards to an A-flat seventh suspended-four chord, creating a sense of tension and anticipation. This A-flat seventh suspended-four chord then moves to an A seventh suspended-four chord, further heightening the feeling of resolution and preparing for the transition to the closing theme. At Rehearsal Letter J, the closing theme begins in the new key, with the trombones prominently playing the theme in E-flat. This harmonic shift and thematic transition symbolize the concept of rebirth in spring, marking a significant moment of musical transformation and renewal in the composition.

The image displays a musical score for measures 112-114. The top system (measures 112-113) features a trumpet line with a melodic phrase and a bass line with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Chords C/G, A $\flat$ 7(sus4), and A7(sus4) are indicated above the staff. The bottom system (measures 114-115) shows a saxophone line with a complex, flowing melody, a trombone line with a more rhythmic pattern, and a bass line. The key signature changes to three flats (B $\flat$  major/C minor) at measure 114, and the tempo/mood is marked *ff* (fortissimo).

Figure 20. Transition to the closing theme in “Spring is Back,” mm. 112-114.

“Spring is Back” employs a diverse and colorful harmonic palette, blending traditional jazz harmony with reharmonization techniques to create a rich and dynamic musical landscape. Through the use of upper-structure triads, quartal and quintal harmony, and contrapuntal bass movement, the composition achieves a sense of complexity and depth. The harmonic content of “Spring is Back” serves to enhance the thematic material and contribute to the overall narrative of the piece, providing a harmonious fusion of traditional Chinese folk music and contemporary jazz elements.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The research aimed to explore the fusion of traditional Chinese folk music with contemporary jazz in the composition “Spring is Back,” shedding light on the processes of thematic transformation, formal structure, and harmonic content within the piece. By analyzing these elements, the study sought insights into cross-cultural musical convergence and its significance in the realm of jazz composition. The analysis revealed several key findings. The formal structure of “Spring is Back” was examined, revealing a well-defined organization comprising distinct sections such as introduction, primary theme, secondary theme, improvisation section, and closing theme. The thematic development within each section showcased the composer’s adept use of thematic transformation, expanding, fragmenting, and reimagining motifs from the original Chinese folk song “大地回春” to create a dynamic and cohesive musical narrative. Also, the harmonic content of the composition was rich and colorful, employing reharmonization techniques to enhance the traditional jazz harmony with complex and vibrant chord progressions.

These findings contribute to our understanding of cross-cultural jazz composition by demonstrating how “Spring is Back” integrates elements from two distinct musical traditions, resulting in a unique and evocative musical experience. The study underscores the transformative power of music in bridging cultural divides and fostering creative dialogue on a global scale, highlighting the potential for cross-cultural musical convergence to en-

rich the global musical landscape. In the context of previous research, the findings of this study align with existing literature on cross-cultural musical fusion and its implications for music composition. Christopher Adler's study (1998) and Nathinee Chucherdwatanasak's thesis (2014) provide valuable insights into the processes and challenges of cross-cultural hybridity in music composition, while Stuart Nicholson's work (2014) offers a broader perspective on the connection between jazz and cultural globalization. The analysis of "Spring is Back" builds upon these insights, showcasing a compelling example of cross-cultural musical convergence in action.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this research. The analysis focused solely on "Spring is Back," limiting the generalizability of the findings to other cross-cultural jazz compositions. Additionally, the study primarily relied on musical analysis, with limited consideration of the cultural and historical contexts surrounding the composition. The findings of this research underscore the significance of cross-cultural musical convergence in contemporary jazz composition, as exemplified by "Spring is Back." By blending elements from traditional Chinese folk music with contemporary jazz techniques, the composition highlights the transformative power of music in bridging cultural divides and fostering creative dialogue. The study contributes to the broader literature on cross-cultural musical fusion, offering insights into the processes, challenges, and implications of this dynamic and evolving artistic practice.

In conclusion, the research on "Spring is Back" has provided valuable insights into the phenomenon of cross-cultural jazz composition. Through a detailed analysis of the composition's formal structure, thematic development, and harmonic content, this study has illuminated the interplay between traditional Chinese folk music and contemporary jazz elements. The analysis revealed the composer's adept use of thematic transformation, reharmonization techniques, and rhythmic exploration to create a dynamic and cohesive musical narrative. Moreover, the findings of this research underscore the transformative power of cross-cultural musical convergence in bridging cultural divides and fostering creative dialogue on a global scale. By integrating elements from two distinct musical traditions, "Spring is Back" serves as an example of the potential for cross-cultural fusion to enrich the global musical landscape and resonate with diverse audiences worldwide.

While this study focused specifically on "Spring is Back," its findings have broader implications for our understanding of cross-cultural jazz composition. By building upon existing literature and offering perspectives on the processes and artistic techniques underlying cross-cultural musical fusion, this research contributes to a deeper appreciation of the dynamic and evolving nature of contemporary jazz composition. Future research could explore a broader range of compositions and incorporate interdisciplinary approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural musical convergence in jazz. By continuing to investigate the socio-cultural dynamics at play in cross-cultural jazz composition, researchers can highlight how music has the power to bridge cultural gaps and promote mutual understanding and appreciation across different cultures.

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