A Newly Commissioned Work for Cello,
A Recording and Performance Practice Guide

by

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Doctor of Musical Arts

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of a new instrumental piece—specifically Taiwanese—into the cello repertoire is as exciting as it is important. Currently, the majority of works for cello and piano include predominantly Western compositions that is repeatedly taught and performed. Reflections, by Taiwanese composer Ming-Hsiu Yen (Ms. Yen) is a response to this saturation. It is a piece that is both demanding for the performers and entertaining for the audience. Brilliantly written by a composer who has intimate familiarity with both the cello and piano, it is highly suitable for scholarly study and performance.

This document details ensemble issues, interpretative suggestions for both cellist and pianist, and general concepts about the music. The composer further adds to these concepts and suggestions.

Reflections is a programmatic work comprised of four movements, each with a descriptive title: “Gear,” “Tears of the Angel,” “Spintop,” and “Transformation.” Because the composer’s intentions were driven by pictorial ideas and not by a formal harmonic structure, this paper concentrates on ensemble issues and interpretation less than harmonic analysis.

Secondly, the project includes the premiere recording of Reflections, as performer by Yu-Ting Tseng, cellist, and Dr. Jeremy Peterman, pianist. This audio documentation provides other cellists and pianists the opportunity of hearing the piece as originally conceived by the composer, as an aid to their own future preparation of this work. This recording, combined with the interpretative analysis, will assist in bringing Reflections into the cello repertoire and public eye.
DEDICATION

To my Mother and Father
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank the Almighty God, who always guides me on the right path of life. Without His mercy, I would not be who I am today. I am also taking this opportunity to thanks Prof. Thomas Landshoot who has been a great teacher throughout my doctoral program. The program at Arizona State University is one of the most important experiences in my life, and I could not have finished the program without his support. I would also like to express gratitude for the members of my committee: Dr. Rodney Rogers, Prof. Catalin Rotaru, and Prof. Russell Ryan. They have all given so much of their time and professional knowledge to make my work better. I am indebted to my parents and sister who have been a source of inspiration and support throughout my life.

I extend a very special thanks to my mom, Miao-Chen Lin, who has been so patient and listened to all my concerns. I am also thankful to the composer, Dr. Ming-Hsiu Yen, for the original work that she wrote for me, which made this recording project more meaningful and also enlarged the repertoire of the cello.

My completion of this project could not have been accomplished without the help of my pianist, Dr. Jeremy Peterman and my friend, Felix Huang. Thank you for your assistance, advice, and support in my writing efforts. Especially to Jeremy: I could not express enough thanks for your generous support.

I am grateful to Sean Kao who has consistently helped me and uplifted me while I completed my work. I am thankful to all my teachers and friends who have encouraged me onward throughout these years. My heart is full of love for them all.
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<td>5.12</td>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BIOGRAPHY OF COMPOSER

INTRODUCTION

It was a joy to commission a new cello piece from Taiwanese composer Ming-Hsiu Yen and it offered a great experience to get involved in the collaborative process of an original work, from the conception of the composition to producing the recording. This piece not only challenges the cellist in terms of rhythmic complexity, but it also incorporates different techniques such as harmonics, *glissandi*, and *sul ponticello*. The focus of this paper is to give interpretative suggestions for both the cellist and pianist, to supply a performance practice guide, produce the premiere recording, provide general concepts about the music, and to introduce readers to the composer through an interview with Ming-Hsiu Yen. Thus, this paper will discuss in detail the composition of the work, especially in terms of the dramatic nature of this piece and performance practice.

BIOGRAPHY OF COMPOSER

Ming-Hsiu Yen was born in Taichung, Taiwan and she started her music education at YAMAHA Music School when she was between five and six years old. Her first composition was a single line melody with some grace notes, trying to mimic the sound of birds chirping. Her teacher amazed her by playing the piece with harmonization and turned her small ideas into a real piece.

Dr. Yen earned both doctoral and master’s degrees from the University of Michigan (DMA in composition major; MM in composition and piano performance major) and a bachelor’s degree from Eastman School of Music (major in composition and piano performance, with a distinguished honor of Performer’s Certificate). At the University of Michigan, she was funded with a full scholarship and was awarded
the distinguished Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship during her final year. Her primary composition teachers included Bright Sheng, William Bolcom, Betsy Jolas, David Liptak, Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon, Christopher Rouse, Steven Stucky, and Gordon Shi-Wen Chin. As a fellow of 2008 Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute, she worked with Aaron Jay Kernis. She has also studied with Herbert Willi at Pacific Music Festival in 2007 and with Sydney Hodkinson at Aspen Music Festival and School in 2006. Her piano teachers in the USA have included Logan Skelton, Nelita True and Vincent Lenti. Dr. Yen is currently Assistant Professor of Composition and Theory at Taipei National University of the Arts in Taiwan. She has also served as Adjunct Associate Professor/Composer-in-Residence at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

Composer Interview Questions:

1. Where were you born and raised?
2. What is your primary instrument?
3. How did you become interested in composing?
4. When did you start your first piece? What is it?
5. What is your favorite instrument to write for?
6. Where do you usually compose your music?
7. How often do you compose?
8. Who is the most influential composer on you?
9. Who is your favorite teacher?
10. Do you have any favorite elements/techniques that you like to use in your compositions?

10. Do you consider the qualities/abilities of the performer when writing your works?
11. Have you written a piece for cello before? If so, please elaborate.

12. Do you usually come up with a title first, or the music?

13. Where do you find inspiration for your compositions?

14. Do all of your pieces have programmatic titles?

15. Why do you name this piece Reflections?

16. What are your general concerns regarding this piece? Could you say a few words about it?
CHAPTER 2

Gear 齒輪

Information on the Composition

The first movement of the sonata entitled “Gears,” is a reflection of contemporary life, in particular its increasingly mechanical nature. Life is routinized and compartmentalized, as our sense of wonder slowly slips away. It is a robotic life—wake up, caffeinate, hunch over a desk and stare at some pixels, go home, eat, find solace in more pixels, sleep; repeat. Like Gears, we keep rotating, but we are stuck on the same axle, doing the same thing, over and over again, all to serve some larger machine. Concern for others, emotional vulnerability—those are luxuries we can ill afford.¹ The first movement is thus machine-like, rhythmic, and mechanical, even sounding metallic at times. The structural outline of this movement is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Structural Outline for Gear

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tempo</td>
<td>( \text{\rotatebox{90}{\textit{\textbullet}}} = 120-128 )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure #</td>
<td>1-24</td>
<td>25-101</td>
<td>102-109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note</td>
<td>through composed</td>
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</table>

¹ This information in this paragraph is a paraphrase of comments made by the composer in conversation regarding the composition. The opening paragraph for each of the remaining movements (chapters 4-6) is also based on discussions with the composer.
**Gear Program Note**

“Gear” is a machine-like movement. A constant eighth-note pulse, representing “time,” is shown throughout the whole movement. Our life is vivid and lively, but in this modern era, we tend to work like a machine. We try our best to achieve our goals after goals, but we do not spend enough time to look around and care about the rest of the world. This movement is expected to be played with an absolutely

~ Ming-Hsiu Yen

**Practice and Performance Recommendations**

The opening motif of three eighth notes in m. 1 permeates the entire first movement. These three notes should be played with short, even, and aggressive strokes; the bow speed needs to be the same for all three notes. The piece starts at *fortississimo*, and the three-note motif is both *staccato* and accented, so it should be played as loud as possible. The example can be seen in Figure 2.1. The *pizzicato* at m. 6 should be played as a snap *pizzicato* (also known as a Bartók *pizzicato*), as indicated by the symbol. In a snap *pizzicato*, the string is plucked directly up and away from the fingerboard and far enough from the fingerboard so as to create a “snap” against the fingerboard when the string is released, as shown in Figure 2.2.

![Figure 2.1. Gear m. 1 with opening motif.](image)

![Figure 2.2. Gear m. 6 with Bartók pizzicato.](image)
The piano part should be played percussively for the entirety of the movement. At m. 9 the piano part is marked “muting string,” meaning the pianist has to mute the strings with fingertips at about one inch from the end of the tuning pins when the notes are marked “+.” This technique occurs from mm. 9-34, and in other passages marked similarly. While the whole movement is to be played percussively, this technique produces an exceptionally percussive sound from the piano, as demonstrated in Figure 2.3. To mute the strings, the pianist plays in a standing position from mm. 1-22.²

Figure 2.3. Gear mm. 9-12 with “+” above the notes.

Special attention should be paid to the third beat of m. 13 and the downbeat of m. 14; both are marked tenuto, and despite being eighth notes, they should not be played too shortly. It is important to note that in the third and fourth beats of m. 15, the accents are on the upbeat, while only one measure later m. 16 has the same sequence, but with accents on the downbeat of the third and fourth beats, as shown in Figure 2.4.

² Most of the suggestions concerning the piano part are made by the composer.
Beginning in m. 18, the technique of sul ponticello appears and recurs throughout the remainder of the movement. At m. 17, to achieve the gradual drive into sul ponticello, the bow shifts progressively closer to the bridge. At the same time, the crescendo goes from forte to fortissimo. However, in an unconventional twist, at the end of the sul ponticello, there is a sudden drop in dynamics from fortissimo to subito mezzo-piano. Measures 19-20 are similar to m. 17 in that there is a sul ponticello into a subito mezzo-piano. However, this time the cellist only has two beats to reach sul ponticello, meaning the bow must reach the bridge at a greater pace (Figure 2.5). The pianist should also take care to commence m. 18 at a mezzo-piano dynamic, in order to heighten the effect of the crescendo.

At m. 23, she/he releases the right hand to play the treble notes. After only two short bars, the pianist mutes the bass notes again with the right hand. The example is shown in Figure 2.6.
Figure 2.6. Gear mm. 22-25.

It is essential that the pianist keep a steady rhythm from mm. 25-51, even while the cello varies in rhythm and melody. The steady short notes of the piano should in no way deter the cello’s musicality.

In m. 35, Ms. Yen adds lower octaves to the left hand of the piano that is accompanying a long sustained note in the cello—this aids in the crescendo that is asked for, while adding richness to the composition, shown in Figure 2.7.

Figure 2.7. Gear mm. 35-36.
It is interesting to note that the composer does not add lower octave notes at m. 37. Although it is a similar passage, lower octaves in the pianist’s left hand of m. 37 might overpower the lower cello note being played.

At m. 57, the pianist must choose when to abandon the normal style of playing for the muting of strings. It may not be possible to comfortably play all notes up to the end of m. 57 as muted, prior to playing m. 58. The same issue occurs at the end of m. 59, as seen in Figure 2.8.

![Figure 2.8. Gear mm. 55-59.](image)

At m. 63, the cellist needs to practice the timing of the gesture with the pianist. The pianist needs time to transition from the higher register of the piano to a much lower position. This allows the cellist more time to accomplish an effective glissando.

From mm. 67-74, there is an elongated crescendo. Starting at m. 68, the cellist needs to maintain a strong tone all the way through m. 73, playing with a slow bow speed. For pianists with smaller hands, the composer prefers that one play the minor 9th (Figure 2.9A) as a minor 2nd (Figure 2.9B), instead of breaking the chord.
At m. 74, the piano part begins with the left hand, then switches to the right hand in order to reach the low C at m. 78 in time. From the second beat of m. 74 through the end of m. 77, the cellist has to play all four notes simultaneously (Figure 2.10). Here, producing machine-like sounds takes priority over intonation. The combination of the bow being close to the bridge (for *sul ponticello*) and the chords being played across four strings should produce a jarring, metallic sound.

Figure 2.9. *Gear* mm. 68-73. Play the minor 9th (A) as a minor 2nd (B).

Figure 2.10. *Gear* mm. 74-77.
The cellist's *glissando* from m. 91 to 92 may require some ensemble rehearsal with the pianist. Although *rubato* should generally not be employed in "Gear," a small amount of time may be necessary for the cellist to accomplish this *glissando* of an octave interval.

In mm. 100-109, both players should take care to faithfully observe the metrical units of rests. Any rushing through the rests is prohibited, because it undermines "Gear’s" steady rhythm.
CHAPTER 3

_Tears of the Angel_ 天使之淚

**Information on the Composition**

From high above, an angel looks down and observes the doleful state of humanity. The mechanical quality, the coldness, the absence of mutual concern—the angel sees all of this. As the angel somberly contemplates the contemporary human condition, tears begin to descend from the angel’s eyes. The structural outline of this movement is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Structural Outline for _Tears of the Angel_

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<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
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<td>1-56</td>
<td>49-72</td>
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<td>Measure #</td>
<td>1-28</td>
<td>29-48</td>
<td>49-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsection</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure #</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>11-19</td>
<td>49-58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note</td>
<td>from Aa</td>
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</table>

_Tears of the Angel_ Program Note

“Tears of the Angel” describes an image, in which an angel is mourning for this modern society. At the beginning of the movement, the piano plays with a repeated pattern, which contains large leaps, in the high register, as if the tears are slowly dropping down from the angel’s face. The cello plays a sorrowful melodic line, which symbolizes the inner life of the angel. This movement is played _attacca_ into the third movement, “_Spintop_.”

~ Ming-Hsiu Yen
Practice and Performance Recommendations

Throughout the duration of the movement, the piano part depicts the angel’s tears with eighth notes, while the cello part depicts the angel’s ruminations. The piano conveys the angel’s external manifestations and the cello conveys its internal reflections. The angel’s tears are continuously flowing, and should be expressed by the pianist’s playing with an unbroken *legato*. From measure 1 up until measure 28, there is a certain measured fragility, somberness, and depth of emotion, with no outbursts or agitation, as shown in Figure 3.1.

![Music notation](image)

Figure 3.1. *Tears of the Angel* mm. 1-4.

Prior to commencing *Tears*, the pianist must prepare the low A, as seen in Figure 3.1, with the *sostenuto* pedal: silently depress the A, and then capture it with the *sostenuto* pedal. This allows the low A to freely ring throughout the piece, as requested by Ms. Yen in m. 1. Additionally, the pianist has complete freedom to employ the damper pedal as he or she wishes. It is important to note that Ms. Yen requests that the *sostenuto* pedal be depressed throughout the entire movement.
For mm. 1-15, a pianist might intuitively play the eighth-note patterns with the right hand. However, because of the large leaps between each adjacent beat within each measure, it may be difficult for the pianist to perform the \textit{diminuendo} and the following \textit{pianissimo} at m. 3 if the eighth-note patterns are played solely by the right hand. The pianist on the recording suggests playing the second and the fourth beat of each measure with the left hand, while using the right hand to play the first and third beats. There are two exceptions in m. 5 and m. 10, where the pianist takes the last two eighth notes with the right hand to approach the low A of m. 6 and m. 11 as seamlessly as possible (Figure 3.2).

![Figure 3.2. Tears of the Angel mm. 4-7.](image)

Although the first harmonic shift occurs in m. 10, where the tonality goes down in a chromatic fashion, the pianist at her/his discretion, may choose to blur the harmonies through minimal changes of the damper pedal (Figure 3.3).
From mm. 3-28 the cello plays in a somber, measured fragility. The bow speed should therefore be controlled and not too fast, and bow changes ought to be smooth and imperceptible. Notes should be held to their full length, with *tenuto* and slight *rubato*. At m. 4, the cellist should avoid sliding from C# to F. However, some sliding from F to B is acceptable, according to the composer. The *crescendo* from mm. 15 to 16 is played with more speed and weight on the bow to maintain the *tenuto*, but the C# in m. 16 is unaccented, because the *crescendo* is only from *piano* to *mezzo-piano*. Also note that the second beat of m. 27 is played with an upbow; as it is *tenuto*, however, it should imitate the sound quality of a downbow.\(^3\)

Beginning at measure 29, the dramatic intent of the music increases, as the angel’s disappointment turns into agitation. The angel’s emotions are more stirred and build towards greater catharsis, eventually peaking at m. 41, as expressed through the *crescendo* into the *fortissimo*. Although preceded by *a poco ritardando*, the tempo change in m. 29 is sudden; the abruptness is essential to conveying the shift from calm to agitation (Figure 3.4).

\(^3\) After playing through the composition in the composer’s presence, these and ensuing comments regarding performance practice were approved by the composer.
In this agitated moment (Figure 3.4), the piano writing consists of two extremes: a tenor line and a treble phrase that is many ledger lines above the staff. The low A of the piano bass clef stops for seven bars (mm. 29-35), as the music here is played *molto espressivo*. While the low A is absent, the tears continue to fall; however, it is as if the angel is searching for meaning and resolution. The bass clef of the piano is in a medium range, while the cello’s melody conveys a meandering up-and-down figure, very much symbolic of the angel’s wandering and searching.

The texture of the piano writing changes drastically in m. 36, with the re-emergence of the grief-stricken low A (Figure 3.5). The angel is no longer crying; the tears of sadness have turned into an acknowledgement of the pain and anguish that reality often brings with it.
Once the angel’s emotional expressiveness peaks at measure 41, the music gradually returns to a calmer state. The eighth notes in mm. 41-44 are to be played with greater power and length than before. At m. 45, having calmed down, the angel begins an internal dialogue considering its course of action, with the question, “what then shall I do?” Measures 45, 46, and 47 employ the same notes, but with different arrangements (Figure 3.6). This communicates the angel’s internal dialogue and growing uncertainty as it repeatedly considers the same question. Further reflecting the angel’s renewed state of calm, m. 58 is played sul tasto.

As the movement closes, measures 65 to 68 convey a long sigh, particularly through the harmonics in m. 67 and m. 68. The movement finishes with a diminuendo into niente, as the notes fade away into little more than a whisper.
CHAPTER 4

Spintop 陀螺

Information on the Composition

After exploring the perspective of an angel in the second movement, we shift
back to an examination of the human condition—from a human perspective. So
often, the state of humanity seems to be helpless and hopeless. Why is the world
so cold? The contemplation takes a turn. Something must be done. We must do
something. There is grief, there is indignation, but there is also resolve. All of this
contributes to an aggressive emotional state throughout the movement.
The structural outline of this movement is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Structural Outline for Spintop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
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</thead>
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<td>$\frac{4}{4}$ @ 84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$\frac{4}{4}$ @ 76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure #</td>
<td>1-29</td>
<td>30-114</td>
<td>115-146</td>
<td>147-161</td>
<td>162-179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsection</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure #</td>
<td>30-55</td>
<td>57-66</td>
<td>67-77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsection</td>
<td>b'</td>
<td>c'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure #</td>
<td>78-98</td>
<td>99-114</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spintop Program Note

Continuing with the sorrowful melodic line from previous movement, “Spintop” starts
with a cello solo section and gradually becomes more rhythmic. Similar to
the first movement, this movement implies that our daily life is a routine, and we live
like a Spintop. After the piano joins, the music becomes more energetic. Fast
scalar motives and rapid repeated notes frequently appear, as if the Spintop never stops.

~ Ming-Hsiu Yen
Practice and Performance Recommendations

Movement three begins with an extended cello solo, lasting from measures 1 to 33. The beginning should be played mysteriously and as *legato* as possible, with imperceptible bow changes. There is no need to employ too much *vibrato*. From measures 1 to 30, the cellist has some freedom to interpret according to her/his own understanding of the theme. Because this movement is about reflecting humanity’s disposition, the cellist may even interpret according to her/his own ideas and/or mood. She/he is free to interpret dynamics according to the shape and the direction of the notes—even the listed dynamic markings are open to different degrees of emphasis and exaggeration.

The movement starts off smoothly at m. 1. The passage should be played quietly and without accent to convey the mysterious nature of the music. Moving from there, be careful not to *crescendo* at m. 3, even though the notes are climbing higher. There should be no accents on the first and third beats of m. 4, and although the *diminuendo* starts there, the dynamic could only be *mezzo-forte*, and get softer from there, as shown in Figure 4.1.

![Figure 4.1. Spintop mm. 1-5.](image)

At m. 12, be careful that the left hand does not slide too fast on the sixth chord. Otherwise, there may be an unwanted accent. The quintuplets at m. 13 should be played on the string—with the bow having more weight on the string—and should not be rushed. Though m. 14 and m. 16 appear to be similar, it should be
noted that the first beat on m. 16 is a triplet, and does not carry a staccato articulation. Therefore, at m. 16, be sure to play the full value for the first note, and not to give the second note a *tenuto* articulation. At m. 21, it is recommended that the cellist use the second finger on the last note (the C), thus making it easier to reach the first note of the double stop. At m. 22, the music culminates in a symbolic spinning around (hence the title "Spintop") through the use of pitches that chromatically rise and fall.

With further emphasis on chromaticism, m. 30 marks a turn for humanity from reflection to resolve. If such is the reality of society, then life must go on, but with a balance of realism and a resolve to change that which can indeed be changed. Therefore, this section is to be performed *con brio*, with energy.

Measures 32 and 34 both employ harmonic notes. The A in m. 31 should be played on the open string to allow for the harmonic in m. 32, played by touching the D with the fourth finger, creating a natural harmonic. The last note in m. 33, an E, necessitates a quick switch from the first finger to the thumb in order to set up the artificial harmonic that follows in m. 34, where the thumb is pressed to fingerboard, and the fourth finger touches the perfect 4\textsuperscript{th} above to create the harmonic. The example is shown in Figure 4.2.

![Figure 4.2. Spintop mm. 31-34.](image-url)
Note that at m. 32 and m. 34 there are accents, so the bow must be played close to the bridge in order to produce a louder harmonic. Also, the piano joins in for the first time in this movement at m. 34, and engages in a dialogue with the cello. The piano imitates and follows the feel of the cello’s melody, matching both the mood and tone.

At measure 37, the piano has a particularly low note, which is meant to imitate the effect of timpani. The left hand plays in a percussive manner, while the right hand continues its dialogue with the cello until m. 52, as shown in Figure 4.3. Meanwhile, the cello accents and slurs at m. 37, while simultaneously maintaining a clear sound. The left hand, therefore, cannot slide too much.

![Figure 4.3. Spintop mm. 37-39. The left hand imitates the effect of timpani.](image)

The cello and piano reverse roles starting at the second beat of measure 46. The cello now imitates the timpani sound. There is no need for the cello to sound pretty here, only percussive. The effect and percussive feel are paramount; sound quality is secondary to a strong, powerful feel—abrasive, even. This is particularly important leading up to mm. 50 to 77, when the cello has quadruple stops. At this point, the cello embraces abrasiveness. As best as possible, all four notes should be played at the same time for the quadruple stops, and with a very fast bow speed.
From measure 58 on, though the thirty-second notes are *staccato*, they are to be played on the string, clear, short, and crisp. At m. 59, the cello goes from *sul ponticello* to a normal bowing technique, flipping back and forth. The example is seen in Figure 4.4. A metallic sound is added to the abrasive sound when in *sul ponticello*, hearkening back to the *Gears* portrayed in the first movement.

![Figure 4.4. Spintop mm. 59-62.](image)

Measures 99 through 114 should be played like a top that is spinning steadily. The accents are the axis, the anchor of the top, so every accent should be played exactly the same. From measures 115 to 140, the tempo slows down some—*meno mosso*. For the three-note arpeggios, emphasis should be placed on the first note.

Measure 147 circles back to form a recapitulation, and unless otherwise noted, should be played with the same patterns as before. Lastly, measures 166 to the end should be played percussively by the cello.
CHAPTER 5

Transformation 昇華

Information on the Composition

When people have been hurt through life experiences, they often feel hopeless, and try to hide these wounds and pretend nothing has ever happened. They may still hope that the wounds will be healed and their lives transformed. The movement suggests both the struggle associated with the human condition and the potential for transformation. The structural outline of this movement is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Structural Outline for Transformation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A'</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D (or C')</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tempo</td>
<td>J= 64</td>
<td>J= 65</td>
<td>J= 95</td>
<td>116-180</td>
<td>J= 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>1-55</td>
<td>56-91</td>
<td>92-115</td>
<td>116-180</td>
<td>101-233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsection</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>a'</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>a'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>1-17</td>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>56-51</td>
<td>52-65</td>
<td>164-172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Note | b; Eb-A-D-Eb-B (motive) | variation of Ab | variation of A | ascending scale | \(a_e\): variation of A

Transformation Program Note

Starting with an expressive melodic line in the cello part, a passionate and emotional language carries throughout the entire “Transformation.” This movement talks about wounds that are buried deep in our hearts, but we pretend they have disappeared. One day, with the return of all the memories, the false scars are torn off. We struggle and suffer, and we hope these wounds will be cured and transformed one day.

~ Ming-Hsiu Yen
Practice and Performance Recommendations

At the very beginning of the movement, although the cello line does not indicate the bowing, the line is to be played legato as marked in the score, and shown in Figure 5.1. The composer intends for the cellist to have the freedom of choosing their own bowing.

![Figure 5.1. Transformation mm. 1-5.]

The opening dynamic is mp, but there is room for variance as long as it follows the shape of the notes. Accents should be avoided here, by paying attention to bow length and distribution; the bow speed should not be too fast.

From measures 1 to 17, the piano, despite having dotted half notes throughout, can match the cello’s shape and emotions. The piano has a pattern of eighth notes at mm. 18-19 (Figure 5.2) which will later be taken on by the cello at m. 27, not in terms of an exact pattern, but rather, the feeling, further conveyed by playing intervals of a fourth (Figure 5.3). The piano plays intervals of a fourth and a fifth (e.g. A-D-Eb-B), which appear throughout the movement, such as at mm. 27-29. This is shown in Figure 5.4.
Figure 5.2. Transformation mm. 18-19.

Figure 5.3. Transformation mm. 27-28.

Figure 5.4. Transformation mm. 27-29.
From mm. 18 to 28, the piano’s downbeats are to be played with both hands. At the transition from mm. 24 to 25, the piano should utilize the tie with finger substitution from fingers 1-3 in order to play the downbeat of m. 25 with both hands, and repeat in the similar manner until m. 27 (Figure 5.5).

![Figure 5.5. Transformation mm. 18-27.](image)

From measures 27 to 35, the cello has a difficult harmonic scale. All the harmonics are to be played in thumb position, with the thumb creating the base for the artificial harmonics. For example, at m. 27, the B should be played with the thumb, thus when the fourth finger (and 4\textsuperscript{th} interval) is added, a harmonic can be created (Figure 5.6). Practice Note: These shifts should be practiced by breaking it down into parts, i.e., practicing just the thumb shifts before incorporating the fourth finger (once the cellist is adequately adept with the thumb shifts). The example can be seen in Figure 5.7.
With regard to playing as an ensemble (from measures 27 to 35), the tempo must be precise. This is due in large part to the piano having triplets against the eighth notes of the cello. It is imperative that, despite the difficulty of the harmonics (mm. 27-29), the cello keeps the tempo. However, at m. 30, the piano waits for the cello during the cello’s septuplets. The example is shown in Figure 5.8.

The cello part in measures 35 to 39 is similar to the movement’s introduction; however, this time around there is slurring in the bow.
Furthermore, the piano now has added a melody in the right hand (particularly from measures 44 to 52), creating a richer soundscape.

Starting at measure 92, the tempo speeds up as the piano plays flowing arpeggios. While the cello leads and dictates the expressiveness here, the piano should play nebulously underneath the cello’s melody. Because the cello will be more free-flowing in terms of rhythm, it is all the more important that the piano listen to the cello. Here the pianist is best suited to adjusting to the cello’s play over counting. In particular, at mm. 94-102, on beat 3 the piano matches notes with the cello. The pianist must be cognizant of when the cellist arrives on beat 3 to ensure that both partners play the tone simultaneously (Figure 5.9).

Figure 5.9. *Transformation* mm. 94-101.
From measures 108-111, the piano’s rhythmic figures begin to change with an accompanying crescendo, thus creating more agitato. Because of the piano’s rhythmic changes, it is especially important that the cello takes care to not rush the tempo here. Measures 112 to 115 serve as a transitional section. The piano starts with ff, and both the cello and piano play in an agitated fashion until m. 116, where the cello starts the new melody. Note that at m. 116 the piano has a ffmp, so dynamic-wise the piano needs to immediately drop to mp, as shown in Figure 5.10.

![Figure 5.10](image-url)

Figure 5.10. *Transformation* mm. 115-117.

The pianist plays quintuplets, sextuplets, and septuplets at measures 116 to 133, and should be careful to not rush. This is in order to allow space for the cellist to play the melody with ample musicality. Although the dynamic is soft here, the pianist should emphasize the first note of every measure from mm. 116 to 122, given the chromatic scale; i.e., the first note of those measures should be accented, as demonstrated in Figure 5.11.
From measure 116 on, where the new melody starts, the cello plays in a higher register until measure 152. Here, the cellist not only plays in a higher register, but also plays double-stops in intervals of sixth. Thus particular attention should be given to intonation from measures 116-152. The example is shown in Figure 5.12.
Both performers build-up tension from measures 135 to 141, as they move from quintuplets to sextuplets to septuplets. At m. 139, a ritardando occurs, even as the piano plays septuplets. This is a particularly challenging order, and will require carefully practiced coordination between the piano and cello. The ritardando continues through the end of m. 141, all the way until the meno mosso at m. 142.
A crescendo begins at m. 141, and builds layer upon layer until the fortississimo at measure 142. The cellist needs to practice intonation for this passage because of the high register. The tonal quality, however, is not as important; rather, the emphasis should be on conveying power and emotion (Figure 5.13).
At measure 148 the piano introduces decuplets (10-note groupings) as part of a transitional passage until measure 152, which marks the beginning of a new section, where the cello and piano engage back and forth in dialogue, as shown in Figure 5.14. The cello part changes between septuplets and triplets, and it is thus vital that the piano maintain a steady beat from measures 152 to 161, as seen in Figure 5.15.
Rhythmically, measures 162 and 163 constitute a particularly difficult passage. While the cello plays septuplets until the very last beat, the piano, on the
other hand, plays triplets. Because of the slurring in the piano part, it is easy to mistake the triplets for 8th notes, so the piano should take heed not to confuse the two. On the last beat of m. 163, take time on the last beat so that the piano and cello land together on the downbeat of m. 164. The cello should cue the piano. The example can be seen in Figure 5.16.

![Figure 5.16. Transformation mm. 162-163.](image)

Starting at measure 164, the cello plays the melody, which the pianist needs to listen to with particular attention, especially because the piano part changes from septuplets to sextuplets to decuplets (until m. 173). The distinction between the septuplets, sextuplets, and decuplets should be demarcated clearly by the piano (Figure 5.17).
Figure 5.17. *Transformation* mm. 164-171.
At measure 177, the cello has double stops with triplets, *accelerando*, and *crescendo*, thus intonation is very important here (Figure 5.18). In practicing this section (measures 177 to 180), one method is to begin by only playing the bottom notes, while still positioning the fingers on the top notes (without playing them). After that, the cellist can practice playing the top notes, while still positioning the fingers on the bottom notes (without playing them), before putting it all together and playing the double stops as written. For the purposes of practice, the cellist can focus on intonation by practicing at a slower tempo. Once the cellist is secure in intonation, they can gradually bring it back up to tempo.

![Figure 5.18. Transformation mm. 177-180.](image)

From measures 181 to 199, the piano has a complex part, while the cello part is rather simple. The cello should therefore listen to the piano here. The piano will need to find a good fingering for this section. The cello plays at a higher register at measure 181, with dynamic *fortissimo* (*ff*), and some accent, thus the bow should be played close to the bridge.

From measure 218, the cello plays ascending octaves (double stops). Because of the high register at measure 228, it is difficult to play with accents and adequate *crescendo*, thus the cello can use discretion in choosing to only play the top notes in order to achieve the dynamics (Figure 5.19). At measure 227, both the cello and piano should take some time going into measure 228, since m. 224 leads...
into m. 228 by way of a chromatic run. The pianist and cellist should make eye contact at measures 231 through the end (m. 233), ensuring that the pianist follows the cellist’s bow changes so that they end together.

Figure 5.19. Transformation mm. 224-233

**Conclusion**

Commissioning a new piece from a living composer is a tremendous collaborative experience. It is an opportunity for the performer to communicate with the composer directly regarding performing styles and general concepts about the music. This written document serves as a performance and practice guide for instrumentalists interested in learning *Reflections*. This newly commissioned work not only enlarges the cello repertoire, but also enriches the musicianship of people who learn and perform it.
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW WITH MIN-HSIU YEN
The following interview with Ming-Hsiu Yen took place on Feb 6, 2013 in Taichung, Taiwan.

Q1. Where were you born and raised?
I was born and raised in Taichung, Taiwan.

Q2. What is your primary instrument?
My primary instrument is the piano, but I also play the viola and the two-string Chinese instrument, erhu.

Q3. How did you become interested in composing?
When I was a kid, the Yamaha music education system was very popular in Taiwan. I joined the system when I was 5 or 6. That was my first music education. In addition to basic musicianship and piano playing, my teacher also occasionally encouraged us to write some little pieces. My first “composition” was a one-voice melody with some grace notes, trying to mimic the sound of bird chirping. My teacher first played what I wrote in class and then played it again with her harmonization. It sounded fantastic! I was so amazed to see my little ideas get turned into a real piece. Since then, I have never stopped writing, and my composition skill has been growing together with my piano playing and music learning. Composing and performing are integrated, and I feel more “complete” when I try to achieve both at the same time.

Q4. When did you start your first piece? What is it?
After an audition, I got accepted into the specialized music program for talented students in a public elementary school. In order to stay in this program, there were
also several auditions I had to take every few years along the way, but at the end, I was in the program from first grade all the way to the time I completed my high school education. I don’t remember when exactly I wrote my first piece, but it was a composition assignment from one of my musicianship classes in first or second grade. The piece was no more than 16 bars and was written for piano.

Q5. What is your favorite instrument to write for?

I don’t have a favorite one. I love to write for all kinds of instruments and always look forward to writing for instruments for which I have never written.

Q6. Where do you usually compose your music?

I can compose in any kind of place, as long as there is no other music going on. My favorite working situation is to write at the piano with a large desk next to me. If there is a window with a good view in the room, it is even better. If the instrumentation is for solo piano, I use the piano to write; if it is a chamber or orchestral work, I tend to use the piano only to check the harmonic progression. Instead of playing everything on the piano, I prefer “imaging” the sound of the instrument for which I am writing. Playing a non-piano part on the piano sometimes restricts my imagination of the sounds of the instruments. In reference to the piece, “Reflections,” I wrote it at my piano in my office and at my electric piano in my apartment.

Q7. How often do you compose?

It depends. The year 2014 was one of my most productive years, in which I wrote a concerto for saxophone and wind ensemble, a piece for sheng (Chinese instrument) and string quartet, a double bass quartet, a four-hand piano composition, a duet for
double bass and piano, an arrangement of an earlier composition of mine for cello and piano, and an arrangement of Taiwanese folk songs for soprano, viola, and piano.

**Q8. Who is the most influential composer on you?**

Many composers have been very influential to my writing. Among them are Bach, Brahms, Debussy, Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Bartok, Barber, etc.

**Q9. Who is your favorite teacher?**

I’ve studied with many masters, and from each of them I learned a great deal.

**Q10. Do you have any favorite elements/techniques that you like to use in your compositions?**

It depends on the ideas I have for each composition. It could be form, contrapuntal writing, or contrasts.

**Q11. Do you consider the qualities of the performer when writing your works?**

Not exactly, but if I know who will be playing the composition, I always ask for their recordings or go to their concerts to get to know the performers better before writing the music. Especially for commissioned works, I want the performers to be able to show the best parts of them.

**Q12. Have you written a piece for cello before? If so, please elaborate.**

“Reflections” is my first piece written for cello and piano and is also my first piece in which the cello has the most important role. However, I’ve written for cello in chamber and orchestral compositions.
Q13. Do you usually come up with a title first or the music?
Most of the time, even in the very early stage of the composition, I know my main musical ideas and extra-musical ideas very well. The musical ideas then turn into the composition, and the extra-musical ideas get transformed into the title.

Q14. Where do you find inspiration for your compositions?
I find inspirations from my daily life.

Q15. Do all of your pieces have programmatic titles?
Once the musical ideas and the extra-musical ideas in the composition are clear, it is not hard to come up with a title. However, the most difficult part is to pick the best one among them. A good title can both “guide” the listeners and “summarize” the ideas of the composition.

Q16. Why do you name this piece Reflections?
Each movement of the piece in “Reflections,” is a reflection of my observation of people in this modern society and of my own experience being one of these people. The people that I portray in this composition work around the clock and are cold like a machine in their expression. They are energetic and always show their strongest side to other people (as in the first movement and the third movement); however, in their inner world, they are as weak as grass, and they are not as strong as they seem to be.

Q17. What are your general concerns regarding this piece? Could you say a few words about the piece?
This is a piece with contrasting movements and sections. It should be played as musically and as dramatically as possible.
APPENDIX B

LETTER OF PERMISSION
I give permission for Yu-Ting Tseng to include my musical score as a part of her research document, “A Newly Commissioned Work for Cello, A Recording and Performance Practice Guide.”
Reflections 《印·映》

I. Gear 齒輪

Allegro \( \frac{3}{4} = 120-128, \) Machine-like

Violoncello

Piano

Vc.

Pno.

\( \text{pizz. \_ \_ \_} \quad \text{arco} \)

\( \text{ff} \)

\(+ \text{ use fingertip to mute string about one inch from the end}\)

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All Rights Reserved.
Reflections - I. Gear

Vc.

Pno.

(norm) → sul pont.

Vc.

Pno.

norm. sul pont. norm. sul pont.

Vc.

Pno.

mp sub. f mp sub. f
III. Spintop

Andante $\frac{3}{4} = 84$

Violoncello

\( \text{mp mysteriously} \)

Vc.

\( \text{mf} \)

Vc.

\( p \)

Vc.

\( \text{mp mf} \)

Vc.

\( \text{f con brio} \)
IV. Transformation 昇華

Andante $J = 84$, Espressivo

Violoncello

Piano

Vc.

Pno.
APPENDIX D

REFLECTIONS RECORDING
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<thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Tears of the Angel</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Spintop</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Transformation</em></td>
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