

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Frank Huang Fei-jan**

#### **Cool, cool, cool**

In 1960, King's College had a new music teacher, Frank Huang Fei-jan.

Frank Huang was a civil servant. He worked in the Music Inspectorate of the Education Department, before becoming the music teacher of King's, taking over from Oswald Lim.

Nothing could have been more different, Lim and Huang. Chalk and cheese. Lim was engaging, out-going, Huang, cool, reserved. Lim led, Huang observed. Lim engaged, Huang observed, and observed.

I had many first hand experiences of Huang's cool, quiet, dispassionate demeanor.

During the years I studied at King's, from 1958 to 1964, within school premises, we were instructed to speak only English. Any student caught speaking Cantonese or any other Chinese dialect would be asked to report to the Vice Principal, who would administer different doses of punishment, from copying 500 times nonsensical statements such as 'I shall only speak English in School', or spending a number of hours after school, in detention class.

I cannot count how many times I was caught committing this offense. Numerous. All students at Kings spoke to one another in Cantonese; we never spoke English, except during the lessons at which English was the medium of instruction. Got caught? Piece of cake. See the Vice Principal? Sure. I had got used to that. I stood ready, for detention, or whatever. Pray tell me how I am going to be published; I just do not care.

One day I was caught again, with a number of fellow offenders. We were instructed to go see the Vice Principal. That we did, after school. The Vice Principal was not in the staff room. We waited. After 20 minutes, we were bored stiff. We began, quietly, to speak to one another, in Cantonese, got more and more excited, and had no idea that the Vice Principal had entered the Staff Room.....

The Vice Principal was furious. He turned lobster red, and yelled at us in a language none of us understood. You see, he was not a Cantonese. Someone said he was born and raised in Shanghai, studied for his Phd in

England, and worked his way up to the rank of Vice Principal at King's.

"NO CANTONESE!!!! NO....NO....." He yelled. The whole room reverberated.

We just stood there, waiting for him to either explode, implode, or run out of steam, or breath, or whatever.

That did not happen. The yelling went on for quite a while. The Staff Room was full, but the other teachers in the room were so embarrassed, that one after another, they quietly slipped out of the room.

I slowly lifted my eyes, looked around and began to notice that one teacher was still in the room, quietly watching the whole episode: our music teacher, Frank Huang; he was watching, dispassionately, his face and eye showing absolutely nothing..... nothing. What was he thinking? What was he looking at, I wondered. I watched him, out of the corner of my eyes. Finally, after about 20 minutes, the Vice Principal began to run out of steam..... we were instructed to copy 800 times that nonsensical phrase, and spend 3 late afternoon in a detention class.

To this day, I still cannot figure out what Frank Huang was doing during those 20 minutes of diabolical monologue by the Vice Principal. I was amazed that someone could have stayed, and watched, watched, and watched. No emotion. Not sure if there was even awareness. Just watched, watched and watched.

Later, years later, I had my own rationalization of Huang's behavior. My own theory. I'll come to this point later.

There was nothing wrong with Frank Huang, when it came to the teaching of music. There was nothing particularly remarkable either way. He was a good singer. At the music lessons, most of the time he would ask us to sing, from song books, with him at the piano. I don't remember hearing him talk about the theory or history of music. Not that we cared. Music lessons were, for us, sessions for relaxation, for quiet chatting, in Cantonese.

Frank Huang taught at Kings for one year. After that he was posted back to the Music Inspectorate of the Education Department.

I next met Frank Huang two years later.

In 1963, I joined the newly formed Hong Kong Youth Orchestra. To call it an orchestra was, perhaps, overstating it a bit. The Hong Kong Youth Orchestra started with over 40 violin players, 3 flutists, 2 clarinets, 2 trombones, a handful of sleepy looking youngsters trying to hit an assortment of percussion instruments. We had no players for instruments in the middle or lower registers. As the Youth Orchestra was started by the Education Department, the Music Inspectorate summoned all its senior officers to come and play, in support of the student members. So we had Frank Huang playing the cello, John Cheng playing the trumpet, and Sheila Lai playing percussion. It was obvious that the senior officers did not enjoy the experience. They were instructed to come and support an initiative started by their supervisor. They came, out of a sense of duty, and you could almost see their suffering. And it was suffering. I sympathize with them. One solitary cello, against 40 foul sounding violinists, many of whom could not play in tune, or in tempo.

I was happy to meet my music teacher again. We talked, briefly. Frank Huang had not changed, not a bit. At the rehearsals of the Youth Orchestra, he was his former self. He usually just sat there, emotionless, minding his own business, playing the cello, with very few visible body movement.

That year, Albert, my brother, 5 years younger than I, wanted to begin his instrumental music studies. Our father insisted that he should study the cello, so that at home we would have a piano trio, my sister on the piano, and me playing the violin. One day, after a rehearsal of the Youth Orchestra, I asked Frank Huang whether he would consider teaching Albert.

"How old is he?" Huang asked.

"12." I said.

"Let me meet him. Take him to my studio." Huang gave me an address.

53 years have passed since that event. To make sure I got my facts right, on 28 July, 2016, I sent an email to Albert, my brother, who now stays at Boston, Massachusetts: "I am writing about Frank Huang, who taught you the cello. Do you remember your age when he taught you, and how many years you studied with him? Any other impressions?"

On 29 July Albert replied: "Gordon, I started cello lessons with Frank Huang at 12. I still remember the first time I met him at his home studio

with MaMa or someone. I remember he stared at me and he put his cello on me for a long time and I remember MaMa asking if his tuition could be cheaper and he said no. Thinking back it was quite memorable and funny at the same time....."

I wrote back. "On that day, it was I who took you to Frank's home, not MaMa. I asked him the fee question. Funny it was, the way he replied....."

Albert wrote: "Ah, thanks for the reminder! I remember that whole experience. Thank you!! Have a great day!"

Albert studied the cello with Frank Huang for 8 years, through his secondary years, until he went to the University of Wisconsin, USA, in 1970. The fees my father paid for Albert's lessons turned out to be excellent investment. Albert did not go to Wisconsin to study music. He read psychology. But he was the solo cellist of the symphony orchestra of his Alma Mater. He played one of Boccherini's cello concerti, and sent me a recording of the concert. Frank Huang must have been a very, very good cello teacher.

Actually he was more than that, much more. Born in Guangzhou in 1921, Huang studied at Saint John's University, Shanghai, in the 1930s, and at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. He did not just play the cello, and sang classical music items, professionally. He sang pop music items, and performed with professional jazz groups. He was such a versatile professional musician. Go on the Internet, and you will be able to read up on Frank Huang's illustrious career, starting in Shanghai, after moving to Hong Kong in 1950, and in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, where he continued to teach, perform and conduct, until he passed away, aged 91. In the 2 appendices attached, I have copied 2 versions of Huang's CV, written by two separate groups of people.

Why did he appear so cool, almost distant and indifferent, that year he taught music at King's College?

I have my theory, entirely my own. I have no way of verifying this theory.

First, Frank Huang was, by nature, a cool, dispassionate person. He knew what he was doing, and what was going on around him. He was not judgmental. He knew, for example, that I was not a model student, that I always got caught doing 'wrong' things at King's, and was punished for my wrongdoings. But he accepted me as I was. Two years after he left King's

College, when I asked me to teach Albert my brother, he agreed. He accepted me as I was. To him, I am eternally grateful.

Second, he had principles, and would not blink when he stood his ground. The fee issue was, to me, a good example of how he reacted when faced with issues of principle.

Third, I doubt whether he was really happy in his Civil Service career. To start with, he was probably better qualified than many of his colleagues in the Music Inspectorate, including those who came from Britain. In Shanghai, before coming to Hong Kong, he was performing two disciplines of classical music: bel canto singing, and the cello, then pop music of the era, and then jazz. None of his colleagues in the Music Inspectorate of the Education Department had anywhere near Huang's qualifications, span of knowledge, or experience. Yet Huang was never promoted. This was not atypical, in the colonial days of British Administration, in the 1950s and 1960s. I joined the Civil Service in 1966. Fortunately, I did not experienced unfair treatment during my 37 years of service, but in the 1960s and 1970s, many of my local civil service colleagues complained about being marginalized. Same rank, same work, but not rewarded the same way, compared to their British colleagues. I do not know how Chinese civil servants were treated where Huang worked, but if he was not treated fairly, and if he was disappointed because his skills, knowledge, and experience were not fully acknowledged and appreciated by his colleagues in the Music Inspectorate, he was only human. Was his disappointment manifested through his coolness? He would be the only one who would know, but again, he probably would not consciously admit it anyway. But I admired and respected him. Otherwise I would not have asked him to teach Albert, my brother.

Frank Huang moved to Vancouver after retiring from the Hong Kong Civil Service.

In 2002, I retired from the Hong Kong Civil Service. Cynthia, my wife was reading for her Master's Degree at the University of British Columbia. One day, in a shop selling CDs and cassette tapes, which were still in use in those last days of its useful existence, I saw a collection of recordings of Chinese classical music compositions, dating back to the 1930s. In one cassette, I saw the name 'Huang Fei-jan. It was a recording of a piece of 'pop' music Huang recorded in that era. The thought came to me: Frank Huang, where is here? I bought 2 sets of the recordings, and found that Huang lived just 15 minutes away from our flat at the University of British Columbia. I also found his telephone number. I decided to go to his

home, and hand him one set of the cassettes.

It was late spring. Vancouver was its most pristine, feminine self, blooming flowers, clear sky, lengthening twilight. Cynthia and I parked our car outside Huang's door.

We rang the door bell. An elderly gentleman opened the door.

I was shocked.

Frank Huang was not tall. The gentleman who opened the door was much shorter, more frail, and smaller than what I expected of Frank Huang, my teacher. Then I realized how long ago I last saw him. Over 25 years. I do not remember the occasion. It could have been at a concert in Hong Kong.....but so long, so very long ago.

But his eyes were focused, and sharp.

I quietly explained who I was.

Frank Huang listened.

I talked about my days at King's, and his teaching.

Frank Huang listened.

I talked about my brother, and his cello lessons.

Frank Huang listened.

I handed over the box of cassette tapes, and mentioned the recording of his singing. His singing in Shanghai, I said.

Frank Huang blinked. His mouth opened. He said nothing. He kept looking at me. After a while, he said, very quietly, "How.....where.....did you get it?"

"In a music shop." I said.

Frank Huang listened, and looked at me.

"It's for you." I said.

Frank Huang looked at me, for a long time. "Thank you" he said.

I shook his hand, and said good bye.

In 2013, I read a press report about Frank Huang's passing, and the memorial service held in Vancouver, in his honour, and in memory of his work, and his Christian service.

Gordon Siu

7 August 2016

Updated 8 August 2016

## Appendix I

黃飛然，資深聲樂家、合唱團指揮及大提琴演奏家。生於廣州，上海長大，也曾在上海國立音樂專科學院進學聲樂及大提琴。畢業后加入上海交響樂團，也曾在舞廳擔任樂隊指揮，復又任職中學音樂教師。

中文名

黃飛然

出生日期

1922

畢業院校

上海聖約翰大學

性別

男

生平

在華洋雜處的上海，爵士音樂因為電台、唱片公司及歌廳的推動而發展神速，華人也不讓洋人專美，紛紛組織自家的爵士樂樂隊，於是黃飛然樂隊也於1947年組成並在“維也納舞廳”駐唱。他以西洋美聲唱法演繹中外歌曲，深受歡迎。

在上海時期，善唱中音的黃飛然曾為百代唱片灌錄不少名曲，如《初戀女》、《熱情的眼睛》、《青春舞曲》等，當中也曾分別與歐陽飛鶯、雲雲合唱《起誓》及《無名氏》等曲。早在1944年還與黃源尹為花腔女高音李香蘭的《海燕》

擔任合唱。

1949年后,初到香港加入香港交響樂團為大提琴手,並在大長城唱片及飛利浦唱片灌錄歌曲,也為多套電影作幕后代唱,這時的歌曲有《同林鳥》及《滿江紅》等,他也曾在中學教授聲樂課程及推動詩班音樂。1968年曾為明儀合唱團擔任音樂會指揮。1971年與徐美芬及舞蹈家劉兆銘主演兩套歌劇《電話》及《靈媒》,其后也曾出任基督教兒童合唱團副團長之工作,居港多年他更是香港聖樂團之創辦人、音樂總監,也曾擔任香港教育司署之音樂視學官。

1975年移居加拿大溫哥華后,常應邀擔任歌唱比賽評判,主持聲樂和指揮技巧研討會。1984年創立了國韻合唱團,一直擔任合唱團總監兼指揮及教唱,在他的帶領下,成員人數達200多人。黃氏亦是慈恩紀念華人協和教會聖詩班、溫哥華聖樂團和溫哥華台灣聖樂團的指揮,並擔任艾格爾弦樂團之大提琴手,經常受禮聘回港作各類型音樂會的客席指揮。

## 作品

### 演唱過的部分歌曲

歌曲名/演唱者/作曲/作詞/灌錄日期/出版日期/備注

《樵歌》/黃飛然、白虹/錢仁康/蔡冰白/1941年11月17日/1942年10月/歌劇  
《大地之歌》選曲

《哪一天回家鄉》/黃飛然/李厚襄/洪菲/1941年11月10日/1942年10月

《初戀女》/黃飛然/陳歌辛/戴望舒/1943年1月25日/1943年3月/電影《初戀》  
主題曲

《海上》/黃飛然/李厚襄/李厚襄/1941年11月24日/1942年10月

《我自從遇見你》/黃飛然、白虹、姚莉、黃穎儀/姚敏/陳棟蓀/1942年9月1日/1943年3月

《熱情的眼睛》/黃飛然/劉如曾/嚴折西/1948年7月23日/1948年10月1日

《起誓》/黃飛然、歐陽飛鶯/姚敏/文朗/1946年10月7日/1947年2月28日/電影《鶯飛人間》插曲

《青春舞曲》/黃飛然/李厚襄 ( 選曲 ) /陳歌辛/1948年6月23日/1948年10月1日/合音者有吳鶯音、姚莉、梁萍

參與制作過的電影

《秋瑾》( 1953 ) .... 音樂設計

《秋瑾》( 1953 ) .... 作曲

《秋瑾》( 1953 ) .... 演唱

《寒蟬曲》( 1953 ) .... 演唱

《風蕭蕭》( 1954 ) .... 演唱

軼事

黃飛然談《青春舞曲》

——接受中央電視台越洋電話採訪

.....從1938年王洛賓老先生重新改編《青春舞曲》這首歌曲之后，馬上這首歌就傳唱開來了，一直到現在有65年的時間了，我們的節目組也找到了一張非常珍貴的唱片，那是三十年代上海的一位歌星，叫黃飛然，最早錄制《青春舞曲》的一個版本。

目前最早的《青春舞曲》錄音：1939年上海百代唱片公司錄制，黃飛然演唱。

([baidu.com](http://baidu.com))

## Appendix II

聞名遐邇的音樂教育家、歌唱家、指揮家和大提琴演奏家黃飛然老師已於9月18日返回天家，享年91歲。安息追思聚會亦在10月19日於溫市慈恩紀念華人協和教會舉行。他留下的，不僅是渾厚優美的歌聲、出色的大提琴演奏、或是指揮台上的英姿，而是永垂不朽的音樂藝術，以及他那股推動音樂的熱誠和勁力；而更教後輩難以忘懷的，就是他對基督教信仰的堅定、豐盛生命的流露，因而感染了無數與他接觸過的人。

### 唱紅經典名曲

黃飛然老師生於音樂世家，1921年12月14日在廣州出生，於上海長大。當年入讀中國首間以全英文授課的上海聖約翰大學，及後更在上海國立音樂專科學院進修聲樂和大提琴，畢業後加入上海交響樂團。後來當過樂隊指揮和中學音樂老師。1947年，他還跟志同道合的同伴組織爵士樂隊，以西洋美聲唱法演繹中外歌曲，深受歡迎。

在上海時期，黃老師雖然極有機會竄紅影壇，但篤信基督、敬畏真神的他，為了不想自己落入試探當中，更不願意在複雜的環境中工作，因而放棄走上這條成名之路；然而，神在往後的年日卻厚厚的回報他——後來，他出色的歌藝備受青睞，那雄渾、磁性、富有情感的男中音更享譽當年的音樂界，終在唱片公司力邀之下，灌錄了很多唱片。被他唱紅的時代名曲不知凡幾，當中最為經典的，首推1939年的《青春舞曲》。那是最早灌錄的版本，原錄於上海百代唱片。

### 推動音樂藝術

黃老師1949年離開上海，開始在澳門教學，1953年移居香港後，受聘於香

港政府教育署音樂部門，負責統籌及監督音樂課程。居港期間，他曾是香港管弦樂團和中英樂團的首席大提琴手，也是香港聖樂團的創辦人、指揮及音樂總監。此外，也曾為大長城唱片及飛利浦唱片灌錄歌曲，為多套電影作幕後代唱。他一直致力推動音樂藝術，贏得各方尊崇，直至70年代才退休。

## **為神退而不休**

1975年，黃老師移民溫哥華。熱愛音樂的他不但退而不休，反而更活躍於音樂界，繼續他的音樂使命；除經常應邀為各類音樂會作客席指揮外，又為歌唱比賽當評判、主持聲樂訓練、舉辦指揮技巧研討會等。80年代，溫哥華華人教會每年舉行的聯合佈道會，也多次邀請黃老師擔任跨教會聯合詩班的指揮。溫哥華聖樂團現任駐團指揮陳慧中，憶起當年認識黃老師的情形時，說：「黃老師正好與家父同齡，應該是長輩，但自從在聯合詩班認識他至今將近三十年，亦師亦友，他的一個眼神、一句簡短的話，都經常讓我感受到他的謙和、溫暖與鼓勵。」

## **音樂人生寫照**

前年，溫哥華聖樂團為慶祝創團20周年，在黃老師的引薦下，邀得他的侄兒、著名音樂家黃安倫特別為聖樂團譜寫了一首三樂章合唱曲——《詩篇第八篇》。在當晚的音樂會上，黃老師還親自指揮該曲；他又在節目表上寫著：「我們歌唱唯一的目的，是要一心一意頌讚神的美名，傳揚祂的救恩。」陳慧中坦言：「這正是黃老師音樂人生的寫照，也是最值得聖樂事奉者學習的榜樣。」

## **慶祝90歲生辰**

黃老師曾說過：「只要上帝讓我有一天生命，讓我有一刻健康，我都會將音

樂繼續發揚光大。」他不但坐言起行，而且還以生命影響生命，並將推動聖樂的使命交捧給他的徒弟，薪火相傳。

2011年，黃老師以一個別開生面的音樂盛會來慶祝他的90歲生辰——他所參與的四個合唱團數百名團員，一齊演唱他的聖樂作品，以及由他改編的多首民歌、藝術歌曲和流行歌曲，合共超過30首動聽的經典歌曲。這個生日演唱會相當震撼，甚至被譽為大溫市難得一見的盛事，好些人認為，此乃近年來最具規模、水準極高的中文合唱演出。事實上，這是黃老師心血結晶的表彰，也是一眾學生用心演繹的成果，難怪好評如潮。

## **基督品格顯現**

在這些光輝事蹟的背後，黃老的處事為人更叫人敬佩。溫哥華聖樂團的創團主席孫永輝對他讚賞不已：「師傅不單是教育家、指揮家、大提琴家、歌唱家、作曲家，他更是一位以身作則、實事求是、敬虔愛主的基督徒。認識的師傅差不多50年，從他身上我見到聖靈所結的美好果子——仁愛、喜樂、和平、忍耐、恩慈、良善、信實、溫柔、節制……他活出了基督的生命、又展示了音樂家的實力。」

孫永輝與黃老師相遇於1965年，憶念當年師徒的情誼，他滔滔不絕地說：「當時我去香港聖樂團試音，師傅是該團的指揮；我以為自己是唱男高音（tenor）的，師傅卻認為我不是，但仍給我機會讓我加入合唱團，從而啓發了我對神曲（Oratorio）的熱愛，亦為日後創立溫哥華聖樂團埋下了一條伏線。在過去半個世紀，師傅除了教我們唱歌外，更是言傳身教，為我們豎立了很好的榜樣。記得在1968年香港學聯之夜專上院校合唱團比賽中，師傅是總評判長，我想透過『打關係』爭取更大的贏面；想不到師傅一眼看穿我的意圖，冷淡處理；直到我們拿到冠軍後，他才對著我笑說，做甚麼都要講實力，不是靠關係。」師傅的訓誨，至今仍銘記在孫永輝心中。

## 夫婦同心同道

在創辦溫哥華聖樂團之初，孫永輝得到黃飛然老師的全力支持。「師傅為聖樂團當指揮長達20年之久，直至90高齡才退下來，稱他為『溫哥華聖樂團之父』殊不為過。2010年正是師傅和師母金婚紀念的大日子，這對模範夫婦確為我們展示出夫妻成功相處的最佳模式——互相支持、同心同道、相敬如賓；兩位前輩曾在台上作二重唱的情景仍歷歷在目。鸞鵲情深、白首偕老的愛情，不但令後輩羨慕不已，而且更是我們學效的對象。」孫永輝坦言，在他留港的20年裡，黃老師灌錄的聖詩，一直陪伴、鼓勵著他。

黃飛然老師雖然已經息勞歸主，但他卻留下了美好的見證，他一生回應上帝的愛，本著他所信的道處事為人，並將神賦予他的音樂恩賜，透過神聖的樂章唱頌榮耀神。這一切，超越了他的歌聲、音樂藝術、技巧和能力。

今天大家都能同證：那美好的仗，黃老師已經打過了、當跑的路，已經跑盡了，所信的道已經守住了，從此以後，有公義的冠冕為他存留！  
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Gordon Siu

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