ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the art of Chinese regulated-poetry chanting. The history of regulated-poetry chanting in China can be traced as far back as the Tang Dynasty (618–907 A.D.). Despite its ancient history and its difference from pure reading and singing, the lyricism in chanting has often been overlooked. Presently, when one talks about poetry appreciation, the emphasis is largely on the strict metrical pattern or the rhyme scheme of a regulated-poetry rather than the relationship between these patterns and the chanting tradition.

Hence, the author of this thesis attempts to reveal the fact that the Chinese regulated-poetry chanter produces rhymes and tones of a poem spontaneously. Because of this, he can vary the melody, the rhythm, and the dynamics of the same poem according to the context or his mood changes. Only when the chanter is allowed to freely express his self-experience and self-enjoyment throughout the chanting process, can the lyric function of Chinese regulated-poetry be considered to be completely represented.

In order to explain clearly how Chinese regulated-poetry chanting shows its lyric function, the author has chosen three versions of chanting music of Zhang Ji 张继, “Mooring at night by the maple bridge” as a case study. These recordings are all chanted by different chanthers, using Mandarin, Cantonese and Hokkien respectively.

At the introduction of this thesis, the aim, scope and methodology of the paper will be defined. The author will then clarify how poetry chanting is greatly related to Chinese regulated-poetry and the Chinese lyric tradition. In
the third section, there will be a brief introduction to the forms of Chinese regulated-poetry to make the ensuing discussion clearer.

Soon after this introduction, the author will analyze the three chanting music that she has recorded. Though it is inappropriate to put chanting into fixed musical notation (because it is a highly personal experience), this paper, however, disregards this so that some general internal rules of chanting music or the difference between them can be discovered. Also, special attention will be given to how chanting music is related to the use of different dialects and chanting skills. In the last section, the author will conclude on the whole paper and raise up some unsolved question regarding Chinese regulated poetry chanting in the contemporary period.