

A cross-cultural comparison of evaluation in classical concert reviews in British and Hong Kong newspapers

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Abstract

The present study investigates the rhetorical acts employed in classical concert reviews (CR) in British English and Hong Kong Chinese newspapers. It focuses on the uses of praise and criticism of different strength levels, targeting various aspects of the concert. It also explores the views of British and Hong Kong music critics on writing CRs, and factors which might affect their evaluation.

This study adopted a mixed-method approach which consisted of textual analyses of CRs and semi-structural interviews with music critics. Drawing on a modified version of Hyland's (2000) framework for evaluation in academic book reviews, 150 CRs selected from each language were examined in terms of dimensions and structural patterns of evaluation, and types of praise and criticism differentiated by their strengths. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 British critics and 12 Hong Kong critics, which revealed their evaluative styles and factors that might affect their evaluation.

Textual analysis results indicated more similarities than differences cross-culturally. Both groups were predominantly evaluative and contained more praise than criticism; more CRs opened and closed positively; evaluation focused primarily on performance; praise was less mitigated than criticism; *Booster* was the most frequently applied strategy to emphasise praise and criticism; *Hedge* was the predominant evaluation strategy, though each group also had their own favoured individual strategies to mitigate praise and criticism. Cross-cultural differences were observed upon more detailed examination. Chinese reviews contained more rhetorical acts while English reviews praised more. More English reviews were framed with praise. Only Chinese reviews commented on *Concert Management*.

Interview results showed that British and Hong Kong critics shared more common than different views on evaluation. Cross-cultural differences were nevertheless observed concerning their understanding of the role of the critic and consideration for the readers.

In closing, a range of implications regarding the analysis and teaching of evaluation were presented.

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List of Abbreviations

CARS (Create-A-Research-Space)

CR (Concert review)

CSP (Chinese for specific purposes)

EFL (English as a foreign language)

ESL (English as a second language)

ESP (English for Academic Purposes)

EAP (English for specific purposes)

L1 (First language)

L2 (Second language)

M (Mean)

N (Number)

SD (Standard Deviation)

UK (United Kingdom)

US (United States)

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Overview of the theme

Recent years have seen a growing interest in the study of evaluation in genre analysis. Evaluation, defined as “the expression in text of the writer’s or speaker’s opinion or judgment” (Tucker 2003, p.291), has been a major focus in studying review genres in genre studies, especially in reviews writing, a genre which is essentially evaluative. Much of the work has been done to examine the rhetorical features of positive or negative evaluations in academic settings (e.g. Hyland 2000; Hyland and Diani 2009; Lorés-Sanz 2009; Itakura 2013). The research of evaluative language in reviews in professional and popular media settings, however, is relatively scarce.

Cross-cultural comparison is another fast developing research area within genre studies of written discourse in the past few decades, although such studies in reviews writing have mostly been limited to the academic domain (e.g. Salager-Meyer, Ariza et al. 2007b; Moreno and Suárez 2008b; Bondi 2009; Lorés-Sanz 2009; Itakura and Tsui 2011; Itakura 2013). Cross-cultural research on reviews writing in non-academic settings has been relatively scant. One of the very few works concerning cross-cultural comparison of reviews in a non-academic genre is Taboada and Carretero’s (2012) study on the evaluative language of consumer reviews in English and Spanish. However, little is known about the similarities and differences between English and Chinese reviews in newspapers regarding the uses of praise and criticism. Furthermore, in previous cross-cultural studies of reviews, comparison is mostly set in a small discourse community of either scholarly writing (Moreno and Suárez 2009a; Moreno and Suárez 2009b; Itakura 2013; Soler-Monreal 2015), or business communication (Taboada and Carretero 2012). To date not much research has been set in a wider context which targets both professional readers and the general public.

The present study explores musicological writing, an understudied discipline of written discourse studies. Music criticism, a neglected area in written discourse research, has a long history of evolution, though its exact time of emergence is not known (Scholes and Ward 1970). Music criticism is a profession of writing which communicates to its readers both information and the writer's opinions about the musical event (Scholes and Ward 1970; Sadie 1980). There are two types of music criticism: scholarly reviews and reviews in the popular media. The former targets music professionals while the latter appeals to both professionals and laymen (Schick 1996). The style, content and structure of evaluation thus differ due to different readerships. In the present day, reviews published in scholarly music journals (e.g. *Music Analysis*, *Philosophy of Music Education Review*) are academic book reviews in music. Concert reviews and record reviews, which used to be published in academic journals a century ago (e.g. the *Musical Times*), are published in popular media now, namely newspapers, magazines and music websites. One possible explanation is that the process of publishing in an academic journal takes much longer than in a newspaper or popular magazine. Music criticism in newspapers or other popular media enables a “day-by-day account of events in the music world” (Schick 1996, p.3), which helps to promote classical music by keeping readers up to date about the latest musical activities.

1.2 Aims of the study

As a former music student in Hong Kong, I read music reviews in both English and Chinese regularly. It has however been brought to my attention that music criticism as a genre of written discourse has rarely been studied of its rhetorical features from a linguistic perspective. This study is thus motivated by the scarcity of research on cross-cultural comparison of evaluation in music criticism in the popular media. The UK has a long rooted tradition of publishing scholarly music criticism (Sadie 1980). Music criticism appeared in the

British press in as early as the nineteenth century (Randel 2003). Today, classical concert reviews are widely published across British broadsheets. For the Chinese corpus, concert reviews written with traditional Chinese characters published in Hong Kong newspapers are selected. As a former British colony, Western classical music criticism started to appear in Hong Kong press in the nineteenth century (Liu 2005). Given the historical connections between Hong Kong and the UK, it is worth looking into the cross-cultural similarities and differences between British and Hong Kong music criticism. Therefore, concert reviews from Hong Kong Chinese newspapers are chosen to compare with English concert reviews in British newspapers. The ultimate goal of this study is to contribute to the understanding of similarities and differences between English and Chinese writing in the popular media, in terms of how writers express their praise and criticism, as well as their rationale behind the chosen strategies. Concert reviews are chosen because despite being a prominent genre in music criticism, its rhetorical features have yet to be explored systematically. The cross-cultural comparison in this study is set in a wider cultural and social context of popular media discourse, which targets both professionals (musicians and concert organisers) and the general public.

In investigating the reviews genre in depth, writers' rationale behind their rhetorical decisions, i.e. their perceptions of the genre and intentions of shaping their opinions in a certain way, are sometimes examined to supplement textual analysis results (e.g. Matsuda and Tardy 2007; Tse and Hyland 2008; Moreno and Suárez 2008b). However, little has been done comparing English and Chinese writers' views from a cross-cultural perspective. Furthermore, with the scarcity in the research of music criticism, it would appear no studies have explored British and Hong Kong music critics' perspectives and rationale regarding their styles of evaluation in writing concert reviews.

The aim of this study is to reveal the similarities and differences between the rhetorical features of the two groups. It also investigates views of British and Hong Kong music critics

in order to find out the rationale behind their evaluative styles, and factors that might affect their evaluation. These aims are split into the following research questions:

1. How are evaluative acts used in English and Chinese concert reviews?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the uses of evaluative acts between Chinese and English concert reviews?
3. What are the Hong Kong Chinese / British music critics' perspectives on the writing of concert reviews, and in particular their use of positive and negative evaluation?
4. What are the factors that affect the writing of music criticism, particularly the use of evaluation in their writing?

The above aims are achieved by conducting a textual analysis of English and Chinese concert reviews in terms of their general rhetorical features and evaluative acts, and an analysis of in-depth semi-structured interviews with British and Hong Kong music critics.

1.3 Significance of the study

The present study is significant in a number of ways as follows:

First of all, writing in the humanities has been understudied. Of all the humanities genres already investigated, some have received a considerable amount of attention, such as academic book reviews (Diani 2009; Tse and Hyland 2009; Petric 2011). Concert reviews, however, have received little attention. To my knowledge, the present work is the first study on the writing of concert reviews. Mimmagh's (2012) case study on an individual music critic's works includes a medley of record reviews, concert reviews and dance reviews. However, her project primarily focuses on a cultural perspective rather than genre analysis, and therefore lacks a systematic analysis of concert reviews as a genre. Thus, the present study fills a research gap in exploring evaluative features of concert reviews in the understudied area of musicology,

and in a bigger context of humanities writing. Second, despite the growing interest in academic reviews writing (e.g. Johnson 1992; Hyland 2000; Kwan, Chan et al. 2012), relatively less research has been done in non-academic settings. There are very few studies (e.g. Taboada 2011; Taboada and Carretero 2012; Kamoen, Mos et al. 2015) which aim to explore the rhetorical features of reviews in popular media genres. The present study researches musical writing in the popular media, which is a novel area in written discourse studies. Third, cross-cultural comparisons of English and Chinese written discourse are predominantly set in academic contexts (e.g. Taylor and Chen 1991; Loi 2010; Hu and Cao 2011; Mu, Zhang et al. 2015), while the non-academic domain has remained understudied. Furthermore, there is a lack of research on the comparison of English and Chinese reviews writing. The present study thus sheds light on the evaluative features of English and Chinese concert reviews in media discourse, i.e. newspapers. Fourth, this study overcomes the limits of text-linguistic analysis by incorporating semi-structural interviews with music critics, which provides holistic insights into the similarities and differences between evaluative styles of English and Chinese concert reviews.

1.4 Thesis outline

This thesis consists of ten chapters. The present introductory chapter provides the background for this study, states overall aims of the project fulfilled through an investigation of the research questions, and justifies the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to the theories and research the present study is based upon. Issues ranging from genre analysis to evaluation in the review genres, as well as cross-cultural comparison and music criticism are discussed with a wide range of perspectives and insights.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological framework of this study. The construction of an analytic scheme for textual and interview analyses, data collection and analysis procedures, and the pilot study for textual and interview analyses are detailed.

Findings of textual analysis are presented in Chapters 4-6. Chapters 4 and 5 report on the findings of textual analysis in the English and Chinese corpora respectively, answering RQ1. Chapter 6 answers RQ2 by comparing findings in the English and Chinese corpora, presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapters 7 and 8 present the findings in interviews. Chapter 7 addresses RQ3, which includes critics' views regarding the writing of concert reviews, especially on praise and criticism. Chapter 8 addresses RQ4, which focuses on critics' reflections on factors that might affect their evaluation of the concert.

In Chapter 9, the general discussion integrates the quantitative textual results and qualitative interview findings. A comprehensive picture regarding the similarities and differences between British and Hong Kong music critics' writing conventions is painted. Matches and mismatches between the textual analysis and interview results are discussed and explained.

Finally, Chapter 10 concludes by providing an overview of the main findings, implications and limitations of the study. Ideas for future research are also listed in this chapter.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing research relevant to the present study. The focus is on evaluation in review genres. *Section 2.2* briefly introduces the concept of genre and studies on review genres. *Section 2.3* provides a theoretical account of evaluation, followed by an overview of its theoretical and analytical frameworks (*Section 2.4*). *Section 2.5* narrows down the focus to evaluation in the review genres. Research on the analyses of praise and critical acts in reviews is discussed from a number of perspectives including targets of evaluation, structural patterns, rhetorical strategies and cross-cultural comparison. Finally, the context of this study is explained by referring to the literature on the publication of music reviews and roles of music critics in British and Hong Kong newspapers (*Section 2.6*).

2.2 Genre analysis

2.2.1 Definitions of genre and discourse community

Since the early 1980s, it has been a widely accepted notion that communicative purpose is the key component in defining genre (Askehave and Swales 2001). Martin (1985) suggests that “genres are how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them” (p. 151). Hyland (2004) defines genre as “a term for grouping texts together, representing how writers typically use language to respond to recurring situations” (p.4). Johns (1997) also regards purpose as an important consideration in how genres are categorised (p.24). Perhaps Swales’ (1990, p.58) definition of genre has been one of the most extensive explanation of the goal-oriented nature of genre:

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre.

This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetoric action.

One significant feature of Swales' (1990) definition of genre is the centrality of a discourse community which, as associated with the notion of genre, is a "sociolinguistic network" (p.9) in which its members share the same communicative goals using the distinctive intercommunicative mechanisms of their own discourse community (p.24-25). A major function of a discourse community is "to provide information and feedback" to its members using its "participatory mechanisms" and some "specific lexis" (p.26) and therefore, it is necessary for members of the discourse community to have a certain level of expertise of the genre (p.27). Hyland (2015) also highlights that genres are "community resources which allow users to create and read texts with some assurance that they know what they are dealing with" (p.33). Based on Swales' definition of genre, Bhatia (1993) further elaborates that genre is a "highly structured and conventionalised communicative act" characterised by its intended communicative purposes and various factors such as "content, form, intended audience, medium or channel", which determines the "nature and construction" of a genre (p.13).

Despite the notion of communicative purpose being the key concept of genre, with the rapid growth of genre studies in recent years, more complexities and uncertainties have been observed around the conceptualised communicative purpose (Askehave & Swales 2001). In fact, there has been an increasing trend that researchers view genre from a wider and deeper perspective, i.e. "the roles of discourse in contemporary society" (Askehave & Swales 2001, p.196). With his notion of intertextuality, Bakhtin (1986) introduces and shapes the concept of genre as "dynamic, social texts" (in Connor 1996, p.128). Other scholars such as Henry and Roseberry (2001) and Johns, Bawarshi et al. (2006) also see genre as a sociolinguistic activity in which members of the discourse community use language in particular contexts to

communicate with their intended audience. Berkenkotter & Huckin (1995) further the dynamic view of genre's being a social activity, developing a framework which "locates genre in disciplinary and professional cultures" (Connor 1996, p.128) and studying how the academic discourse community of international graduate students at American universities acquire genre knowledge. The present study which investigates reviews writing in a popular media context, focuses on the communicative purposes of concert reviews and the strategies music critics apply to communicate with their readers.

2.2.2 Types of genre and features

This section gives an overview of the types and common features of written genres, rather than spoken genres, as the present research focuses on a written genre, which is concert reviews in newspapers.

In the past three decades, genre scholarship has seen rapid developments and genre analysis has become a popular framework for non-literary discourse analysis (Hyon 1996). Much of the work has been dedicated to written genres situated in academic settings, such as academic research articles (Swales 1990; Hyland 2000; Kong 2006; Samraj 2008; Basturkmen 2012; Hu and Wang 2014; Mu, Zhang et al. 2015), application essays (Ding 2007), grant proposals (Connor and Mauranen 1999), textbook writing (Gu 2016), literature reviews (Kwan 2006; Thompson 2009; Kwan, Chan et al. 2012; Gil-Salom and Soler-Monreal 2014; Soler-Monreal 2015; Xie 2016), discussion sections of doctoral theses (Geng and Wharton 2016), manuscript reviews (Matsuda and Tardy 2007; Samraj 2016), academic theatre reviews (Stermieri 2012) and academic book reviews (Hyland 2000; Gea Valor and Del Saz Rubio 2001; Moreno and Suárez 2008a; Moreno and Suárez 2008b; Alcaraz Ariza 2009).

A variety of professional written genres have also been studied, for instance, job application letters (Bhatia 1993; Henry and Roseberry 2001), corporate annual reports and sales letters (Bhatia 2008), property transaction reports (Kong 2008), tax computation letters (Flowerdew and Wan 2006), curriculum vitae and motivational letters (Furka 2008), customer complaint forms (Giannoni 2014), company social reports (Fuoli 2012) and company brochures (Askehave and Swales 2001). These genres are all embedded in the corporate context.

For both academic and professional discourse genres mentioned above, it is relatively easy for writers to identify their readers who are either within the same academic discourse community (Hyland 2001), or have interactions in the workplaces (Connor and Upton 2004). Media genres, on the other hand, target “a large, diverse and unknown audience” (Fu and Hyland 2014, p.123).

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in popular media genres, which include journalistic articles in newspapers or magazines, such as popular science and opinion articles (Fu and Hyland 2014), advertorials (Zhou 2012), news stories (Shie 2012), financial news articles (Daille, Dubreil et al. 2011) and newspaper headlines (Shie 2011). Further to traditional printed media, online media genres have also been explored. Genres being studied include blogs (Daille, Dubreil et al. 2011), online property advertising (Pounds 2011), product or service reviews (Pang and Lee 2008; Kamoen, Mos et al. 2015), twitter messages (Sifianou 2015), internet discussion forums (Shum and Lee 2013), movie reviews from blogs written by laymen (Mishne 2006; Taboada 2011) or from specialized websites (Pang and Lee 2008). However, compared with academic genres, media genres are still relatively understudied, especially writing on music. Ha’s (2011) study of record reviews in musical journals, for example, is set in an academic context. The present study thus fills a gap in the research of media genres by looking at a genre that has yet to be studied.

2.2.3 Approaches to genre analysis

There are three main approaches to genre analysis in applied linguistics: Australian genre theories, North American New Rhetoric studies, and English for specific purposes (ESP) (Hyon 1996).

The Australian genre theories or systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is based on the work of Michael Halliday (1985, 1994) and further developed by researchers such as Christie (1991), Hammond (1987), Joyce (1992), Martin (1993). Genre studies, adopting the SFL approach have largely focused on the schematic structure (Martin 1989) or overall structural patterns of texts within a genre (Hasan 1984). Linguistic features of a genre such as lexico-grammatical items are also analysed under the SFL approach (Rothery 1989).

The New Rhetoric approach (e.g. Bazerman 1988; Freedman and Medway 1994; Miller 1994), on the other hand, is ethnographic and pays more attention to the situational context, i.e. the “purposes and functions of genres and the attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors of the members of the discourse communities within which genres are situated” (Flowerdew 2002, p.91). In other words, the use of language is not the main focus of the New Rhetoric approach (Johns, Bawarshi et al. 2006). Therefore, ethnographic methods such as participant observation and interviews carry more weight in this approach than linguistic methods.

The ESP approach looks at the “global organisational patterns” (Hyon 1996, p.695) of genres in academic and professional settings (e.g. Swales 1981; Salager-Meyer 1990; Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993; Kwan 2006). ESP researchers (e.g. Swales 1990; Salager-Meyer 1994) also look at “sentence-level grammatical features, such as verb tense, hedges, and passive voice” (Hyon 1996, p.695). Many of the studies in this approach have focused on the communicative purposes by examining the genre-specific features and rhetorical patterns, such as evaluation and politeness strategies in both academic and non-academic genres. Gea Valor (2000b) and

Myers (1989), for example, explore the pragmatics of linguistic politeness in academic book reviews and scientific articles respectively. Cherry (1988) investigates the use of explicit performatives in persuasion letters written by academics. ESP scholars have also conducted substantial studies about the uses of rhetorical strategies in professional genres, such as evaluation strategies in record reviews (Ha 2011), politeness at service counters in Hong Kong (Kong 1998), positive politeness in business letters (Jansen and Janssen 2010), and so on.

It is worth noting that the ESP approach has not only been limited to investigating communication strategies in L1 writing (e.g. Upadhyay 2003; Fukada and Asato 2004; Dunn 2011; Hatfield and Hahn 2011; Chejnová 2014). This approach has also been widely applied in cross-cultural studies of rhetorical features. To name but a few, Wierzbicka (1985) discusses the differences between English and Polish speech acts; Itakura and Tsui, drawing on politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987), compare the uses of criticism in Japanese and English book reviews (2009, 2011); Precht (1998) compares the generic structural differences and politeness strategies in letters of recommendation from the US, the UK, Germany and Eastern Europe.

The present study adopts the ESP approach in analysing the rhetorical features of a non-academic genre, i.e. concert reviews from a cross-cultural perspective. However, using a particular approach alone might not be sufficient for the analyses. It is common now for ESP researchers to complement textual analysis with ethnographic methods such as questionnaires or interviews with writers in order to better understand the communicative purposes behind their writings (Magnet & Carnet 2006; Flowerdew & Wan 2006; Tse & Hyland 2006; Motta-Roth 1998; Bondi 2009). Continuing this line of work, the present study will also take a broader approach to studying the genre in focus.

2.2.4 The review genres

The review genres are referred to as texts written with an explicit aim to evaluate the research, or writings or people related to the research (Hyland and Diani 2009). They are regarded as genres of disinterest by Shaw (2009). According to Shaw, interested genres are those which aim to promote the object they are writing about, such as blurbs, in which only positive evaluative lexis can be found. Evaluation in the interested genres is usually “extreme”, “intensified” or “polarised”, such as ideal, brilliant, fantastic (p. 217). Disinterested genres such as reviews tend to be objective and impartial, which contain both positive and negative vocabulary. Texts from the disinterested genres are more controlled in terms of the use of intensified words, and apply more mitigation strategies (Hyland 2000; Diani 2007).

As a genre of written discourse, reviews have existed for a long time. Scholarly reviews, for example, have approximately 2000 years’ history (Orteza y Miranda 1996, in Hyland 2000). The evolution of reviews began in the mid-seventeenth century, when they summarised usually uncritically scientific writings for the public to read (Roper 1978, in Hyland 2000).

Reviews in modern days, on the other hand, serve to provide both information and evaluation, as North (1992) quotes from The MLA Style Manual:

At its best, a book review is both informative and evaluative, describing the book’s contents and assessing its significance, accuracy, and cogency. Reviewers given little space must take particular care to present a balanced examination of the case. (p.350)

Studies also suggest that information and evaluation are both core components in reviews (Belcher 1995; Hyland 2000; Moreno and Suárez 2009a; Ha 2011). Hyland (2000) explains that reviews “include neutral descriptions of aims, organisation and content” (informative) and “provide writers with a discursive space in which to elaborate their own views” (evaluative) (p.44). In other words, reviews play an important and frequent communicative role in the social interaction between its participants (Johnson 1992). Gea Valor

(2000) also emphasises in her study of academic book reviews the interactive role this genre plays in the interest of the prospective reader. She points out that a review aims to inform the reader of the content and structure of a book, as well as to provide professional assessment and reviewers' opinion of the book, which should be useful to the reader. The development of these two functions of reviews will be further elaborated in *Section 2.5.1 General trends in reviews*.

In academic discourse communities, reviews are interactive texts (Myers 1989) which allow the “manufacture of knowledge” and the “social cohesiveness of disciplinary communities” (Hyland 2000, p.43). In other words, reviews act as a platform for members of a discourse community to share their ideas and analyses (Hyland and Diani 2009). Junior academics “gain institutional credit and a publication profile” by writing reviews, while established academics use it as a “rhetorical forum” (Hyland 2000, p.43). Research shows that academic reviews are considered useful by academics of various disciplines (Spink, Robins et al. 1998) and are read “regularly for news about titles and more general information” (Hyland 2000, p.43). The interactive role of the review genres will be discussed in detail in *Section 2.2.4.3 Reader Awareness*.

2.2.4.1 Types of reviews studied

There has seen a growth in the study of reviews in the last decade (Gea Valor 2000; Hyland 2000; Salager-Meyer, Alcaraz Ariza et al. 2007a), especially in the academic domain. For example, academic book review (Motta-Roth 1998; Gea Valor 2000; Hyland 2000; Römer 2005; Moreno and Suárez 2008a; Moreno and Suárez 2008b; Diani 2009; Groom 2009; Moreno and Suárez 2009b; Babaii 2011; Moreno and Suárez 2011; Petric 2011; Lorés-Sanz 2012); state-of-the-art review (Lewin 2005a; Lewin 2005b; Lorés-Sanz 2009); literature review (Thompson 2009; Kwan, Chan et al. 2012; Gil-Salom and Soler-Monreal 2014; Soler-Monreal 2015; Xie 2016); literary book review (Lewin and Perpignan 2011); academic

theatre review (Stermieri 2012); and peer review or blind manuscript review (Gosden 2001; Matsuda and Tardy 2007; Samraj 2016).

Among the above academic review genres, book reviews have been studied the most. Academic book reviews are regarded as “public evaluations of research, a way of recognizing work done in one’s own field, and a vehicle for bringing attention to potentially useful work done in one’s own field and in other fields” (Lindholm-Romantschuk 1998, p.85). Hyland and Diani (2009) also state that book reviews offer a platform for members of a discourse community to share ideas and analyses. Therefore, academic book reviews are considered a useful tool for academics as they are crucial sites of “disciplinary engagement” with much higher “interpersonal stakes” than research articles (Hyland 2000, p.41).

Studies of academic reviews have covered both hard and soft disciplines. Research on reviews in the hard disciplines include: Physics (Babaii 2011), Biology (Hyland 2000; Tse and Hyland 2006; Tse and Hyland 2008), Chemistry (Motta-Roth 1998), Science (Noguchi 2009), IT (Kwan, Chan et al. 2012), Engineering (Hyland 2000), Medicine (Salager-Meyer 1999; Salager-Meyer and Ariza 2004; Mungra and Webber 2010). Research on reviews in soft disciplines include Literary (Moreno and Suárez 2008a; Moreno and Suárez 2008b; Groom 2009; Moreno and Suárez 2009a; Petric 2011), Linguistics (Motta-Roth 1998; Gea Valor 2000; Hyland 2000; Römer 2005; Diani 2006; Diani 2009), History (Bondi 2009; Diani 2009; Groom 2009; Lorés-Sanz 2009), Philosophy (Hyland 2000; Tse and Hyland 2006; Tse and Hyland 2008), Theatre performance (Stermieri 2012), Marketing (Hyland 2000), Economics (Motta-Roth 1998; Diani 2006; Giannoni 2006; Diani 2009; Shaw 2009), Sociology (Hyland 2000; Lewin 2005a; Tse and Hyland 2006), Psychology (Lewin 1998), Theatre performance (Stermieri 2012), and Movie (Taboada 2011). Music, nevertheless, is rarely covered in review studies.

Compared with academic reviews, professional review genres have not been paid much attention in written discourse studies. Reviews writing in media genres, for instance, have been relatively scarce. Online film reviews (Mishne 2006; Pang and Lee 2008; Taboada 2011), product or service reviews (Pang and Lee 2008), consumer reviews (Taboada and Carretero 2012), and online hotel reviews (Kamoen, Mos et al. 2015) are among the few media reviews being investigated. Studies on music reviews are particularly scant. One existing research of music review genres (Ha 2011) analyses the move structure of record reviews based on Swales' (1990) CARS model. Ha (2011) also examines the evolution of evaluation and the use of mitigation strategies in record reviews. Mimmagh (2012) in her MA thesis investigates the rhetorical style of an individual music critic. Concert reviews, however, remains an unstudied genre.

2.2.4.2 Perspectives of reviews studied

Over the years, studies of the review genres have been conducted from the following perspectives: move structure (Ha 2011; Kwan 2006; Motta-Roth 1998; Moreno and Suárez 2008; Stermieri 2012), evaluative language (Hyland 2000; Ha 2011; Lewin 2005a and 2005b; Mackiewicz 2007), cross-cultural comparison (Moreno and Suárez 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010; Lorés-Sanz 2009), gender (Römer 2005; Tse and Hyland 2006), cross-disciplinary variables (Hyland 2000; Motta-Roth 1998) and diachronic changes (Ha 2011; Salager-Meyer 1999, 2001).

Of the various perspectives regarding the analysis of review genres, evaluative language, which reflects the communicative purposes of genres, has been recognised as the most salient component of the reviews genre (Gea Valor 2000). Studies of evaluative language in reviews will be discussed in detail in *Section 2.3*. The aspect of cross-cultural comparison

in reviews will also be looked into, as it is another focus of this research, i.e. L1 Chinese and L1 English in the writing of concert reviews.

2.2.4.3 *Reader Awareness*

Reader awareness is a traditional concern in the study of written discourse. It is widely believed that writers shape their discourse to the expectation of their intended readers (Kroll 1978; Flower and Hayes 1980; Bazerman 1988; Swales 1990; Hyland 2000; Hyland 2001). Plato emphasised the importance of reader awareness in his *Phaedrus* two thousand years ago (in Kroll 1978). Contemporary scholars also consider it an essential step for writers to think of their readers before they write (McCrimmon 1973, in Kroll 1978), and in turn awareness for readers might have an impact on the style and content of one's writing (Irmscher and Stover 1985).

Despite the fact that writer-reader relationship is important to academic writing (Swales 1990, Hyland 2000), the notion of the reader seems to be a controversial topic among scholars. Some regard reader as fictional while others think readers are real people that the writer must take into consideration (Ede and Lunsford 1984; Park 1986; Kirsch and Roen 1990; Selzer 1992). According to Ede and Lunsford (1984), the writer who regards a reader as fictional (audience invoked) believes that it is impossible to know clearly what exactly the reader is like. Therefore, instead of analysing and adapting discourse to suit the reader's needs, the writer uses the "semantic and syntactic resources" (p.160) to help the reader to define their role and adapt to it. While more common in speech communication, the writer who stresses the reality of an audience (reader addressed) believes it is essential to know the audience's "attitudes, beliefs, and expectations" (p.156).

Readers of academic articles are believed to come from diverse backgrounds. It is up to writers to construct their audience “by drawing on their knowledge of earlier texts and relying on earlier texts and relying on readers’ abilities to recognize intertextuality between texts” (Hyland 2001, p.551). In other words, the conversation between the writer and their discourse community members is largely based on the prediction of the readers’ reaction to the writing (Swales 1990; Hyland 2000). In mass media communication such as newspaper, where readership is even more enormous and diverse, it could be very difficult for a writer to have intimate knowledge of their audience. Simons (1976), for instance, describes the commercial mass media public as having little or no contact with each other, and no reciprocal awareness of each other as well. Thus, it is more plausible for critics to treat their audience as fictional and make rhetorical decisions they consider as appropriate to engage their imagined audience.

A number of interactional management issues are involved in reader engagement, which include “politeness, mitigation, reference to shared knowledge, persona, status, and the positioning of readers by manoeuvring them to see things in the same way as the writer” (Hyland 2001, p.551). Interpersonal metadiscourse is commonly used to modify and highlight the writer’s attitude or evaluation, which includes hedges (e.g. *might*, *perhaps*), boosters or emphatics (e.g. *in fact*, *definitely*), self-reference (e.g. *I*, *we*), engagement markers, and personal pronouns (Hyland 2001; Hyland and Tse 2004).

2.2.5 Summary

This section introduces the concept of genre analysis. It gives an account of various types and research perspectives of the review genres. It is stated that the present study aims to investigate the communicative purposes of concert reviews, a neglected genre in review studies.

2.3 Evaluation

2.3.1 Definition and functions

Evaluation is an “elusive and complex concept” (Hyland & Diani 2009, p.4) which plays a significant role in the function of reviews (Bondi 2009). In academic discourse, evaluation gives critical views on the article of its academic quality and values of the discourse community (Bondi 2009).

Among the studies in recent years about evaluation in written discourse, Susan Hunston is one of the first who defines evaluation:

To evaluate something is to have an opinion about it, particularly in terms of how good or bad it is.

While this evaluation is a mental process, its linguistic expression forms an essential component of discourse. That is, for a text – an exemplum of discourse – to work as communication, there must be frequent indications of attitudes held towards information given in the text and towards the communicative value of the discourse itself.

Expressing evaluation in a text involves both a statement of personal judgment and an appeal to shared norms and values. In that it creates a shared point of view of speaker/writer and hearer/reader, its meaning is essentially interpersonal.
(Hunston 1994, p.191)

The above definition indicates two major features of evaluation:

First, evaluation belongs to the “interactional dimension of language” which features “how writers and speakers intervene in their propositions to convey opinions and attitudes” (Camiciotti 2004, p.81), and is related to the “interpersonal uses of language and how the subjective presence of the writer or speaker intrudes into communication to convey an attitude to both those they address and the material they discuss” (Hyland and Diani 2009, p.4-5). From a broader perspective, evaluation is “the expression of the speaker or writer’s attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about” (Thompson and Hunston 2000, p.5). According to Tucker (2004), *entities* is referred to a value scale of “good” and “bad”, and *propositions* refers to “different degrees of likelihood,

obviousness and relevance” (p.162), both qualified by the writer or speaker. This broad understanding of the concept of evaluation allows the analysis of a series of related issues in the present study, more specifically, the building of writer-reader relationships, the value-system of the discourse community (Lorés-Sanz 2009) of classical music reviews, and how evaluative language works in this system.

Second, evaluation could be seen as not only a personal act, but also a collective social practice based on the values shared by a discourse community (Valle 2004). This concept of evaluation explains the first two major functions of evaluation defined by Thompson and Hunston (2000):

- (1) *to express the speaker’s or writer’s opinion, and in doing so to reflect the value system of that person and their community;*
 - (2) *to construct and maintain relations between the speaker or writer and hearer or reader;*
 - (3) *to organise the discourse.*
- (Thompson and Hunston 2000, p.6)

For the first function, expressing opinion, the writer tells the reader what he or she thinks or feels about something through evaluation. Not only does evaluation reflect the writer’s own opinions, the value-system of the discourse community is also revealed. Behind the value-system lies the ideology of the society in which the text is produced. Such ideology seems to be the core component of every text (Thompson and Hunston 2000). The authors further point out that the ideology reflected in a text may not necessarily belong to a whole society but a sub-group, for example, a particular discourse community. Ideologies are constructed and reflected naturally through texts and are “sets of values” of “what counts as good or bad, what should or should not happen, what counts as true or untrue”. Therefore, evaluation is “a key linguistic feature” in the study of ideologies in discourse (Thompson and Hunston 2000, p.8).

As for the second function, the writer builds and maintains relations with the reader in three aspects: manipulation, hedging and politeness (Thompson and Hunston 2000). First, the reader is manipulated by the writer to view things in a particular way (Hoey 1983; Carter and Nash 1990; Thompson and Hunston 2000). It is easier for the reader to accept the writer's evaluative view when it does not appear as the main point (Hoey 2000), and it is unlikely for the reader to doubt the evaluation if it is embedded in information (Francis 1986; Francis 1994; Thompson and Hunston 2000). Thompson and Hunston quote few numbers of newspaper articles to illustrate how journalists use lexis such as nouns (e.g. *admission*), conjuncts (e.g. *and, but*) and subordinators (e.g. *because, although*) to lead their readers into agreeing with the unobtrusive evaluation behind the information given. Second, hedging in evaluation has been largely used to adjust the "truth-value or certainty attached to a statement" (Thompson and Hunston 2000, p.10, see also Holmes 1984; Myers 1989; Myers 1990; Hyland 1994; Hyland 1998). On the other hand, however, hedging may also function solely as a rhetorical device or a politeness strategy to maintain a harmonious writer-reader relationship (Myers 1989; Myers 1990; Thompson and Hunston 2000).

Apart from getting the readers involved, evaluation often occurs at boundary points of a text which helps to organise the discourse (Sinclair 1988). In narrative discourse, evaluative terms such as *funny* and *amazing* indicate the point, i.e. event of the story and the expected reaction of the reader (Labov 1972, in Thompson and Hunston 2000).

Linguists in general seem to agree on what is meant by evaluation. However, as Valle (2004) points out, specific details such as textual forms and expressions of evaluation differ. For example, viewpoints about *entities* have also been studied in terms of *stance* or *attitudinal stance* (Conrad and Biber 2000; Hyland 2005b; Min 2008), *affect* (Ochs 1989; Besnier 1993) and *appraisal* (Martin 2000; White 2003). Those related to *propositions*, on the other hand, have also been referred to as *epistemic stance* (Conrad and Biber 2000) or *modality* (Halliday

1994). Other terms relating to evaluation include connotation (Lyons 1977), evidentiality (Chafe and Nichols 1986), point of view (Simpson 1993), engagement (Hyland 2004; Hyland 2005b), and metadiscourse (Crismore 1989; Hyland 2000; Hyland and Tse 2004; Hyland 2005a). Despite such differences in terminology, these terms are all based on one common ground: how writers or speakers “take a position on something and seek to position others to do the same” (Hyland and Diani 2009, p.4).

2.3.2 How is evaluation recognised?

Evaluation can be realised both conceptually and linguistically (Thompson and Hunston 2000).

From a conceptual perspective, evaluation is comparative, subjective and value-laden in nature (Thompson and Hunston 2000, p.13). According to Labov (1972) (cited in Thompson and Hunston 2000, p.13), evaluation is a comparison to the norm and carries someone’s reaction to incident, which is regarded as subjective. The value-laden nature of evaluation is bound with goal-achievement (Hunston 1985; Hunston 1989), which means that “what is good” helps to achieve a goal and “what is bad” is a hindrance to achieving the goal.

From a linguistic perspective, evaluation can be recognised in three aspects: lexis, grammar and text (Thompson and Hunston 2000). Shaw (2009) points out that lexical items are a key component of evaluation, of which evaluative adjectives are the most common, and evaluative nouns, verbs and adverbs as well (see also Hunston and Sinclair 2000; Thompson and Hunston 2000). Thompson and Hunston (2000) also state that evaluation does not only occur at a particular part of a text but throughout the whole text.

An evaluative act is a text fragment which should be uniformly negative or positive, and contains one or more evaluative terms (Hunston and Sinclair 2000). Evaluation in explicit

evaluative acts is reflected by an evaluative term, and an evaluative item can either be an “evaluative item” or an “evaluative response” (Shaw 2009, p.219). An *evaluative item* evaluates an entity and categorises it as being good or bad. (Hunston and Sinclair 2000; Martin 2000; Shaw 2009). An *evaluative response* is an alternative to the evaluative item which shows the evaluator’s reaction. According to Thompson and Hunston (2000, p.14-20), there are several aspects in identifying evaluative acts:

1. Evaluative lexis which is evaluative in meaning:

adjectives: splendid, terrible, surprising, obvious

adverbs: happily, unfortunately, plainly, interestingly

nouns: success, failure, tragedy, triumph

verbs: succeed, fail, win, lose

Lexical items as above are evaluative in nature and function. However, a lexical item may carry positive or negative evaluative meaning depending on the perspectives of people involved (Thompson and Hunston 2000). Shaw states that lexical items are “the most obvious signals of evaluation” (2009, p.219). He looks into the polarity of evaluative lexis in economics reviews and the results show that adjectives contribute to the majority of positive evaluation items but much less in negative evaluation. Verbs and verb phrases are the most frequent syntactic units in making negative evaluation, but are less frequent in positive evaluation. Nouns and adverbs have relatively low frequencies in both positive and negative evaluations. As for the objects being evaluated, evaluative adjectives are largely used positively or negatively in relation to the content of the book, whereas verbs are commonly applied in negative evaluations of the author (Shaw 2009).

2. Grammar

Evaluation can be revealed from the syntax of a text (Thompson and Hunston 2000; Römer 2008; Shaw 2009). Shaw (2009) studied 11 economic reviews for their use of explicit evaluation. Grammatical categories in evaluation assessed included parts of speech, modification of evaluative items, syntactic role of an item (head or modifier), role in a phrase in its smallest clause (subject, object, etc.), the realisation of evaluator, subject of verb phrases, clause relations, and so on.

Results show that evaluators (*I, reader*) appear more in negative evaluation, as by announcing a criticism a personal opinion makes it less face-threatening. It is also found that a large number of criticism is mitigated by preceding praise, as in blame-praise pair. Conversely, a considerable amount of praise is softened by preceding blame. Shaw argues that while it is important to mitigate face-threatening acts, it is equally important to “publicly preserve one’s disinterested status” (p.232). It is also stated that some negative evaluation may be boosted to maintain the writer’s “credibility as a disinterested judge” (p.233).

3. Text

Apart from lexis and syntax, evaluation can be identified from its position in a text and the role it plays in that particular position (Thompson and Hunston 2000).

2.3.3 Summary

This section defines evaluation. Two major functions of evaluation are indicated as well: for the writer to convey their values of what is good or bad to the reader, and as a collective social practice for the writer to establish relations with the reader. The present study aims to investigate how the music critic expresses opinions through evaluation, and how the critic expects to impact the reader by applying various types of evaluative strategies.

This section also states that evaluation can be realised conceptually and linguistically. For this study, the conceptual perspective of evaluation can be reflected in the critic's subjective value and taste in music. The recognition of evaluation from the linguistic perspective in previous literature, i.e. lexis, grammar and text, suggests how evaluative acts can be identified in the present study.

2.4 Analyses of evaluation

2.4.1 Overview

This section gives an account of frameworks that contribute to the analysis of praise and criticism in the present study. Praise, following Holmes (1988) and Hyland and Hyland (2001), can be defined as “an act which attributes credit to another for some characteristics, attribute, skill, etc., which is positively valued by the person giving feedback” (Hyland and Hyland 2001, p.186). Criticism, on the other hand, is viewed as “an expression of dissatisfaction or negative comment” (Hyland 2000, p.44) on a text or activity.

The present study adopts a modified version of Hyland's (2000) taxonomy of categories of evaluation, which is largely based on the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson's (1987). Other frameworks based on politeness are also taken into account of this study (e.g. Myers 1989; Herbert 1990; Johnson 1992; Zajdman 1995; Hyland 2000; Hyland and Hyland 2001; Rogerson-Revell 2007; Ha 2011; Holmes 2013). Apart from politeness, the analysis of criticism in concert reviews also draws on frameworks based on impoliteness, as opposed to Brown and Levinson's (e.g. Culpeper 1996; Culpeper, Bousfield et al. 2003; Rockwell 2006). With the concerns about cultural differences in mind, approaches to analyse Chinese and Japanese evaluation strategies (Haugh and Hinze 2003; Hu and Cao 2011; Itakura and Tsui 2011; Pan and Kádár 2011; Itakura 2013) are also taken into consideration.

2.4.2 Politeness

2.4.2.1 *The politeness theory and Face Threatening Acts (FTA)*

Studies on English book reviews (e.g. Motta-Roth 1998; Gea Valor 2000; Hyland 2000; Salager-Meyer 2001) have underlined that book reviews appear to be a highly face-threatening act (FTA) as they evaluate a colleague's work (Salager-Meyer and Ariza 2004). FTA is a concept introduced by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) as part of their influential politeness theory.

The politeness theory is a major theoretical framework on which many studies of evaluation are based (e.g. Cherry 1988; Hagge and Kostelnick 1989; Myers 1989; Johnson 1992; Gea Valor 2000; Hyland 2000; Lewin 2005a; Mackiewicz 2007). Politeness can be defined as the interactional balance achieved between the needs for pragmatic clarity and to avoid coerciveness (Blum-Kulka 1987, p.131). The concept of face is commonly believed to have come from China, which has been first introduced by Goffman (1955). Brown and Levinson (1987) define face as "the kernel element in folk notions of politeness" (p.62). A "face" model has been developed to explain writers' strategies in giving praise and criticism in reviews, in which mitigation of face-threatening acts (FTAs) is the main theme.

According to Brown and Levinson, one will apply politeness strategies if one wants to employ a face-threatening act and at the same time tries to maintain the face of those involved. Thus a number of elements are taken into consideration to calculate the degree of threat the act might cause, for instance, relative power, social distance, and the rank or size of imposition of the FTA. There are two types of faces: positive face is a person's desire for approval and acceptance; negative face indicates the desire for one's actions to not be hindered and attention not impeded. In Brown and Levinson's terms, bestowing praise addresses one's positive face and redresses face-threatening acts (FTAs). A criticism, on the other hand, is a risky act which undermines one's positive face.

2.4.2.2 *Praise and criticism*

Evaluation has been commonly seen in terms of politeness theory in studies of written discourse (Cherry 1988; Hagge and Kostelnick 1989; Myers 1989; Hyland 2000). Hyland suggests that a face model might explain reviewer's choice of evaluation strategies, as the academic circle is small and the reviewer could risk antagonising the ones within it. In other words, criticism can be a direct challenge to the reviewed and undermines the person's confidence (Hyland and Hyland 2001). With a socio-pragmatic force beyond the evaluation, it is claimed that strong criticism can pose risks to all parties included, i.e. the reviewer, the book author and the discourse community (Hyland 2000). Thus, mitigations such as hedging and impersonal constructions can be negative politeness strategies to reduce possible friction between writer and reader (Myers 1989). In contrast, Lewin (2005a) investigated critiques from two sociological journals. She found no mitigation strategies in the critiques. This suggests possible differences between genres in their uses of mitigation.

As well as criticism being a potential threat to the reader's negative face, praise, on the other hand, carries a risk to the reader's positive face. Hyland and Hyland's (2001) study on teachers' feedback on students' English essays indicates that positive comments might damage an open relationship as it "implies a clear imbalance of authority" (p.194). In her study of compliments in peer reviews, Johnson (1992) argues that reviewers use compliment strategies to "establish and maintain support" and "mitigate both global and specific face-threatening acts" (p.51). It is also believed that politeness is more important when a reviewer is not anonymous, and politeness theory contributes to the use of compliment strategies as a means to redress the reader's positive face. Myers (1989) regards the regularities of expression in scientific articles as positive politeness strategies which emphasise the solidarity of writer and reader. Examples of the regularities of expression include passives, pronouns, emotional markers and modal

verbs. He claims that the risks of positive politeness in scientific writing are related to a conflict of interest between a personal interest and a duty for the discourse community.

2.4.2.3 Frameworks of praise and criticism based on politeness

Amongst studies based on Brown and Levinson's, Hyland's (2000) framework on praise and criticism in academic book reviews has been one of the most influential. In his study Hyland discusses dimensions of praise and criticism, as well as mitigation strategies for critical acts. Hyland's (2000) framework on dimensions of evaluation (p. 47, Table 3.1) and mitigation strategies of criticism (p. 55-61) is outlined in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1: Hyland's categories and mitigation strategies of evaluation (2000, p.47, 55-61)

Categories of evaluation	Description	Mitigation strategies of criticism	Description
(i) General:	Overall discussion: e.g. coverage, approach, interest, currency, quality	Praise-criticism pairs	Praise syntactically subordinated to a criticism, and the adjacency creates a more balanced comment, which slightly softens the negativity of the evaluation
(ii) Specific:	Argument: e.g. insight, coherence, explanatory or descriptive value	Hedging	Mitigate the interpersonal damage of critical comments. Typical hedges include modal verbs such as <i>would, might, may</i> and <i>could</i> , and the epistemic verb <i>seem</i> .
Style	Exposition: clarity, organisation, conciseness, difficulty, readability and editorial judgements		
Readership	Value or relevance for a particular readership, purpose or discipline	Personal responsibility	Label criticism as reflecting a personal opinion
Text	Extent, relevance and currency of references, the number, usefulness and quality of diagrams, Index items, tasks and exercises	Other attribution	Attributes critical comments to an abstract reader or general audience
Author	Writer's experience, reputation, qualifications or previous publications	Metadiscourse bracketing	Aspects of the text which explicitly refer to the organisation of the discourse or the writer's stance towards its content or the reader
Publishing	Price, quality and production standards of the book	Indirectness	Conveying criticisms indirectly by saying less than the writer thinks and leaves the reader to make the appropriate implicatures

Regarding dimensions of evaluation, Hyland's framework addresses both the global aspect and specific features of a book review. He identifies a number of issues specific to the genre of academic book reviews, such as style, readership, text, author and publishing matters. As he notices that praise in book reviews is more fulsome while criticism is more redressed, he lists a number of mitigation strategies of critical acts in his taxonomy, namely hedging, praise-criticism pairs, personal responsibility, other attribution, metadiscoursal bracketing and indirectness. Hedges are linguistic modifiers used to tone down negative evaluation, such as modal verbs (e.g. *would, might, could*), epistemic verbs (e.g. *seem*), and approximators (e.g. *somewhat*). Praise-criticism pair weakens negative evaluation by placing praise prior to criticism. Personal responsibility is a strategy which presents criticism as the reviewer's personal opinion instead of an objective evaluation of the issue. Similarly, Other attribution shifts responsibility of criticism to others such as the audience, thereby reducing the force of criticism. Metadiscoursal bracketing signals criticism explicitly and shifts the reader's focus to the act of evaluation, instead of evaluation itself. Indirectness or limited praise conveys criticism indirectly by offering less praise than the reader would expect.

Hyland's reasoned framework includes both a classification of evaluation dimensions and a taxonomy of mitigation strategies. This framework has been adopted and modified for the analysis of evaluative features in reviews of various genres across disciplines and cultures, for example, academic book reviews (Shaw 2004; Mackiewicz 2007; Shaw 2009; Petric 2011; Itakura 2013), music reviews (Ha 2011), and cross-cultural comparison (Moreno and Suárez 2008b; Itakura and Tsui 2011; Lorés-Sanz 2013).

The present study adopts Hyland's framework because it is an effective and flexible tool which is applicable to investigate evaluation in concert reviews. The framework has been extensively modified in order to fully realise the evaluation dimensions and strategies in concert reviews. Regarding dimensions of evaluation, the modified framework addresses

genre-specific aspects of concert reviews, such as performance, composition, programme, acoustics, etc. As for evaluative strategies, Hyland's framework only addresses a few mitigation strategies of criticism. The framework for the present study, after several empirical analyses of the corpora, consists of not only a larger range of mitigation strategies of both praise and criticism, but also a comprehensive set of emphasised praise and criticism strategies. A full version of the modified framework of praise and criticism will be presented in *Section 3.3.4.3*.

2.4.3 Impoliteness

Hyland's (2000) taxonomy of evaluation based on politeness, though powerful in categorising targets and dimensions of praise and criticism, does not address reinforced critical acts out of impoliteness. Impoliteness, as opposed to politeness, is defined as the use of strategies to attack face and cause social disruption (Beebe 1995; Culpeper 1996; Culpeper, Bousfield et al. 2003). To identify an impoliteness act, it is necessary to take the context into account (Mills 2003; Watts 2003; Schnurr, Marra et al. 2007). Culpeper (1996) developed a framework of impoliteness which is parallel with but opposite to the politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987). Having identified notions of impoliteness which are not intending to be impolite, such as inherent and mock impoliteness, Culpeper also discusses situations when genuine impoliteness might occur. For example,

A powerful participant has more freedom to be impolite, because he or she can (a) reduce the ability of the less powerful participant to retaliate with impoliteness (e.g. through the denial of speaking rights), and (b) threaten more severe retaliation should the less powerful participant be impolite. (1996, p.354)

Apart from power inequality, a conflict of interest may also lead to impoliteness (Culpeper 1996), such as the prosecution provoking the defendant in a court (Lakoff 1989). Personality (Infante and Wigley III 1986) and emotions (Blitvich 2009) are also factors they

lead to impoliteness, while Brown and Levinson's politeness is rather strategic and is unlikely to arise from true emotions (Blitvich 2009).

Part of Culpeper's impoliteness framework is applied in the present study to complement Hyland's framework. One of the superstrategies of impoliteness, Sarcasm or Mock impoliteness (Culpeper, Bousfield et al. 2003; Taylor 2015) (see *Section 3.3.3*), is used by British and Hong Kong music critics to reinforce their critical acts.

2.4.4 Summary

This section gives an account of the major theoretical frameworks the present study is based on: the politeness theory and the impoliteness theory. Taxonomies of Hyland's (2000) framework on dimensions and strategies of evaluation are adopted, although extensive modifications are undertaken to make the framework more suitable for the present study.

2.5 Evaluation in the review genres

2.5.1 General trends in reviews

Contemporary review genres are "centrally evaluative" which "provide(s) writers with a discursive space in which to elaborate their own views" (Hyland 2000, p.44). In fact, reviewers nowadays are expected to not only inform readers of the content of a book, but also let them know the reviewer's judgment on the book (Orteza y Miranda 1996). It is argued that book reviews "provide a forum for the peer review of new theories and ideas" (Spink, Robins et al. 1998, p.364). Therefore, a review usually consists of "neutral descriptions of aims, organisation and content" (Hyland 2000, p.44), and both praise and criticism (Spink, Robins et al. 1998; Shaw 2004).

2.5.2 Perspectives of evaluation in reviews

Various aspects of praise and criticism in reviews have been studied, such as their dimensions of evaluation (Global versus specific evaluation), structural patterns, and rhetorical strategies (emphasis or mitigation). Patterns and features of evaluative acts have also been compared cross-disciplinarily and cross-culturally.

2.5.2.1 Dimensions of praise and criticism

The reviewer gives both general and specific comments on a work. A general comment is an overall evaluation of a work in terms of its coverage, approach, interest, currency or quality (Hyland 2000, p.47). For example,

The batch as a whole gives one a great deal of pleasure, the more so as the music is of a type that wears well. (Ha 2011, p.345)

“The batch” here refers to the classical music record under review.

However, a comment on global features of a work does not address specific aspects. A letter from a reader of the Musical Times, an academic music journal published in the UK, revealed the audience’s need for specific comments:

To suggest that a record of a song by Mozart is one of the best records merely because Mozart was one of the greatest composers, seems silly to those of us who have tried the record and disliked extremely the metallic of the singer’s voice. (Musical Times, January 1921: 41, in Ha 2011, p.355)

Reviewers across genres tend to evaluate on issues specific to their genres. For instance, academic book reviewers comment on style, readership, text features, author and publishing matters of a book (Hyland 2000); Ha (2011) identifies specific aspects of evaluation regarding classical record reviews, i.e. Composer/Composition, Performer/Performance, sound and recording techniques.

It is further noticed that reviewers tend to praise more on global features and criticise more on specific aspects (Hyland 2000; Ha 2011). Hyland attributes the correlation between criticism and specific features to the dual purpose of the book review genre, that reviewers need to provide an overview of the book and recommend it to potential readers, while at the same time raise particular problems to contribute to knowledge of the field. On the other hand, global criticism condemns the whole work and is thus used as little as possible in reviews to avoid the particularly face-threatening consequences (Hyland 2000).

2.5.2.2 Structural patterns of praise and criticism

It is observed that the majority of academic book reviewers prefer to frame their texts with positive comments rather than negative ones, both at the beginning and at the end of the review (Johnson 1992; Gea Valor 2000; Hyland 2000). Johnson (1992) claims that this can redress a global FTA. Hyland finds similar patterns of complimenting behaviour appear at the openings of various types of addressee-oriented speech events (Cherry 1988; Salerno 1988; Wolfson 1989; Johnson 1992; Holmes 1995). It is argued that as there is no established structural pattern of the review genre, such practice might serve the similar interpersonal purposes as to both establish rapport with the readers and mitigate coming criticism (Hyland 2000, p.53). Johnson (1992) and Gea Valor (2000) also state that as the book review is highly interactive and face-threatening, the reviewer might want to create a solidarity framework in a socially appropriate atmosphere before presenting the negative comments.

Gea Valor (2000), Moreno and Suárez (2009a) and Ha (2011) discovered that reviewers have a greater tendency to close than to open their texts positively. A similar pattern is also found in other genres involving evaluation, such as teachers' responses to high school essays (Harris 1977), peer response marking (Johnson 1992), and academic book reviews in business communication (Mackiewicz 2007). Putting criticism at salient locations such as the beginning

or ending of a review can be “particularly noticeable and memorable” (Mackiewicz 2007, p.202). Ending a review with a positive note therefore not only “offer(s) a stronger endorsement” (Hyland 2000, p.54) of the book, but also redresses the FTAs created by criticism in the review (Gea Valor 2000). The reviewers, therefore, could repair the negative effects of earlier criticism and address the book author’s positive face and re-establish their credentials as being balanced and impartial in giving evaluation (Hyland 2000). In addition, a complimentary closing remark can create a “socially appropriate solidarity framework for the entire text” (Hyland 2000, p.54).

2.5.2.3 Rhetorical strategies in evaluation

Politeness, a major framework for the realisation of evaluative strategies, is largely linked to indirectness (Blum-Kulka 1987; Brown and Levinson 1987). With the proposition that praise and criticism in academic book reviews are “carefully managed strategies” (Hyland 2000, p.45), a number of mitigation strategies used to redress the illocutionary force of evaluation are identified, which include praise-criticism pairs or pairing strategy (Johnson 1992; Hyland 2000; Hyland and Hyland 2001), hedging (Myers 1989; Hyland 2000; Hyland and Hyland 2001; Ha 2011), personal responsibility (Hyland 2000; Hyland and Hyland 2001; Ha 2011), other attribution (Hyland 2000), metadiscourse bracketing (Hyland 2000), indirectness or implicit evaluation (Hyland 2000; Shaw 2004), giving reasons (Gea Valor and Del Saz Rubio 2001; Moreno and Suárez 2009b), negated clause in praise (Hunston and Thompson 2000), and humour in criticism to address one’s negative face (Holmes 2000).

Despite the potential FTAs, critical acts are sometimes strengthened based on the impoliteness framework (Culpeper 1996; Culpeper, Bousfield et al. 2003). Praise acts, on the other hand, can be emphasised to make the positive illocutionary force even stronger.

2.5.2.3.1 Criticism

Review genres have shown diverse trends in the expression of negative comments. Various studies have found that while praise is more direct in reviews criticism is more likely to be mitigated with rhetorical strategies (Hyland 2000; Shaw 2009; Ha 2011). Salager-Meyer (1999, 2001), and Salager-Meyer, Alcaraz Ariza et al. (2007a, 2007b), in their diachronic studies of medical book reviews and research articles, discovered that current academic criticism in medical science is more indirect and impersonal compared with the nineteenth and twentieth century. Salager-Meyer (2001, in Babaii 2011) points out that highly face-threatening, emotionally charged criticism and (black) humour were more common in the past than the present. Salager-Meyer, Alcaraz Ariza et al. (2007a) argues that as the author is usually the primary audience of the book review, reviewers in present days are more aware of the importance of social interactions in the review. In this genre hedges primarily function to “help maintain social harmony and solidarity with the reviewee” (p.1771). Therefore, criticism is mostly hedged in current medical book reviews.

In his study about explicit evaluative acts in academic book reviews, Shaw (2009) observes that negative evaluation or criticism might demand more rhetorical effort and mitigation strategies to redress FTAs. However, a number of FTAs such as naming the author are not used as infrequently as expected, with the possibility that there is demand other than politeness in a disinterested genre.

In light of differences in politeness in non-western cultures, mitigation strategies unique to these cultures are also given attention to, such as “self-denigration”, “recasting problems as potential for future research”, and “attributing problems to the next generation” in Japanese book reviews (Itakura and Tsui 2011).

Although it is claimed that critical acts in review genres are typically mitigated (Hyland and Diani 2009), it is not uncommon to find strong criticism in reviews. Lewin (2005a), for example, reports an absence in mitigation strategies in criticism in the “comments” in two sociological journals. In fact, a considerable amount of unmitigated, personal and contentious negative comments can be observed in scientific book reviews (see *Section 2.5.2.4*). It is possible that studies in different genres or disciplines may present different results in the use of mitigation strategies.

2.5.2.3.2 Praise

Although praise is less face-threatening than criticism and is often more straightforward or even emphasised, it can still be mitigated under certain circumstances. As Hyland and Diani (2009) point out, praise as well as criticism may threaten one’s positive face, the desire to be approved of (p.8). The reviewer can be under risk for exercising authority to appraise and making one’s judgment in public, especially when the praise is given to someone who does not deserve it, for lavish praise can be seen as “superficial” and “undiscriminating” (p.9). Johnson (1992) notes that compliments are sometimes hedged in peer reviews by labelling the praise as a personal opinion, such as *I think, I find*. Johnson (1992) finds that while hedges are regarded as strategies for negative face (Brown and Levinson 1987) and tone down criticism (Hyland 2000), it can also function as a politeness strategy to address interpersonal relations. By making the praise a personal opinion, this strategy humbles the writer and thus emphasises solidarity. However, Hyland (2000) argues that personal attribution emphasises the force of evaluation, as it enables the reviewer to be more firmly aligned with his or her judgments (p.58).

2.5.2.4 *Disciplinary differences in evaluation*

A number of studies have addressed disciplinary distinctions in the uses of praise and criticism. Hyland (2000) claims that engineering and science (e.g. physics, biology) reviews contain twice the amount of praise in soft disciplines (e.g. Philosophy, sociology). Reviewers of soft disciplines seem to be more critical in their evaluation. Praise in the soft disciplines tends to be “more fulsome” and criticism “more acerbic” (Hyland 2000, p.50). Lewin (2005a) also finds criticism in sociology reviews largely personal and contentious.

Regarding quantity of evaluation, Hyland (2000) finds that reviews in the soft knowledge disciplines are more extensive in their praise and criticism. Mackiewicz (2007) finds more praise than criticism in book reviews in business communication, with a higher frequency of mitigated than unmitigated criticism. Ha (2011) observes similar results in her study of another soft discipline, musical writing. It is noticed that over time, record reviews contained more praise than criticism. Praise is more often unmitigated and criticism is more mitigated.

In the study of hard disciplines, it is argued that criticism is often mitigated to maintain objectivity in scientific writing (Myers 1989; Hyland 1998b). For example, in medical book reviews (Salager-Meyer 2001; Salager-Meyer, Alcaraz Ariza et al. 2007a; Salager-Meyer, Ariza et al. 2007b) criticism is more matter-of-fact and impersonal, though a small instance of mockery and sarcasm still exist in physics book reviews (Babaii 2011). Babaii also remarks that it is common to find “unhedged, blunt criticisms” (p.73) in physics book reviews, especially in those with global criticism. One possible explanation for this is that reviewers of higher academic ranking are more likely to give harsh criticism than junior academics (Mackiewicz 2007; Salager-Meyer 2011). While most book reviews are written by junior academics (Motta-Roth 1998; Hyland 2000; Mackiewicz 2007) who can “gain institutional credit and a publication profile” (Hyland and Diani 2009, p.2), physics book reviews are mostly

written by senior academics who might worry less about possible negative effects caused by their comments. Therefore, they seem to be bolder in giving their opinions (Babaii 2011).

2.5.2.5 *Cross-cultural comparison*

This section reviews research on evaluation from a cross-cultural perspective. Contrastive rhetoric, in which cross-cultural studies situated is discussed in *Section 2.5.2.5.1*. *Section 2.5.2.5.2* examines cross-cultural studies based on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. Findings regarding comparisons between English and Chinese discourses are reported in *Section 2.5.2.5.3*.

2.5.2.5.1 *Contrastive Rhetoric*

Contrastive rhetoric, initiated five decades ago by (Kaplan 1966), investigates “differences and similarities in writing across cultures”, particularly in ESL and EFL writing (Connor 2002, p.493). Over the last few decades, contrastive studies have seen considerable developments in academic writing (e.g. Liebman 1992; Mauranen 1993; Giannoni 2002; Salager-Meyer, Alcaraz Ariza et al. 2003; Hirano 2009; Mur-Dueñas 2011; Soler-Monreal, Carbonell-Olivares et al. 2011; Soler-Monreal 2015; Gu 2016; Loi, Lim et al. 2016) and professional settings (Precht 1998; Gimenez 2001; van Mulken and van der Meer 2005; Giannoni 2014; Murata 2014). Research on reviews in popular media, however, has been relatively scarce.

In comparing evaluative acts across cultures, it is interesting to find that English academic reviewers are often more critical than those of other languages. English literary reviews contain a much higher frequency of critical acts than the Spanish ones (Moreno and Suárez 2008b; Lores-Sanz 2009). Giannoni (2006) reports a similar trend comparing Italian

and English book reviews in economy, that Italian writers are more lenient in their criticism. Follow-up email interviews show that Spanish reviewers tend to avoid verbalising their critical attitude publicly, and even refuse to review bad books particularly if they know the book writer in person (Moreno and Suárez 2008b). It is also found that although academics of both cultures consider giving reasons for praise and criticism essential, English-speaking reviewers show more tendency to justify their negative critical comments than their Spanish counterparts (Moreno and Suárez 2009b). Nevertheless, such findings contradict the claims that French and Spanish researchers tend to be more critical than their Anglo-Saxon counterparts in medical writing (Salager-Meyer, Alcaraz Ariza et al. 2003). With the disciplinary discrepancy present, it might be more precise to conclude that English academic communities of humanities and social sciences are more open to objective and balanced judgments in book reviews (Moreno and Suárez 2008b; Moreno and Suárez 2009b).

Despite the differences, English and Spanish reviewers share some common grounds in giving their evaluation. Moreno and Suárez (2011) find a much higher frequency of writers' invisibility strategies than visibility ones, suggesting that both English and Spanish academics believe that it is better to not intrude into the text for the sake of face protection. A number of writer visibility strategies are applied to either strengthen or weaken the reviewer's position as an expert, and hence the evaluative force of critical acts. For example, the visibility signals such as first singular pronouns *I/me*, possessive pronouns *my*, or verb forms, are argued to help reviewers to act as an ordinary reader and mitigate the effect of criticism (Hyland 2000). The plural pronouns *we* and *us* used to engage the readers, are "expert sounding" and "imposing" (Moreno and Suárez 2011, p.239), though may mitigate the reviewer's positive face for implying modesty. The analysis suggests a significant cross-cultural difference, that English-speaking reviewers tend to favour a subjectivising dialogic strategy (*I, me*), while Spanish academics prefer an expert-sounding strategy (*we, us*). Such a discrepancy hints a difference

in what is considered as *good face* between the two cultures. It is also claimed that hedging as a strategy to mitigate criticism, is used more in English academic writing than French and Spanish (Salager-Meyer, Ariza et al. 2003). Similar findings are also reported in other European languages, such as Bulgarian (Vassileva 1997) and Finnish (Duszak 1997; Ventola 1997).

Researchers have been looking into variation between English and Asian languages. By investigating features of L1 and L2 English academic writing, Hinkel (1995, 1997, 2002) discovered a higher frequency of indirectness strategies among Asian L2 English writers. These strategies include hedges, disclaimers and rhetorical questions. However, these studies do not look at the L1 of the L2 English speakers, and only address the rhetorical strategies common in English as the first language (Kong 2006). There has therefore been a recent trend for cross-cultural researchers to compare L1 writing in English and other languages (e.g. Kong 2006; Mur-Dueñas 2011; Itakura 2013). These studies mainly focus on the academic domain. There are nevertheless much fewer cross-cultural studies in the professional setting.

2.5.2.5.2 Politeness theory and cross-cultural studies

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory has been the most influential theory in the field. Nevertheless, it has been criticised for being inadequate to address cultural differences (Wierzbicka 1985; Matsumoto 1988; Held 1989; Ide 1989; Matsumoto 1989; Fraser 1990; Kasper 1990; Nwoye 1992; Watts 1992; Chen 1993; Ide 1993; Janney and Arndt 1993; Matsumoto 1993; Upadhyay 2003). For example, Wierzbicka (1985) observes that neither the so-called universal politeness or English-specific rules of politeness is applicable to speech acts in Polish; Moreno and Suárez (2009b) report that Castilian Spanish reviewers of academic books do not always provide reasons for their criticism for the sake of maintaining "good face", which is against the universal theory.

It is also claimed that politeness conveys largely Western social psychological assumptions about speech strategies (Held 1989), and fails to address discourse features of Asian cultures, such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Nepali, in which the focus of interaction is largely on group identity rather than individuals (Ide 1989; Ide 1993; Upadhyay 2003; Hatfield and Hahn 2011). Politeness in Asian cultures is based on discernment or “the automatic observation of socially-agreed-upon rules” (Hill, Ide et al. 1986, in Upadhyay 2003, p.1654). This observation is opposite to Brown and Levinson’s concept of “freedom of action and freedom from imposition” (1987, p.61), which is also believed to be a key feature of Western societies. Studies also show that the notion of negative face is either different (Gu 1990) or plays an insignificant role (Mao 1994) in Chinese culture. Yeung (1997) studies polite requests in English and Chinese business correspondence in Hong Kong. Yeung finds the Chinese to have a different system for the choice of politeness strategies, other than the factors proposed by Brown and Levinson.

Despite the criticism against politeness theory, Leech (2005) claims that there is no obvious divide in politeness between Eastern (i.e. Chinese, Japanese and Korean) and Western (i.e. English) cultures, even though the Eastern “group-orientation” and the Western “individual-orientation” have a strong impact on polite behaviour (p.27). Leech thus argues that a different theory of politeness is unnecessary to analyse Eastern cultures. Ji (2000) asserts that Chinese people are highly sensitive to negative face, and there is no evidence that the face model cannot be identified in Chinese culture. Nevertheless, Ji does admit that Brown and Levinson’s model might not be adequate to explain all strategies in different cultures, and that the same criteria cannot identify all strategies across cultures.

2.5.2.5.3 Comparing English and Chinese discourse

Cross-cultural research on English and Chinese discourse has seen a rapid growth in academic settings (e.g. Kong 2006; Loi 2010; Mu, Zhang et al. 2015; Gao 2016; Xie 2016), though remains relatively scarce in non-academic genres (e.g. Sun and Jiang 2014). Many of these studies try to explain the uses of rhetorical strategies between English and Chinese in terms of cultural differences. However, studies comparing English and Chinese reviews are still scant.

Chinese has been stereotypically perceived as indirect and implicit (Oliver 1971), which is echoed by Taylor and Chen's (1991) research comparing uses of citation by Chinese and Anglo-American speaking scientists. It is claimed that Chinese scientists give fewer critical comments than their English speaking colleagues. However, it is also argued that this is not due to cultural factors. In fact, many studies claim that the "East-West dichotomy of implicitness versus explicitness" (Kong 2006, p.299) is wrong as contradictory findings evolve. Bloch and Chi (1995) and Kirkpatrick (2002) find that Chinese academics can be as critical as their English counterparts in writing. Kong (2006) discovered that Chinese writers can be even more explicit in expressing their evaluation. Kong examined how third party ideas were evaluated in research articles in English and Chinese. Kong also observed that Chinese writers tended to evaluate without mitigation.

Kong (2006) refers to the deference politeness system (Scollon, Scollon et al. 2011), i.e. the social distance between the addressee and addressor accounting for the implicitness in researcher papers. Based on the observation that Chinese writers use explicit evaluation as an involvement strategy (Kong 1998), it is argued that Chinese writers' fear of placing FTAs on the object of evaluation could be offset by the potential gain in building a relationship with their readers (Kong 2006). Kong further points out that English academic discourse has gone through centuries of developments and evolved to be more implicit and impersonal, and

interact with readers as equals. China, on the other hand, “did not go through a revolutionary phase of science as western countries did in the Industrial Revolution” (p.301). Traditional Chinese scholarship, which still has certain impact on the Chinese writing style today, placed more weight on humanities and social sciences, and favoured a more personal or explicit style of evaluation. A recent study also reveals that Chinese research articles prefer to use boosters to “convey their authority and certainty of knowledge” (Mu, Zhang et al. 2015, p.144). Chinese writers’ exclusive use of “we” instead of “I” as a self-mention strategy reflects the cultural influence of collectivism on their writing style. This study also indicates that English research articles used more hedges to qualify claims.

2.5.3 Summary

This section gives an account of previous research on evaluation. Studies have been conducted from various perspectives, namely dimensions of evaluation, structural patterns, evaluative strategies, as well as cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural comparisons of praise and criticism. Results from previous studies on evaluation will be compared and contrasted with findings in the present study.

2.6 Music Criticism

The present study on the evaluation in classical concert reviews genre is being examined from a broader perspective: music criticism of the musicology discipline. Therefore, it would be necessary to overview music criticism of its historical background and developments (*Section 2.6.1*), the popular media industry where music criticism situates in the UK and Hong Kong (*Section 2.6.2*), as well as the roles music critics play in a media setting (*Section 2.6.3*).

2.6.1 General background

Music criticism, “a common practice in Western music traditions” (Alessandri 2014, p.19), is defined as “the profession of writing about the aesthetics, history, and evolution of music and of reviewing musical composition and performance in newspapers, periodicals, books, and on radio and TV” (Scholes 1970, p.171). In other words, music criticism is not only limited to commentaries on concerts, but any evaluation genres of musical activities and research (Li 2005). Bujic (1985) and Maus (1964) point out that music criticism is a genre of professional writing which formulates evaluation on aspects of music and musical life. The aim of music criticism, according to Sadie (1980), is to “establish a line of communication between the creative artist and the public” (p.44). After a long history of amateur reviewers (Sadie 1980), professional musicians (e.g. Wagner, Debussy, Bizet) started to review music in the nineteenth century (Michael and Bourne 2007). Music criticism has become a common part of the western musical traditions (Alessandri 2014).

Early music reviews were largely concert reviews, which focused mainly on compositions (from sixteenth century) and performance (from mid-nineteenth century). More aspects of music have been looked into as the genre evolved, for example, sound and recording quality in classical record reviews (Ha 2011). Unlike early scholarly reviews, which contained only uncritical comments and a summary of scientific articles (Roper 1978, in Hyland 2000), Western music reviews contained evaluation since their first recorded appearance in 1547 (Apel 1969). Record reviews, for instance, were dominated by evaluation since the beginning of the genre (Ha 2011). It is believed that Western music critics have inherited the practice of evaluation from the centuries of tradition of commenting on composition and live performance (Apel 1969; Sadie 1980).

In China, music criticism was not uncommon in ancient classics. Evaluation in Chinese music criticism can be dated back to more than two thousand years ago. Confucius (551-479

B.C), for example, was recorded in the *Analects (Lun Yu)* (translated by Legge 1893) his praise of the music of *Shao*, that he did not know the taste of meat for three months after hearing the wonderful music (Huang 1963).

2.6.2 Music criticism in popular media

There are two types of music criticism: scholarly criticism and criticism for the general public. Music criticism in newspapers and popular (non-technical) journals targets lay audiences or both lay people and professional musicians (Schick 1996). Schick further points out that although scholarly and popular media reviews might be similar in content, they differ in a number of aspects. For instance, theoretical analyses seem to only appear in scholarly reviews, whereas interviews and profiles only exist in popular press. There is also a difference in tone between the two kinds of reviews, in that the scholarly ones usually contain more terminology and details than reviews in the popular media.

Concert reviews, one of the most common genres of music criticism, almost exclusively appear in popular media, i.e. newspaper, magazine, online forum, and radio programmes. Perhaps this could be described by a French term *actualite* (Schick 1996, p.4), which means timeliness. In other words, music criticism, especially concert reviews, only focus on current events. This explains why concert reviews appear in the press rather than academic publications, as the latter usually take a long time to publish.

The UK is believed to be the first Western country that published concert reviews, i.e. *Apologia Musices* in 1588 (Sadie 1980). Today, all broadsheets in the UK publish classical music criticism on a daily basis, of which majority are concert reviews. It is however a different scenario in Hong Kong. According to Liu Ching-Chih (2005), English music criticism in Hong Kong first appeared in the middle of the nineteenth century. *South China Morning Post*, a major

Hong Kong English newspaper started publishing concert reviews after WWII. With the economic take-off in the 1970s, Hong Kong saw a significant growth in classical music activities, and concert reviews started to appear and prosper in Hong Kong newspapers and magazines. Nevertheless, ever since the downfall of the newspaper industry in late 1990s, the publication of concert reviews in newspapers has seen a significant drop (Liu 2005, Lau 2005). Today, publication of concert reviews in Hong Kong newspapers is a lot less regular than British newspapers. A lot of Hong Kong newspapers do not publish concert reviews at all.

It is apparent that newspaper management and editors on the whole do not seem to have a particular preference for music criticism. Schick (1996) describes the relationship between music criticism and journalism as “frequently troubled” (p.51) in the United States; Andrew Potter, a renowned music critic in the UK mentions that serious and scholarly reviews have disappeared from today’s newspapers (2000). In Hong Kong, a senior newspaper manager describes newspapers as “a supermarket of pictures and articles” 圖文超市 (Lau 2005, p.169), for a group of wide and heterogeneous readers to choose whatever they want. The majority of Chinese newspapers in Hong Kong do not have a culture section, and editors believe that readers would only read short articles about music. Lau points out that music criticism is of no difference from any articles about entertainment or food, which only serve two functions to decision makers of newspapers: fulfil the needs of readers and fishing for advertisements. It is also crucial for music criticism to be interesting to read, as editors demand. Lai Kin 黎鍵, a senior writer for a broadsheet culture section, the *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, remarks that if a music critic aims to give feedback to the musician in the reviews, he or she should instead tell the musician in person. In other words, the primary function of music reviews is to serve the readers.

Music criticism informs the public about “what happens in music” (Schick 1996, p.21), although it seems unclear about who are the people that make up the public, what information they should be given and what aspects of music should be reported on. Oscar Thompson, a music critic for the *New York Sun*, claims that the central function of music criticism is “to hold a mirror to what has been composed or performed and to the performance” (in Schick 1996, p.21). In other words, he believes that music criticism should be largely descriptive in order to give a clear image of the musical events. On the other hand, however, most music criticism contains “value judgements” (Schick 1996, p.21) or constructive opinions on aesthetics of music, which address both positive and negative aspects of music (“為音樂提供美學上的見解，為整體的音樂藝術提出由建設性的觀點、視野”) (Lau 2005, p.168).

2.6.3 Roles of music critic

Music critics provide important insights about the performance, and they are believed to be “seasoned listeners” (Alessandri 2014, p.19) who have “solid musical knowledge” and “long lasting experience” in music listening and evaluation (p.25).

Music critics are the only listeners being paid to attend concerts or listen to recordings (Alessandri 2014), though they should not be paid by anyone related to the music they comment on, as that might restrict critics in what they write (Schick 1996). Therefore, promotional writings about music such as programme notes, record jacket and liner notes are not classified as music criticism. A preview of coming events is neither music criticism as it merely repeats what the commercial press release says, according to Schick.

As the genre evolves, there emerges a distinction between “music reviewer” and “music critic”. In his article on the authority of music criticism, Cone (1981) describes the reviewer’s primary role as giving guidance to consumers on their purchasing decisions. Therefore, the

reviewer should have their ears similar to the laymen's but sharper, and be writing from the laymen's point of view. The critic is also regarded as a "professional professional" (Cone 1981, p.2) or "critic proper" (p.3), who acts as a teacher to help to broaden and deepen the reader's appreciation of music. Music "critics" for the popular media such as newspapers and magazines often play mixed roles, i.e. critic proper, reviewer and news reporter (Alessandri 2014, p.71). Thus in this study, "music critic" is used to address writers of concert reviews in newspapers.

Evaluation is an essential part of the genre though it is not expected to find the same intellectual depth in the popular media as in academic music journals. Due to the absence of concert reviews in academic journals and a lack of study on the music criticism genre from a linguistic perspective, it is hard to get a clear picture of how music reviews in academic and popular media settings differ. It is interesting to note though while reviewers of academic reviews are experts of their discourse community (Hyland 2000), none of the qualities required of an ideal music critic enlisted by a number of music critics (Donald Mitchell, Winton Dean, Andrew Potter, in Potter 2000) is to be a professional musician or music scholar. Music critics writing for newspapers are nevertheless expected to have "a knowledge of the technical and theoretical knowledge of music", "a knowledge of musical history and scholarship", and "a wide general education, covering as many as possible of the subjects with which music can be shown to have a point of contact" (Winton Dean, in Potter 2000, p.10). This implies that musical writers for the popular press are not supposed to make scholarly analysis of music as music scholars do in academic publications. In fact, Andrew Potter, a music critic for the *Financial Times* was occasionally complained to by his arts editor for being too "musicological" (Potter 2000, p.20).

Further, while it is common for academics to convey their praise or criticism with an impersonal tone (Hyland 1994; Crompton 1997; Lorés-Sanz 2011), music critics for the popular media are expected to bring their personal feelings into their writing, as remarked by

renowned critics such as George Bernard Shaw, Ernest Newman and Andrew Potter. Winton Dean also mentioned that music critics should have “creative imagination” and write in a “clear and stimulating manner” (in Potter 2000, p.10-11) for the public readership.

The above observations show that compared with academic writing, music criticism in popular media might contain less intellectual insight. The commercial pressures outlined in *Section 2.6.2* might lead to uses of more entertaining and attractive rhetorical strategies (e.g. humour, metaphor, sarcasm) to appeal to a non-specialist readership. It is also indicated that music critics in newspapers seem to experience a certain degree of intervention from their editors (Schick 1996; Potter 2000). They are also pressurised by a much tighter deadline and word limit than writers for academic journals (Schick 1996). These are all possible factors that might impact on the writing of music critics in newspapers, which will be investigated in the present study.

2.6.4 Summary

This section provides an overview of music criticism of its historical background and developments to date. It also compares music criticism in academic and popular media, as well as its publications in British and Hong Kong newspapers. Literature on music critics’ opinions of their roles is also reviewed. The existing views on music criticism will be compared with the findings of the present study in the Results and Discussion chapters.

2.7 Summary

In this chapter, the relevant literature is reviewed to situate the present study, which aims to explore and compare features of evaluation in concert reviews in British English and Hong Kong Chinese newspapers. Previous studies on the concept of genre and features of the

review genres are introduced. Evaluation, focus of the present study, is discussed in detail in terms of research perspectives and the methodologies. Music criticism in newspapers, the context in which this study situated, is introduced cross-culturally. Differences between music criticism in academic and popular media domains are also reviewed. The following chapter describes and discusses my research methodology in detail.

Chapter 3 Research design and methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological framework and analytical procedures of the present study. The reasons for adopting a mixed-method research approach for this project are first explained in *Section 3.2*. *Section 3.3* describes the framework for textual analysis of this research. Procedures of data collection and analysis are also detailed in this section. *Section 3.4* presents the methodological procedures of the interview analysis, which includes the development of interview schedule, the pilot study, selection of music critics, the interview process, as well as coding and analysis of the interview data.

3.2 Mixed methods research design

This study employed a mixed methods approach which consisted of textual analysis of concert reviews and semi-structured interviews with music critics who were authors of the reviews in the corpora of this study. Mixed methods is a research design which “uses both quantitative and qualitative data to answer a particular question or a set of questions” (Hesse-Biber 2010, p.3). According to Creswell and Clark (2007), the mixed methods approach can be beneficial to a study as it “provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative research” (p.12), and is suitable to deal with research questions which cannot be answered by only quantitative or qualitative methods. Miles and Huberman (1994) also support the application of mixed methods in research since “quantitative and qualitative inquiry can support and inform each other” (p.310). A mixed methods approach is considered most suitable for this study to explore both the evaluative strategies in concert reviews and perspectives of music critics about the writing of music criticism.

According to Dörnyei (2007), the mixed methods approach “involves different combinations of qualitative and quantitative research either at the data collection or at the

analysis levels” (p.24). Drawing on previous studies on academic book reviews (Tse and Hyland 2006; Moreno and Suárez 2008b; Hyland and Diani 2009; Moreno and Suárez 2010; Moreno and Suárez 2011), the present study combined textual analysis of classical concert reviews with in-depth, semi-structured interviews with music critics, which “allow interviewee responses to shape the discussion and questions focused on the characteristic features of the genre and the writing practices and disciplinary preferences of the reviewers” (Tse and Hyland 2006, p.181).

Concert reviews were first collected and analysed qualitatively with a hand-tagged approach, and then quantitatively to generate statistics for comparison. At the second stage of the research, as two research questions aim to uncover music critics’ perspectives on music criticism and factors which affect critics’ evaluative styles, it was necessary to use a qualitative approach, i.e. interviews to investigate the critics’ viewpoints. Music critics who contributed to the corpora were invited to participate in this part of the research. The semi-structured interviews for music critics were designed in a form as a combination of responsive interviews (Salmons 2015), retrospective interviews (Dörnyei 2007) and discourse-based interviews which allowed the researcher to find out the perspectives of critics on music criticism as well as why they wrote the reviews in certain ways (Odell, Goswami et al. 1983).

The quantitative aspect of this study was mainly reflected in the textual analysis of concert reviews, that instances of evaluation strategies were calculated and compared cross-culturally. The dominantly qualitative interviews with the critics were used as a tool to explain the quantitative data generated from the textual analysis in order to provide a more in-depth account of how the use of positive and negative evaluation strategies differ between English and Chinese concert reviews.

3.3 Textual analysis

The textual analysis for this research included the following procedures: compiling two comparable corpora of Chinese and English concert reviews; developing an analytical framework for the analysis; choosing an analytical software for the analysis; conducting a pilot study to test the framework; introducing an inter-rater reliability to cross-check the pilot study results with a second coder; and analysing the whole corpora. After the qualitative hand-tagged analysis of the evaluative acts in the corpora, the frequencies of evaluative and non-evaluative acts were obtained in order to enable comparable analysis of the two corpora.

3.3.1 Compiling the corpora

3.3.1.1 Targeting resources

To compile the corpora for this study, I have searched academic music journals, magazines, newspapers and classical music websites in both Hong Kong and the UK for classical concert reviews. Although initially I intended to study reviews published in academic journals, there are no music journals in Chinese published in Hong Kong, and current music journals published in the UK do not contain concert reviews. Non-academic music magazines such as *HiFi Review* (Hong Kong), *Gramophone* (UK), and *BBC Music* (UK) do not seem to publish concert reviews either. A few Hong Kong news/cultural magazines such as *Asia Weekly* and *Ming Pao Monthly* publish concert reviews occasionally, but the number is too small to generate sufficient amount of data for the study. Online concert reviews from British classical music websites are abundant. However, only a few Hong Kong music websites publish concert reviews in Chinese, and the number of reviews is not enough to form a comparable corpus to the one in English.

Hong Kong and British newspapers, on the other hand, are a major source of classical concert reviews in current times. Various critics have been writing for the newspapers, and it

is possibly easier to investigate their backgrounds because they are writing for popular print media. Therefore, I have targeted newspapers to be the source of my corpora.

3.3.1.2 The selection of Hong Kong Chinese and British English newspapers

The data for this study consist of two corpora compiled from three English newspapers published in the UK and three Chinese newspapers published in Hong Kong respectively. The British newspapers are: *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*. The Hong Kong Chinese newspapers are: *The Hong Kong Economic Journal* (信報), *Ta Kung Pao* (大公報) and *Ming Pao* (明報). The selection of newspapers was based on two criteria:

1. They should be broadsheets that have published the most classical concert reviews over the 10-year period from August 2003 to July 2013;
2. These broadsheets should employ a relatively large number of critics. This can reduce the risk of results being skewed by the domination of a few critics and their individual styles of writing (Table3-1).

Table 3-1: The corpora

Newspapers	English	Chinese
Period	August 2003 – July 2013	
Number of reviews	150	150
Total number of critics	25	26
Total number of words / characters	198793	53416
Number of words / characters per review	356	1525

First, classical concert reviews only appear in broadsheets in the UK. In order to keep both corpora compatible, although a few Hong Kong tabloids such as the *Apple Daily* (蘋果日報) also publish classical concert reviews, this research only focused on reviews published in broadsheets in both the UK and Hong Kong.

Second, both the English and Chinese newspapers chosen are daily papers which published the biggest numbers of classical concert reviews over the 10-year period from August 2003 to July 2013. According to the National Readership Survey (<http://www.nrs.co.uk/latest-results/nrs-padd-results/newspapers-nrspaddresults/>), the three English national newspapers chosen, i.e. *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*, are among the major newspapers of the UK which have large numbers of readership. They have published concert reviews regularly over the ten-year period. In every newspaper, there is a sub-section of “Music” under the section of “Arts” or “Culture” where classical concert reviews can be found. Most of these newspapers publish more than one concert review on a daily basis. The Hong Kong Chinese newspapers selected, i.e. *The Hong Kong Economic Journal* (信報), *Ta Kung Pao* (大公報) and *Ming Pao* (明報), published the largest numbers of concert reviews over the ten years’ period of study. Altogether more than 50 critics contributed to the corpora, so that the results might less likely be dominated by writing styles of few individuals. Critics from each corpus were of almost equal numbers (25 British, 26 Hong Kong), which enabled the compilation of compatible corpora (Table 3-1).

3.4.1.3 Selection criteria for the concert reviews

I obtained the English and Chinese corpora from university libraries in the UK and Hong Kong respectively. Each corpus consists of 150 reviews. The English corpus contains a total of 198,793 words, with an average of 356 words per review. The Chinese corpus contains a total of 53,416 words, with an average of 1525 words per review (Table 3-1).

The following selecting criteria for the corpora were set to minimise variables that might affect the results of comparison:

1. Only single concert reviews should be selected;

2. Only reviews focusing on Western classical music should be included (no folk, jazz, pop, metal, new age, Chinese classical music, etc.);
3. Reviews about operas should be excluded from the corpus, so that evaluation of theatrical acts is not taken into account.

Despite my efforts to make the corpora as compatible as possible, the numbers of eligible reviews from Chinese newspapers were uneven. *The Hong Kong Economic Journal* comprised more than a third of the corpus, whereas *Ming Pao* only contributed less than half of the total number (Table 3-2). Hong Kong Chinese newspapers do not publish concert reviews on a regular basis, and some newspapers published more Western classical reviews than the others. With the selection criteria outlined above, *Ming Pao* has only 30 reviews eligible for the corpus. The English newspapers, on the other hand, published a greater number of reviews. To obtain a corpus of equal size, reviews in English newspapers were selected at random. Of the 150 reviews in the English corpus, each newspaper contributed 50 reviews (see Table 3-2). The lists of English and Chinese concert reviews collected for this study are in Appendix A and Appendix B respectively.

Table 3-2: Constitution of the English and Chinese corpora

Region	Newspaper	No. of reviews	No. of critics
UK	<i>The Times</i>	50	7
	<i>The Guardian</i>	50	12
	<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	50	7
Hong Kong	<i>The Hong Kong Economic Journal</i>	65	16
	<i>Ta Kung Pao</i>	55	10
	<i>Ming Pao</i>	30	3

For easy reference, each newspaper is given a short form as follows:

The Times: **ET**

The Guardian: **EG**

The Daily Telegraph: **ED**

The Hong Kong Economic Journal: **CJ**

Ta Kung Pao: **CK**

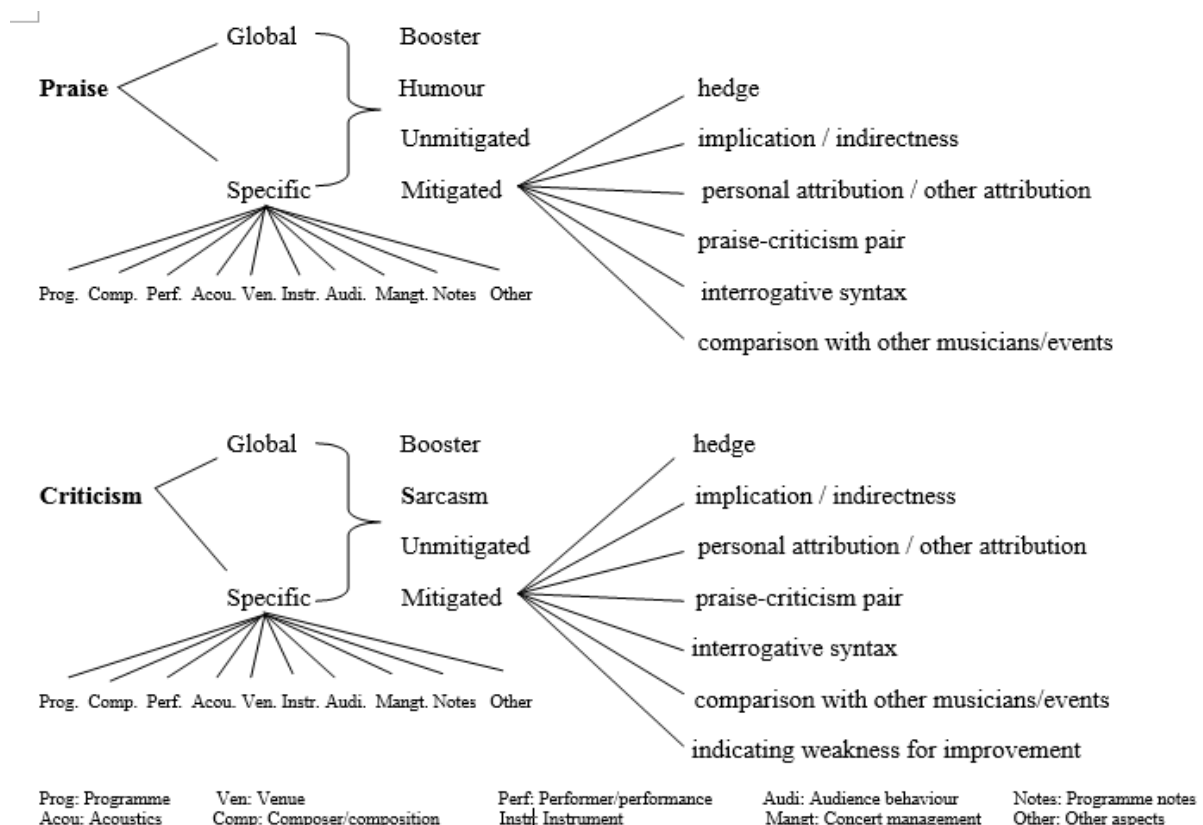
Ming Pao: **CM**

Each review is numbered after their newspaper, for example, ET15 is the fifteenth review from *The Times* in a chronological order.

3.3.3 Developing an analytical framework

As explained in *Section 2.5*, reviews contain both information and evaluation. Therefore, the analytical framework addresses both non-evaluative remarks and evaluation strategies. Reviews rely heavily on evaluative language as it provides a platform for writers to express their own views on the work. Hyland's (2000) framework on academic book reviews is considered suitable for this study because it addresses both global and specific aspects of a book, and presents a corpus-driven approach to realise evaluation strategies evolved from the book. Modifications were made to this framework as concert reviews contain their own genre-specific targets and strategies of evaluation. The initial framework for concert reviews is shown in (Figure 3-1).

Figure 3-1 Initial analytical framework of praise and criticism in classical concert reviews



Revisions of the above coding scheme were made systematically through the following procedures. First, a pilot study was conducted by using the framework in Figure 3-1. The pilot study consisted of 60 reviews from the Chinese corpus, and 60 from the English corpus, for which 20 reviews were selected randomly from each newspaper. I drew on my own expertise and knowledge gained as a degree holder of music and research assistant on musicology projects to analyse the classical concert reviews. To begin the analysis, I undertook a close reading of the reviews for an overview of how evaluation was made in the concert reviews. After that a hand-tagged coding and analysis was conducted with Nvivo, a qualitative analysis software package. As the analysis went on, more categories of evaluation strategies emerged from the corpora and were added to the framework. Modifications have been made a few times after trials and seeking experts' opinions from presenting my preliminary results in conferences and research group meetings, which included adding new categories of evaluation strategies, modifying definitions of codes, and clarifying confusing cases in coding.

Further to the revisions, in order to establish a workable coding scheme and validate the reliability of the analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994; Saldaña 2012), a cross-analysis of the pilot study was conducted for an inter-rater reliability test. The purpose of conducting the test was to cross-check my analysis, clarify ambiguous cases and revise the definitions of codes, before I proceeded to code the rest of the corpus. The test involved a lecturer in applied linguistics from a UK university and an English teacher from a tertiary institution in Hong Kong. The former is an expert in discourse analysis. The latter holds two Masters Degrees, one in Applied Linguistics and another one in Sociology, which equip her with sufficient background knowledge in conducting textual analysis in discourse analysis. Both coders have sufficient knowledge in classical music, which ensured the reliability of their coding results. Each coder was provided with a set of the initial coding framework, definitions of the codes and examples of each code. Each of them coded 10 reviews from the English or Chinese corpus

independently. We then merged and compared our coding results using Kappa coefficient in Nvivo. A high reliability agreement percentage was obtained with each coder (English: 99.4%, Chinese: 99.54%). Disagreements were resolved and a number of changes in my coding decisions were made through discussion.

After the procedures of revision and inter-rater reliability tests, changes were made to definitions and coding of the non-evaluative part of the reviews after the inter-rater test and discussion. In the initial framework, the non-evaluative part contained three codes:

Description: Non-evaluative remarks regarding aspects happened at the concert, i.e. venue, programme, performer/performance (e.g. how the performer was dressed), composer/composition, and other aspects.

Background: Information NOT describing/evaluating what happened at the concert being reviewed, which can be positive, negative or neutral.

Flowery language: decorative language used to increase readability of the review.

However, as there have been frequent instances of confusion between *Description* and *Background* in both the research group and inter-rater coding, it was decided after discussing with my second coders that *Description* and the neutral instances (non-evaluative) in *Background* to be merged into a new code *Non-evaluation*. The positive and negative instances of *Background* will still be specified because they are part of evaluation. *Flowery language* was removed from the framework because it is too vague to define and it is not the focus of this study. Details of *Non-evaluation* and *Background Comments* will be explained in Sections 3.3.4.1 and 3.3.4.2.

Changes were also made to the coding of evaluation strategies. For example, *Sarcasm* in criticism was replaced with *Impoliteness*, adopted from frameworks developed by Culpeper and his colleagues (Culpeper 1996; Culpeper, Bousfield et al. 2003). Impoliteness in the

framework of this study includes sarcasm and other harsh or rude criticism that attacks one's face. New evaluation strategies emerged during the analysis process. A new category of evaluation, i.e. *Emphasised Praise / Emphasised Criticism*, is created to include all reinforced praise or critical acts which hurt one's face instead of saving it. Details of the coding scheme of evaluation will be described in *Section 3.3.4.3*.

3.3.4 The revised analytical framework for concert reviews

The revised framework consists of three major components identified based on their rhetorical purposes:

Non-evaluation: information about aspects of the concert which is neutral and contains no evaluation;

Background comments: evaluations on aspects other than the concert itself. To make a distinction with evaluations on aspects of the concert, background comments were categorised as *positive comments* and *negative comments*;

Concert Evaluation: praise or criticism on aspects of the concert.

3.3.4.1 Non-evaluation

Non-evaluation provides neutral information of the concert, including acoustics, audience behaviour, composer/composition, concert information, instrument(s), performer/performance, venue, and other aspects. Here are some examples:

- (3-1) 《第七交響曲》的第一樂章有兩個速度，首先是 Poco sostenuto（少許綿延）
(CJ06) [**Composer/Composition**]
[There are two tempi in the first movement of Symphony Number 7. First, there is poco sostenuto.]

- (3-2) An Easter Eve Requiem marked the completion of the London Symphony Orchestra's celebration of Brahms and Szymanowski with their principal conductor, Valery Gergiev. (ET05) [**Concert information**]
- (3-3) He used natural (ie valveless) trumpets, not for their "authenticity" but the sheer strangeness of their sound, which cut through the texture like a knife. (ED43) [**Instrument**]

3.3.4.2 *Background comments*

Background comments address aspects other than the concert itself, namely *Audience Consideration*; *Composer/Composition*; *Event Organisation*; *Performer/Performance*; *Programme*; *Venue*; and *Other Aspects*. Examples of positive *Background Comments* are as follows:

- (3-4) 下半場是德布西（Claude Debussy）的《夜曲》（Nocturnes），這首作品的好版本不少，我個人傾向布烈茲（Pierre Boulez）流暢爽快的 DG 版，當然海汀（Bernard Haitink）的 Philips 版也是經典，貝努姆（Eduard Van Beinum）的版本雖舊，但有相當參考價值。(CK49) [**Audience Consideration**]
[The second half of the concert was Claude Debussy's Nocturnes. There are quite a lot good recordings of this work. I personally prefer the smooth and refreshing style of Pierre Boulez (DG), but of course Bernard Haitink's Philips' version is also a classic. Despite Eduard Van Beinum's recording being a bit old, it is of certain reference values.]

The above example of *Audience Consideration* (positive) consists of the critic's recommendation of related recordings to the work performed at the concert, which might help the readers better appreciate the music.

- (3-5) In 1908, with most of his major scores still unwritten, Vaughan Williams took himself to Paris to study with Ravel, two years younger but already a successful composer. Later, after they had become friends, Ravel remarked that Vaughan Williams was the only one of his pupils who had not ended up sounding like their teacher. (EG42) [**Composer/Composition**]

The above excerpt gives a positive account of the composer's biography, which is not about his work performed at the concert being reviewed.

- (3-6) MASTERPRIZE calls itself "the world's leading composing competition". What makes it admirable is the way in which it reaches people who wouldn't normally touch contemporary classical music with a bargepole. (ED30) [**Event Organisation**]

MASTERPRIZE is a composing event taking place annually. Review ED30 comments on one of its concerts. Therefore, the general positive remark above on the music event is coded as *Background Comments* (positive).

Examples of negative *Background Comments* on aspects other than the concert itself are as follows:

- (3-7) All of which raises gloomy doubts in my mind about the long-term future of the conductor, the peculiar Franz Welser-Most. He had a rocky ride with the London Philharmonic early in his career. (ET32) [**Performer/Performance**]

Here, the negative remarks are given to the background of the conductor, rather than his performance at the concert.

- (3-8) 筆者不時在本欄慨嘆，近年香港音樂會選唱日耳曼歌曲的次數，少之又少。
(CK30) [**Programme**]
[The writer often sighs at this column, that the chances of having Germanic songs at concerts in Hong Kong are so rare.]

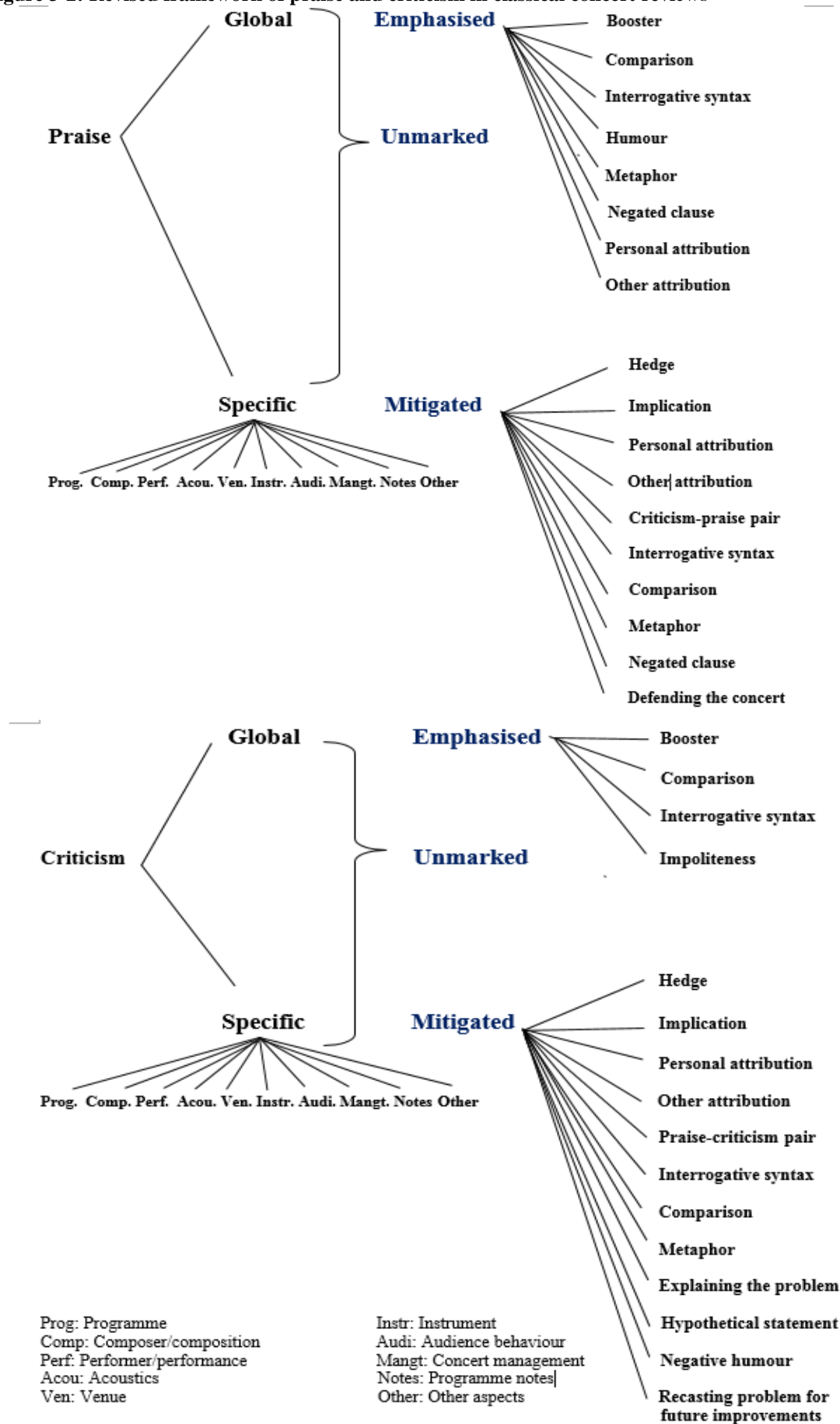
The above negative comment is made on concert programming as a general trend.

- (3-9) 只是，香港的確缺乏小型音樂廳。(CJ01) [**Venue**]
[Nevertheless, Hong Kong indeed lacks small concert halls.]

3.3.4.3 Concert evaluation

Concert Evaluation contains praise or criticism on aspects of the concert. Following revisions and discussions with my inter-rater coders, the initial frameworks for praise and criticism were modified as shown in Figure 3-2. Drawing on Hyland's (2000) analytical framework on academic book reviews, concert evaluation is analysed from two perspectives: dimensions of evaluation (*Section 3.3.4.3.1*) and strategies of evaluation (*Section 3.3.4.3.2*).

Figure 3-2: Revised framework of praise and criticism in classical concert reviews



Three principles were set when coding evaluation:

1. A clause/sentence containing more than one positive/negative semantic item should be coded as one instance of evaluation if it only refers to a single aspect of the concert under review (Hyland 2000; Ha 2011). For instance:

(3-20) 她的聲線**有力**, 咬字**清晰** (CJ04)
[Her voice was **strong** and the articulation was **clear**.]

In the above example, both “有力” (strong) and “清晰” (clear) are explicit positive semantic items referring to the performance of the vocalist. The whole sentence is therefore coded as one instance of unmarked specific praise on performer/performance.

2. Every evaluation strategy should be counted if more than one appears in a single clause/sentence. For instance:

(3-21) The music, *all played far more expertly than it deserved* by the London Symphony Orchestra under Daniel Harding (*are they really that short of work?*) was *profoundly depressing*. (EG02)

The following codes are derived from the above example:

Emphasised praise (Booster) on performer/performance, and Emphasised criticism (Booster) on composer/composition: *all played far more expertly than it deserved*;

Emphasised criticism (Interrogative syntax) on composer/composition: *are they really that short of work?*;

Emphasised criticism (Booster) on composer/composition: *profoundly depressing*.

3. Each praise or criticism clause within a praise-criticism pair may contain its own evaluative features, and therefore pairs are double-coded. For example,

(3-21) A *useful* singer, but *not yet fully* matured. (ED38)

The above sentence as a whole is an instance of mitigated criticism (praise-criticism pair) on the performance of a singer. In addition, the praise clause and the criticism clause each applies their own evaluation strategy: “*useful*” in the first clause is an explicit positive semantic item qualifying the performer, so “*A useful singer*” is coded as unmarked specific praise; “*yet*” and “*fully*” in the second clause are hedges which weakens the criticism on the singer, so the clause “*but not yet fully matured*” is coded as mitigated criticism (Hedge).

3.3.4.3.1 Dimensions of concert evaluation

As shown in Figure 3-2, praise and criticism focus on global or specific aspects of the concert. ***Global Praise*** and ***Global Criticism*** are overall comments about the concert reviewed. For example,

(3-10) The full range of that culture was displayed in this fascinating and generous harpsichord recital from Carole Cerasi. (ED01) [**Global Praise**]

(3-11) Thus far, it was a disappointing evening. (ED45) [**Global Criticism**]

Targets of specific evaluation include *Programme*, *Composer/Composition*, *Performer/Performance*, *Acoustics*, *Venue*, *Instrument*, *Audience Behaviour*, *Concert Management*, *Programme Notes*, and *Other Aspects*. For example,

(3-12) CARL NIELSEN's symphonies and Beethoven's piano concertos do not make obvious companions, but the concurrent programming of two of the LSO's ongoing cycles has seen them brought together in a jaunty, intriguing pas de deux. (ED20) [**Specific praise: Programme**]

(3-13) 馬勒不用標準的意大利文，改用德文的速度指示，又不附上拍子機速度，就有辭意不清之病。(CJ12) [**Specific criticism: Composer/Composition**]
[Mahler refused to use standard Italian but German to indicate tempo. Neither did he mention the metronome tempo. The problem was him not clear being with what he meant.]

- (3-14) He elicited from the SCO Chorus a performance perhaps more sensitive than anything it has done in recent years. (EG23) [**Specific praise: Performer/Performance**]
- (3-15) 文化中心的音響實在該整頓了！(CJ44) [**Specific criticism: Acoustics**]
[The acoustics of the Cultural Centre really needs a fix!]
- (3-16) There are few places more pleasant than St George's, but the Bohemian castle of Kromeriz must have been one of them. (EG25) [**Specific praise: Venue**]
- (3-17) The programme note rightly primed us to hear the piano as an orchestra, but pieces like the storm portrait, Orage, firmly underlined that the sounds came from hammers hitting strings in a wooden box. No wonder the instrument was re-tuned in the interval. (ET25) [**Specific criticism: Instrument**]
- (3-18) 音樂會下半場演奏馬勒第五交響曲，第三樂章奏畢，正當大家期待着最熟悉、最著名的第四樂章出現，卻見場中有多達二、三十位觀眾離座退場，這顯然是那些馬勒是何許人亦不大清楚的盲目捧場者。(CJ38) [**Specific criticism: Audience Behaviour**]
[The second half of the concert was Mahler's Fifth Symphony. When the third movement ended, everyone was looking forward to the most familiar and most well-known fourth movement. However, there were as many as 20 to 30 audience leaving the concert. These were obviously ignorant attendants who were not quite clear about who Mahler was.]
- (3-19) Kempf 彈完第二樂章停了良久，不敢貿然開始終曲，卻被帶位員當成彈完，帶遲到觀眾入座。變奏曲的主題旋律太過無遮無掩，難以開始是很平常，到他集中精神開始後，帶位員才到達前排，擾擾攘攘大煞風景。(CJ25) [**Specific criticism: Concert Management**]
[Kempf made a long pause after the second movement, did not want to rush into the finale. But the usher thought he had finished playing and took the late comers to their seats. The theme of the variations was too straight-forward to start. The usher came to the front rows just when he managed to focus and start to play. The disturbance was utterly annoying.]
- (3-20) 不過，唯一美中不足之處，是場刊裡這五首俳句的英譯與中譯，都沒有遵守「五、七、五」的格式。(CK33) [**Specific criticism: Programme Notes**]
[The only flaw, nevertheless, was that none of the English and Chinese translations of the five pieces of Haiku followed the format of 5-7-5.]

3.3.4.3.2 Categories of evaluation strategies

An evaluation was further categorised into unmarked, emphasised or mitigated praise or criticism (following Hyland 2000 and 2004, Hyland and Hyland 2001, Ha 2011, Culpeper et al 2003, Shaw 2004, Stotesbury 2006, Itakura and Tsui 2010, Rockwell 2006, Rogerson-Revell 2007). Sub-categories of emphasised and mitigated evaluations are listed in Figure 3-2.

Unmarked evaluation:

An **unmarked evaluation** is neither strengthened nor weakened in its illocutionary force. It usually contains explicit positive (e.g. *good, pleasure, the best, precisely* and *marvellously*) or negative lexical items (e.g. *blemishes, poor, disappointing, bad, and less interesting*) to indicate praise or criticism (Hyland 2000). Examples of unmitigated evaluations are given below, with the indicative term in italic and underlined.

Unmarked praise:

(3-21) Franck 的奏鳴曲是浪漫樂派傑出小提琴作品. (CJ29) [Composer/Composition]
[Franck's (violin) sonata is an *outstanding* violin work of the Romantic period.]

Unmitigated criticism:

(3-22) The mezzo Helena Rasker was *slow to warm up*. (ET04) [Performer/Performance]

Emphasised evaluation:

An **emphasised evaluation** strengthens the illocutionary force of praise or criticism, thus making the evaluation even stronger. There are eight types of praise strategies and four types of criticism strategies to emphasise the force of evaluation (Figure 3-2). *Booster, Comparison, and Interrogative syntax* can be used to strengthen both praise and criticism. *Humour, Metaphor, Negated clause, Personal attribution and Other attribution* are only used

to emphasise praise. *Impoliteness* is only used to emphasise criticism.

Boosters “emphasize force or writer’s certainty in proposition” (Hyland and Tse 2004, p.169). Common types of boosters include modal auxiliaries (e.g. must [必須], will [會]); epistemic adjectives and adverbs (e.g. very [非常], always [總是], certain [肯定], absolute [絕對], perfectly [完美地], undeniably [無容置疑地]) (Hyland 2000b; Hu and Cao 2011). Exclamation mark (!) is also a booster which strengthens the evaluation. Examples of booster in praise and criticism are as follows:

Booster (emphasised praise):

(3-23) Ten years on from his composition, the work is *still* shocking and consoling, lamenting and uplifting *all at once*. (ET30) [Composer/Composition]

Booster (emphasised criticism):

(3-24) 上周末我聽的那一場 ~~還是~~ 有人咳嗽， *真是* 煞風景！ (CM22) [Audience behavior]
[There were *still* people coughing at the concert I attended last weekend. *So* mood killing!]

Comparison reinforces praise or criticism by comparing an aspect of the concert under review with other similar instances which are not part of the concert reviewed. It is a code that emerged from the analysis of this study. For example,

Comparison (emphasised praise):

(3-25) In 2010 the 150-year-old Gustav will be everywhere. But I'll wager that *not many performances will be as revealing as this keenly felt performance of* Erwin Stein's 1921 arrangement of the Fourth Symphony for chamber ensemble. (ET42)
[Performer/Performance]

Comparison (emphasised criticism):

- (3-26) 後半場的《小紅帽》故事，作曲家帕特森(P.Patterson)像是在為卡通片作配音，表面上五彩繽紛，**但音樂感實在不能與普羅可菲也夫的《彼德與狼》相提並論。** (CM14) [Composer/Composition]
 [Regarding (the composition on) the Hoodie Red story in the second half of the concert, the composer P.Patterson is like composing music for a cartoon programme. It is colourful on the surface, **but it is indeed not in the same league with Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf.**]

Interrogative syntax strengthens the evaluative force by making the comment through a question instead of a statement. This code was originally a mitigation strategy of criticism in Hyland and Hyland's (2001) study on teachers' written feedback on student's essays. When analysing concert reviews, it was found that some instances of evaluation were emphasized by asking rhetorical questions. This finding suggested that Interrogative Syntax can be used both as an emphasiser or a mitigator, depending on the context of the writing. For example:

Interrogative syntax (emphasised praise):

- (3-27) **誰說香港沒有第一流的古典音樂聽眾?** (CM19) [Audience behavior]
 [Who says there are no first-rate classical music audience in Hong Kong?]

Interrogative syntax (emphasised criticism):

- (3-28) Gergiev used big forces, and made big gestures - not all of them clear enough to avoid ragged entries and, at times, not a little disparity between chorus and orchestra. **Had he really taken time to think through the work anew?** Probably not. (ET05)
 [Performer/Performance]

Humour, Metaphor, Negated Clause, Personal Attribution and Other Attribution are the emphasised strategies only used in praise.

Humour is a positive face strategy which expresses solidarity and creates a positive self- image by amusing an audience and showing them a shared idea of what is funny (Hay

2000; Rogerson-Revell 2007). Findings in this study suggest that humour can make a praise act sound even stronger than it originally was. For example,

- (3-29) So often did he make the orchestra roar, then he just let go, abandoning it to its own sighs of exhalation. The effect was deeply romantic, especially in the third movement Adagio, when that exquisitely melodious and classically Rachmaninov style theme flooded over the hall in waves of melancholy.
I've decided, I'm vain enough to want this music at my funeral.
 (ET20) [Performer/Performance]

Here, the critic announces to make the third movement of Rachmaninov's Symphony No. 2 his funeral music, nevertheless in a light-hearted tone, which suggests this might be a joke. He might just want to praise how well this movement was interpreted by the conductor. By making a humorous remark of wanting this music at his funeral, the effect of praise is stronger than saying the conductor was excellent.

Metaphor is another strategy that only emphasises praise acts. It was meant to convey evaluation implicitly (Hunston 1993). In this study, some instances of metaphors were found to be reinforcing praise, for instance,

- (3-30) Let's face it: the programming of many classical concerts is as nourishing as sliced white bread. But not this London Philharmonic Orchestra concert... *This was a multi seed, multi-vitamin loaf, and served piping fresh.* (ET12) [Programme]

In the above example, although rhetorically a comparison is made, it is not made to any specific concert or orchestra. Therefore, in effect comparison is used with the aim to support the metaphor rather than for the sake of comparing the reviewed concert to another one. The metaphor then functions as praise by implying that the programming is more nutritional. The metaphor here makes the praise stronger than simply claiming that the programming of this London Philharmonic Orchestra concert is better than many other concerts.

Negated clause is a strategy “with grammatically negative markers imply contrast and hence evaluation” (Hunston & Thompson 2000, in Shaw 2004: 126-127). An example of this strategy to emphasise praise can be seen below:

(3-31) *Without* the BBC Philharmonic's unfailing concentration and dedication, *none of that* would have been possible. (ED04) [Performer/Performance]

“Without” and “none of that” are both grammatically negative markers, yet put together they create a positive evaluation of the performer even stronger than a straight-forward praise, i.e. the BBC Philharmonic has made the concert a big success with their unfailing concentration and dedication.

Personal attribution, use of personal pronoun “I” in evaluation, strengthens a praise act as critics support the comment with their personal credentials (Hyland 2000). For instance,

(3-32) 這是近年來 *我所聽過的* 當代作曲家作品中最受感動的樂曲。(CM16)
[Composer/Composition]
[This is the most touching work of contemporary composers *I have heard* in recent years.]

Other attribution, on the other hand, draws on others’ reaction to the concert and makes the praise stronger than unmarked praise. For instance,

(3-33) The first movement was driven to such a tremendous climax *it provoked spontaneous applause from the usually impeccable Wigmore audience*. (EG44)
[Performer/Performance]

In the above example, the praise would not have sounded so strong if the critic simply wrote “The first movement was driven to a tremendous climax”. It is however worth noting that personal and other attribution do not emphasise criticism, they only emphasise praise. On the other hand, they might mitigate evaluation in certain contexts. Details about mitigation

strategies regarding personal and other attribution will be discussed later in this section under **Mitigated evaluation**.

Apart from evaluation strategies used exclusively to emphasise praise, **Impoliteness** is a strategy only used to emphasise criticism. Impoliteness is a negative behaviour which to “wound, insult, or taunt” (Rockwell 2006, p.6) one’s face, rather than saving it. Impoliteness can be sarcasm or mock politeness (Culpeper, Bousfield et al. 2003), or harsh criticism which intends to be offensive. For example,

(3-34) Unsettling? Definitely. *But in a way you had to admire Postnikova's persistence in banishing bravura fireworks and much wistful charm from a concerto well endowed with both.* (ET48) [Performer/Performance]

In the above example, the critic conveyed his criticism with positive lexical items, i.e. “admire” and “persistence”, which sound obviously insincere and offensive. In other words, this is an example of sarcasm/mock impoliteness (Culpeper 1996) which falls in the spectrum of impoliteness.

Mitigated evaluation:

In contrast to emphasised evaluation, **mitigation** softens the evaluation. A mitigated praise is applied to “make comments sound more objective” (Ha 2011, p.357) or to work as “rephrased criticism” (Hyland/Hyland 2001, p.198). A mitigated criticism is used to limit the harshness of criticism (Hyland 2000; Hyland and Hyland 2001; Stotesbury 2006). During analysis, it was observed that a number of mitigation strategies can be applied to both praise and criticism, namely *Hedge*, *Implication*, *Personal attribution*, *Other attribution*, *Praise-criticism* or *Criticism-praise pair*, *Interrogative syntax*, *Comparison*, and *Metaphor*. *Negated clause* and *Defending the concert* are strategies only used to mitigate praise. On the other hand, *Explaining the problem*, *Hypothetical statement*, *Negative humour*, and *Recasting problem for*

future improvements can only be found in criticisms. As explained above, some strategies can emphasise or mitigate an evaluation, depending on the context. These strategies are *Personal attribution*, *Other attribution*, *Interrogative syntax*, *Comparison*, *Metaphor* and *Negated clause*. More details can be seen below at the discussion of each individual strategy.

Hedge is widely used to “tone down uncertain or potentially risky claims” (Hyland 2000b, p.179). Common forms of hedge include modal verbs (e.g., may [可能], could [可以], would [將會]), adverbs (e.g., probably [可能], perhaps [也許], maybe [大概], in general [總括來說]), epistemic verbs (e.g., seem [好像], appear [看來]), imprecise quantifiers (e.g., a bit [稍微], a little [一點兒], some [一些]), and adverbs of frequency (e.g., sometimes [有時], occasionally [偶爾]) (Hyland 1996b; Gea Valor 2000; Hyland 2000; Hu and Cao 2011). Instances of hedge are found in both praises and criticisms in concert reviews in the corpora.

Hedge (mitigated praise):

- (3-35) *總括來說*, 這是一場成功的音樂會 (CJ49) [Global Praise]
[*In general*, this was a successful concert.]

Hedge (mitigated criticism):

- (3-36) *Parts of* the Largo were *a little* over-interpreted, *perhaps*. (ED20) [Performer/Performance]

Implication conveys evaluation indirectly (Hyland 2000) and contains no explicit evaluative lexis. The context needs to be taken into consideration to recognise this strategy in concert reviews.

Implication (mitigated praise):

- (3-37) Finally, a selection of the Jubilee Songs of the USA, settings of Negro spirituals for solo concert performance by Harry Thacker Burleigh, a contemporary of Richard Strauss. *Now Allen's shoulders relaxed, his chest and diaphragm expanded*. (ET03) [Performer/Performance]

In order to understand how this strategy works in the above example, it is necessary to take its

surrounding text into consideration. Thomas Allen is a tenor who might have performed too much and was a bit overworked before this concert, which resulted in “a slight roughness in his larynx”, as the critic remarked at the beginning of this review. The text above indicates that his voice has improved towards the end of the programme. The praise is conveyed indirectly by describing his body posture as “shoulders relaxed” and “chest and diaphragm expanded”, which is a positive sign for singing.

Implication (mitigated criticism):

(3-38) 不過，在香港很少機會聽到馬勒第六的現場演出，港樂也算「交了貨」，聽了亦不是損失。(CK13) [Performer/Performance]

[After all, there are no many opportunities for a live performance of Mahler Symphony No. 6 in Hong Kong. Hong Kong Philharmonic has sort of “done its job”, and it is not a loss to hear it.]

The above example conveys criticism indirectly through *limited praise* (Hyland 2000), which weakens the negative force of evaluation by making the criticism look like a praise and lets the reader to make suitable connections.

As mentioned above, *Personal attribution* and *Other attribution* can make a praise act stronger. As explained earlier in this section, *Personal attribution* can be used to emphasise praise (see Example 3-32). However, this strategy can also be used to weaken praise in some occasions, by making it sound like a humble opinion of the reviewer (Johnson 1992). In criticism, *Personal attribution* weakens the evaluative force by labelling the comment as reflecting a personal opinion (Hyland 2000). The following examples illustrate these effects of the personal and other attribution strategies:

Personal attribution (mitigated praise):

(3-39) 我個人認為，聽老布的音樂也必須以虔誠之心進入他的音樂世界，猶如進教堂一樣，自然受其感染，聽後得到的心靈洗滌作用也不亞於馬勒。
(CM23) [Composer/Composition]

[It is my personal opinion that one should have a faithful heart to enter Bruckner's world, just like entering a church. That way one would be impressed naturally, and the soul cleansing effect (of Bruckner's music) is not any weaker than Mahler.]

Personal attribution (mitigated criticism):

- (3-40) *I'm not sure I was convinced by* some moments of exaggerated hush, or Fray's¹ occasional jabbing accents. (ED15) [Performer/Performance]

On the other hand, **Other attribution** can make the evaluation “more diffuse by shifting the source elsewhere” (Hyland 2000, p.58), such as the audience at the concert or an imaginary audience. For example,

Other attribution (mitigated praise):

- (3-41) 終章明快樂段推至最後由定音鼓主導的高潮，*在場所見聽眾的反應是滿意的。* (CJ32) [Performer/Performance]
[The lively coda led by timpani in the Finale was at last pushed to its climax², and *the audience at the concert were satisfied with it.*]

The critic shifts his praise to his observation of the audience's positive reaction. The force of praise here is weaker than complimenting directly on the quality of performance.

Other attribution (mitigated criticism):

- (3-42) 他彈得流暢，沒有多大的表情，也不會太過急促，*喜歡聽活潑快樂的莫扎特的朋友，可能會嫌他太過平淡。* (CJ03) [Performer/Performance]
[His playing was smooth yet without much expression, but not too hasty either³. *Those who like the liveliness and joy of Mozart might complain that he was being too dull.*]

Praise-criticism pair in criticism (or Criticism-praise pair in praise) consists of an instance of praise followed immediately by an instance of criticism (or vice versa in praise),

¹ David Fray (1981) is a French classical pianist.

² This was a performance of Schumann's Second Symphony.

³ He refers to Polish pianist Krystian Zimerman.

which softens the effect of evaluation by creating a more balanced comment (Hyland 2000).

For example,

Criticism-praise pair (mitigated praise):

- (3-43) *There was the slightest pause at the halfway point, and another brief punctuation after the anguish of variation 25, but otherwise it flowed seamlessly through to the final recap of the aria.*⁴ (EG04) [Performer/Performance]

The praise in the main clause (in bold) is weakened by the first half of the sentence (in italic), which criticises aspects of the performance.

Praise-criticism pair (mitigated criticism):

- (3-44) 英國現代作曲家馬修斯 (C. Matthews) 的《穿過玻璃.....》帶有探索性，一小塊一小塊狂暴的音響此起彼落，卻不知所云。
[“Through the Glass” composed by British contemporary composer C. Matthews is exploratory. **The frequent small chunks of tumultuous sounds, however, are unintelligible.**]
(CK24) [Composer/Composition]

In the above example, the criticism (in bold) is softened by the precedent clause of praise (in italic).

Interrogative syntax can either emphasise (see examples 3-28 and 3-28) or soften an evaluation. As a mitigation strategy, Interrogative syntax “weakens the force of a statement by making it relative to a writer’s state of knowledge” (Hyland and Hyland 2001, p.199). For example:

⁴ It was a performance of Bach’s Goldberg Variations by pianist Angela Hewitt.

Interrogative syntax (mitigated praise):

- (3-45) 話雖如此，這次的《第六交響曲》不但在樂隊及指揮上都比上次優勝，更比迪華特的其他馬勒演奏為佳...**究竟是迪華特這幾年進步了，還是之前未使出真功夫？** (CJ16) [Performer/Performance]

Nevertheless, the Sixth Symphony (Mahler) this time was not only much better in orchestra and conductor than last time, it was nicer than other Mahler pieces performed by Edo de Waart...*Is it because de Waart has improved himself in these years, or he did not show his real talent before this?*

The uncertainty presented in the question above weakens the praise on the conducting skills of Edo de Waart.

Interrogative syntax (mitigated criticism):

- (3-46) 迪華特的 Poco sostenuto 可能太快，Vivace 可能太慢。。。不過，如果 Vivace 不能快，那麼當初的 *Poco sostenuto* 奏得慢一點，會不會較接近貝多芬心目中，慢與快之間的比例呢？ (CJ06) [Performer/Performance]

[De Waart's Poco sostenuto might be too fast, Vivace might be too slow⁵... *However, if Vivace cannot be too fast, then would a slower Poco sostenuto be closer to Beethoven's intended ratio of pace between fast and slow?*]

Comparison is a code that emerged from the data of this study. Comparison as an emphasis strategy has been discussed in earlier part of this section (see Examples 3-25 and 3-26). Comparison as a mitigation strategy softens praise or criticism by comparing an aspect of the concert under review with other similar instances which are not part of the concert reviewed. For instance,

Comparison (mitigated praise):

- (3-47) 迪華特在第一樂章的速度爽快，近年有些指揮為了做出所有 *accent* 或 *sf*（特強），將速度減得很慢，**迪華特並非這一類指揮。** (CJ16) [Performer/Performance]

[De Waart conducted the first movement⁶ with a brisk tempo. In recent years some conductors greatly slowed down the tempo in order to make all the accents or *sf* (*sforzando*). *De Waart is not this kind of conductor*].

⁵ This refers to the first movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, performer by Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Edo de Waart.

⁶ The first movement of Mahler's Sixth Symphony.

In the above example, a comparison is made between Edo de Waart, the conductor this review evaluates, and other conductors. There is no explicit comment on whether de Waart is better than the others or not. However, conducting the fast-paced first movement of Mahler's Sixth Symphony in a very slow tempo suggests a stylistic mismatch. Therefore, the contrast between de Waart and other conductors in their choice of tempo should be treated as a praise about de Waart, although the force of praise is weakened by the implicitness of the evaluation.

Comparison (mitigated criticism):

(3-48) It helped, no doubt, that two of the three composers, Berlioz and Ravel, were world champions of orchestration. *Colin Matthews can't quite be placed in that league*, though there were easily enough teasing textures and other compositional niceties to see us happily through the 13-minute Reflected Images (2003), receiving its British premiere. (ET33) [Composer/Composition]

In the above example, the critic points out that Colin Matthews, a contemporary English composer is not as good as Berlioz and Ravel in terms of orchestration. However, the criticism is not a harsh one at all, because he is compared to the two historically famous composers who were “world champions” of orchestration. In other words, the comparison strategy in this evaluation weakens the force of criticism as we take the backgrounds of relevant musicians into consideration.

Metaphor is another strategy which can emphasise (see Example 3-30), although more often a metaphor is used to convey evaluation implicitly (Hunston 1993), hence weakens the force of praise or criticism. For example,

Metaphor (mitigated praise):

(3-49) 不用說，這首 Sarabande 也是很慢，但去到應該同速的 Double，就意外地再減

慢，將本應如流水的八分音符變成一聲聲嘆息。將巴哈的 S a r a b a n d e 彈得極慢的不只 Anderszewski⁷，但慢得來而有說服力的，一時想不起有別人。
(CJ21) [Performer/Performance]

[Needless to say, this Sarabande was slow. But when it came to the “double” which should be in the same tempo, he slowed down again unexpectedly. *The eighth notes were supposed to be like running water, and he turned them into a lot of sighs.* Anderszewski is not the only one who plays Bach’s Sarabande very slowly. But I cannot think of another person who can play it in such a slow pace yet so convincingly.]

To analyse metaphor in this instance, it is necessary to take its surrounding text into consideration. The very slow tempo the pianist chose can be a problem, as it was contrary to the critic’s expectation. However, it is stated at the end that the pianist played very slowly yet convincingly, which indicates the metaphor “*he turned them into a lot of sighs*” is a praise though softened by the ambiguity and implicitness of the expression.

Metaphor (mitigated criticism):

(3-50) Our very own demon barber of Fleet Street admitted that *he'd probably been slitting rather too many throats recently*. (ET03) [Performer/Performance]

This excerpt is taken from the same review of Example 3-37, which starts by criticising Thomas Allen, tenor of the concert has recently sung too much in other performances, resulting in tiredness in his throat. The critical force is softened by the use of metaphor “*he'd probably been slitting rather too many throats recently*”, implying he has overworked himself in the opera *Sweeney Todd: The Demon barber of Fleet Street*, where he played the leading character. Readers of this review need to have the background knowledge of Thomas Allen to be able to understand what this metaphor means.

Negated clause and *Defending the concert* are mitigation strategies to soften praise acts.

⁷ Piotr Anderszewski, a Polish pianist. This comment is about his performance of Bach English Suite No. 6.

As explained earlier in this section, a negated clause contains grammatically negative markers which implies contrast. The **Negated clause** strategy can emphasise (see Example 3 31) or tone down praise. An example of Negated clause in mitigating praise is as follows:

- (3-51) No one likes birthday cake more than the Philharmonia Orchestra's members and directorate. Only the other day, it seems, we were cheering its 60th anniversary. Now the huzzahs have come out for its 65th. Considering the band's glorious achievements, its survival battles and strong loyalties, gala concerts are certainly appropriate, though they might consider refreshing the format. Do we always need the warhorse works? Couldn't we also rejoice with innovation, novelty, a spin into the future, if only for ten minutes? *Not that anyone could be churlish about the cake's quality on Tuesday.* (ET39) [Global praise]

In the above instance, the force of praise is weakened by using the double negatives “not” and “churlish”, rather than a straight-forward praise, i.e. the quality of concert was excellent.

Defending the concert is a mitigation strategy emerged from the data analysis of this study, in which the critic first puts forward some negative remarks against the target, followed by his/her defence against the criticism. For instance,

- (3-52) The first hushed uttering of the text seemed almost doubtful, *but this only increased the severity of the fortissimo repetition, which now seemed like unavoidable truth.* (ED13) [Performer/Performance]

The first clause of the sentence, “The first hushed uttering of the text seemed almost doubtful” looks like a criticism of the performance. However, it is not a real criticism. The critic immediately explains in the following clauses that it is the right way of singing the piece (in bold and italic). With the defense of the critic, the comment above thus becomes a praise of the performance.

Explaining the problem, Hypothetical statement, Negative humour, and Recasting problem for future improvements are mitigation strategies only applied on criticism.

“Giving reasons” is a common strategy to soften criticism in academic book reviews,

as it “provide sound argumentation for the reasonableness of the positive or negative evaluation of some aspect of the book” (Gea Valor and Del Saz Rubio 2001, p.171). A similar strategy is found in classical concert reviews, and it is termed “**Explaining the problem**” in this study.

For instance,

- (3-53) Tippett's piano writing was always idiosyncratic, *his own restricted playing abilities perhaps giving him an optimistic picture of what could be surmounted by others.* (ED33) [Composer/Composition]

Tippett is a composer of contemporary classical music. The critic softens his criticism about Tippett's poor piano writing by trying to attribute it to the composer's restricted piano playing.

Hypothetical statement ameliorates criticism by describing a possibility using either a conditional clause, which “conveys a more desirable condition as counter-factual” (Itakura and Tsui 2011, p.1372) (see example 3-54), or simply using modal verbs such as “could/would/might have” to refer to a possibility in the past (see example 3-55).

- (3-54) 。 。 。 若弦樂能拉出像第一樂章的結實音量，就算音質略硬，效果或會更佳。
(CJ11) [Performer/Performance]
If the strings could produce the firm volume as in the first movement, the effect would have been better even though the timbre would be a bit hard.

- (3-55) *There could also have been more pointed orchestral detail and definition of character in the Three Russian Songs*, delightful products of Rachmaninoff's later years when he was looking back nostalgically to the old life in his Russian homeland. (ED39) [Performer/Performance]

As mentioned above, *Humour* is a strategy to emphasise praise acts. On the other hand, humour can also be used to soften criticism (Rogerson-Revell 2007), which is referred to in this study as **Negative humour**. Negative humour mitigates a criticism by presenting it in an amusing and funny way. For example,

- (3-56) 可挑剔的是莫扎特的聲音在保利劇院聽起來顯得較「肥大」，尤其是第三樂章小步舞，*起舞的舞伴要去做纖體了*。(CJ35) [Acoustics]
To pick on the flaw, Mozart sounded quite “bulky” in the Poly theatre, especially the third movement, the Minuet. *The dancers should try to slim down.*

In the above example, “the dancers should try to slim down” is a joke to make the criticism made on the bulky-sounded classical dance music (the Minuet) sound less harsh.

Recasting problem for future improvements is another mitigation strategy to soften criticism, which states expectations or recasting problems as potential for future development (Itakura and Tsui 2011) and ends with a positive note. For instance,

- (3-57) But if Schwanewilms⁸ can smooth away this mannerism, *she could easily become one of the leading Straussians of her generation.* (ED46) [Performer/Performance]

3.3.5 Procedures for analysing rhetorical acts in concert reviews

Following the construction of a coding scheme and the hand-tagged qualitative analysis of rhetorical acts, the quantitative data such as occurrences and mean frequencies of the rhetorical acts were collected and calculated. Overall patterns of rhetorical acts including evaluation and non-evaluation were examined, as well as the structural patterns of evaluation. Focus of this study was nevertheless on features of concert evaluation, in terms of the targets of evaluation and various layers of positive and negative evaluation strategies, i.e. unmarked, emphasised and mitigated.

In analysing the English and Chinese concert reviews, intra-cultural and cross-cultural comparisons of the following seven aspects were conducted: ratios of evaluative and non-evaluative acts in reviews; structural patterns of reviews in terms of opening and closing with

⁸ Anne Schwanewilms (1967) is a German soprano.

evaluation or non-evaluation; global evaluations and evaluations on specific aspects of the concert; positive and negative evaluation on specific aspects of the concert; positive and negative evaluations differentiated by their strengths, i.e. unmarked, emphasised and mitigated; types of emphasised positive and negative evaluations; types of mitigated positive and negative evaluations. The quantitative analyses of the text features were conducted by using the SPSS software. Intra-cultural features of rhetorical acts were compared by the Wilcoxon signed rank test and the non-parametric Friedman test. Cross-cultural comparisons of rhetorical features were made by applying the Mann-Whitney test and the Kruskal-Wallis test, since most of the English and Chinese data did not pass the normality test.

Textual analysis results of the English and Chinese data will be discussed in *Chapter 4* and *Chapter 5* respectively. The cross-cultural results will be presented in *Chapter 6*.

3.4 Interviewing music critics

This section describes the analytical procedures of interview data. Details of data collection were explained regarding the following aspects of research: constructing a semi-structured interview schedule, the pilot study, selection of music critics for interview and the interview procedures. The interview data analysis procedures were also discussed regarding the transcription and coding of the interview data. Results of the interview analysis were cross-checked by an inter-rater reliability test.

3.4.1 Data collection

3.4.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

The qualitative interview is considered “as a resource for investigating truths, facts, experience, beliefs, attitudes, and/or feelings of respondents” (Talmy 2010, p.131). According

to McCracken (1988), it enables me “to capture how the respondent sees and experiences the world” (p.65). Mason (2002) also points out that “qualitative interviewing is more likely to generate a fairer and fuller representation of interviewees’ perspectives” (p. 66). The qualitative interview research, as an established method in empirical research in social sciences, has been increasingly popular in applied linguistics, “particularly in qualitative studies that aim to investigate participant’s identities, experiences, beliefs, and orientations” (Talmy 2010, p.128).

A semi-structured interview, according to Hermanowicz (2002), is one of the most fundamental of qualitative interview methods and might “bring us arguably closer than many other methods to an intimate understanding of people and their social worlds” (p.480). In a semi-structured interview, the researcher guides the interview by asking set questions to the participant, and at the same time has the flexibility to explore further by following up on the participant’s answers (Patton 2002; Rubin and Rubin 2011). Compared with structured interviews in which the questions are tightly controlled and the question order is followed strictly, or unstructured interviews in which no interview guide is prepared to address the research questions, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher the freedom to broaden and deepen the topic by giving the participant follow-up probes after a set question is asked (Dörnyei 2007). In fact, the flexibility in its format and order of questions made semi-structured interview the most suitable for this study to investigate and compare music critics’ perspectives on their use of evaluative strategies, and to explore their views on factors that affect their evaluation of concerts. Therefore, semi-structured interviews with music critics were conducted in this research.

Apart from a set of standard questions that all critics were asked about their views and experiences in writing music criticism, specific discourse-based questions were also designed for every critic interviewed. This allows the critics to explain why a given review is constructed the way it is (Odell, Goswami et al. 1983; Harwood 2008). Odell, Goswami et al (1983) point

out that, researchers “cannot determine what assumptions writers made or what background knowledge they had concerning the audience, the topic, and the strategies that might be appropriate for achieving their assigned purpose with a given audience” (p.222), and that writers might not always be conscious about their actions during writing. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to elicit the critics’ “tacit knowledge about the rhetorical context” (p.223) for their concert reviews.

To conduct the semi-structured interviews effectively, an interview schedule (see *Section 3.4.1.2*) was made before the interviews. Pilot interviews were conducted to trial the questions and for me to practise interview skills (see *Section 3.4.1.3*).

3.4.1.2 Developing the interview schedule

The two research questions of this study which the interview addresses are:

RQ3: What are the Hong Kong Chinese / British music critics’ perspectives on their use of positive and negative evaluative strategies?

and

RQ4: What are the factors that affect the use of evaluative strategies in their writing, e.g. editorial policies, critic-musician relations, culture, etc.?

To answer these two RQs, the interview was divided into three parts:

Part 1: Set Questions:

This part contained a number of main questions with follow-up questions depending upon the interviewee’s responses. There are 39 questions, of which the majority are open-ended questions. Drawing on McCracken (1988)’s view on setting up interview questions, asking “simple, informational’ opening questions can help create an ‘atmosphere of face-safety’ for

the interviewee (p. 38). Therefore, the interview started with the critic's background on music criticism, such as when and how the critic started writing concert reviews, what training the critic had received, whether review writing was the critic's full-time job, how regularly did the critic write concert reviews, and so on. However, these questions do not only serve as ice-breakers, but also help to link to the more in-depth questions relating to the critic's writing style, such as whether the critic has become more or less critical over time.

After the opening questions, more specific questions were asked about the critic's evaluation style, such as whether the critic was more direct or indirect when praising and criticising. Questions were also set to investigate readers' impact on their writing, from perspectives of general readers and musicians. Critics were also asked about the possible factors that might affect their writing, such as editorial policy. Finally, critics were invited to express their views on the role of the music critic.

As each critic has his or her own distinctive background and experience in writing music criticism, I researched each critic before the interview and developed additional questions specific to that critic where relevant. For example, in the background study, a critic who was based in the US was asked to compare the difference between New York and British music criticism in aspects of editorial policies, functions of music critics and the ways critics write their concert reviews.

Part 2: Prompt Card Questions:

This part aimed at eliciting critics' opinions on other critics' or musicians' comments on music criticism. The foci of these questions were primarily on the critic's perception about the function and writing style of concert reviews relating to evaluation. Questions were generated from various sources such as an episode of a BBC Radio 3 programme "Music Matters" (24/03/2014) in which a few prominent music critics and musicians expressed their

opinions on music criticism, newspaper or online articles about music criticism, few leading Hong Kong music critics' comments on the music industry. There were seven statements for the critics to comment on:

1. The function of music critic is to ignite debate.
2. A music critic said:

 'When I'm writing a review, no matter whether I praise or criticise, I try to write it in an entertaining way to attract my readers.'
3. Many critics do not really know the music they criticise about.
4. Many concerts have been killed after bad reviews. In other words, bad reviews are a huge put-off instead of help to the music industry.
5. Music critics should take part in some of the 'cheerleading' for the future of music art, industry, and funding for music activities.
6. A music critic said:
 'Sometimes I get offers from concert organisers, musicians' agents or advertisers. I always turn them down.'
7. A music critic said:
 'Sometimes I find it difficult to criticise some musician friends of mine who appear in the concerts I write about.'

Statements 1-3 are related to RQ3, regarding music critics' perspectives on the writing of concert reviews, namely roles of music critic, criteria for a good review and qualities for a music critic. Statements 4-7 are related to RQ4, which concerns about factors affecting their writing, such as the critic's consideration for their general readers, musicians and the development of the music industry. Critics' reflections on the above statements helped answer the research questions.

A complete version of the interview protocol can be found in Appendix C.

Part 3: Discourse-based Questions:

This part contained 5-6 discourse-based questions which were specifically designed for each critic, asking them about their reviews which were included in the corpora for textual analysis. Each critic was invited to provide account on chosen parts of their reviews of the rhetorical strategies they applied. Further probes might be given depending on their answers, such as how often they used such strategies or how they expected their readers to understand or react to the strategies that they used. An example of a discourse-based question followed by probing questions is as follows:

Interviewer: I highlighted a little bit the second paragraph: “Levin gets a great deal of sound out of this instrument in the best sense: he hammers the keyboard and makes it work hard.” Why did you write it this way?

Interviewee: Well I suppose I wanted to give some impression, and he is a very, very fierce pianist. And you know there are some pianists like that with the keyboard, but his ones are very, very (gesture), very, very percussive.

Interviewer: Were you trying to criticise him for being too forceful?

Interviewee: No I don't think so. I think...I can't remember, forgotten...He's got terrific energy, and great vitality.

Interviewer: How would you expect your readers to understand this: ‘hammers the keyboard and makes it work hard’?

Interviewee: I was trying to give them a vivid impression, trying to make something vivid, the idea vivid to people. It's not meant to be a joke...

Apart from the evaluation strategies they applied in the reviews, critics were also invited to discuss some of their non-evaluative writing features. This is because critics' views on the non-evaluative parts of their reviews could reflect to what degree concert reviews are regarded as an evaluative genre, as opposed to an informative genre. An example of a discourse-based question and follow-up questions is as follows:

Interviewer: I've noticed that in your reviews, whenever there is new music, you tend to give more background information, like the composers...

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: *Why did you do that?*

Interviewee: *Because I'm assuming that people are familiar with Ravel and Prokofiev, but they are not familiar with Turnage. Because not everybody is into new music, some people avoid it completely. And I want to give out the kind of knowledge they need to understand what I'm going to say about the piece. So it's always the new piece to which I'd give more background information, or the rare unusual piece from the 19th or 18th century, I would say something about that.*

Interviewer: *So it was considered for the knowledge of the readers?*

Interviewee: *Yes*

3.4.1.3 Pilot study

Piloting the interview is a crucial part of developing an effective research instrument, which enables the researcher to explore how an interview actually works (Murray 2009). By piloting the interview, the researcher can practise the interview skills, test the “clarity of the questions”, “the design and style of the way” the interview questions are presented, and solve potential problems that might occur during the interview (Plowright 2011, p.88). In fact, piloting “can reveal subtle flaws in the design or implementation of the study – flaws that may not be readily apparent in the plan itself, but that could otherwise prove costly and time-consuming, perhaps even leading to the loss of valuable and irreplaceable data” (Gass and Mackey 2007, p.3). Therefore, two pilot interviews were conducted in advance of the formal interviews to test the instrument and to check the amount of time an interview could possibly take. Both interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants before the interviews.

The first pilot interview was conducted with a PhD student from the Language and Linguistics Department of Essex University. She is not a music critic and has no background in reviews writing. She has experience in conducting semi-structured interviews, therefore conducting a pilot interview with her enabled me to familiarise herself with the logistics of a semi-structured interview and to test the general layout of the interview schedule. The second pilot interview was conducted with a journalist who writes reviews of various cultural events,

including concerts, music records, drama and films. He has been a critic for thirteen years and is currently writing reviews for eight local newspapers. This participant was considered as a member of the target population of this research and the pilot interview with him was expected to help test and modify the interview questions. For both interviews, only the first two parts of the interview schedule were used, because Part 3 discourse questions are based on the concert reviews in the corpora and would be asked specifically to the critics who wrote them.

The first pilot interview took approximately 46 minutes and the second interview 1 hour and 17 minutes. After the interviews, positive feedback was received from both interviewees concerning clarity of interview questions, flow of the interview and my performance. In both interviews, questions were not asked in the pre-arranged order. Instead, a question in the later section would be asked if it was related to the interviewee's answer to the previous question. Therefore, it was noticed that the researcher needed to be very familiar with the interview schedule to make sure all major questions were covered, as well as be able to lead the interview smoothly. The second interviewee also suggested that it was most important to keep the atmosphere relaxed and natural, so that the interviewee would be able to talk more freely.

The interview schedule was modified after the pilot interviews. The order of the questions remained unchanged. One background information question was added to explore the critic's interest in specific genres of music:

- *Is there a genre of music that you particularly focus on?*

The critic's style of evaluation was also further explored by adding three more questions to the interview guide:

- *When giving praise, are you more expressive or more reserved?*
- *When giving criticism, are you more straightforward or more indirect?*
- *What element(s) do you always include in your reviews?*

The modified interview schedule consisted of 40 main questions and 7 supporting questions asking about critics' opinions on others' views regarding music criticism, followed by 5-6 discourse questions specifically based on each critic's own work (see Appendix D). It was estimated that each interview would last between one hour and one hour and a half.

3.4.1.4 Selecting music critics as interview informants

Music critics who have contributed their reviews to the English and Chinese corpora of this study were selected for a followed-up interview to explore their opinions about the use of evaluation strategies in concert reviews. The selection criteria are as follows:

- (1) the critic is currently an active music critic who has been writing music criticism on a regular basis; and/or
- (2) the critic has contributed a number of concert reviews to the corpus of this study.

The second criterion was made because by having a relatively big proportion of reviews in the corpus, a critic is likely to have a significant impact on the constitution of written data, i.e. evaluative strategies, in this research. Some of the critics, on the other hand, have been active music critics and published a great deal of classical music reviews while the number of reviews selected for this study might not reflect their real contribution to music criticism. Therefore, these music critics were also invited to share their views on music criticism irrespective of the quantity of reviews they contributed to the corpora.

To get in touch with the selected critics, I searched their contact information online and invited them to participate in the interview via email. In the invitation letter I stated the purpose of my research and a brief description of the intended interview. (A sample of the invitation email can be seen in Appendix E). Some critics were introduced by other critics who have participated in the interview. 24 critics out of the total of 51 contributed to the corpora took

part in the interview, of which 12 were from British newspapers (*The Times*: n = 3; *The Guardian*: n = 6; *The Daily Telegraph*: n = 3) and 12 were from Hong Kong newspapers (*The Hong Kong Economic Journal*: n = 6; *Ta Kung Pao*: n = 7; *Ming Pao*: n = 1). In addition, two critics from an international English newspaper, *The Financial Times*, were also invited to take part in the interview. One is based in the US and one is based in the UK. They are both veteran writers of concert reviews, and their views would be valuable to this research. They were grouped in the English team. Thus, there were fourteen informants in the English group and twelve informants in the Chinese group. The similar number of critics from each group enabled a similar amount of data input for comparison. Written consent was obtained from every interviewee before the interview was conducted (an example of consent form is available in Appendix F).

3.4.1.5 Interview data collection

It was worth noting that a few of the British critics interviewed have published their reviews in different newspapers but not within the same period. However, there were no such restrictions on Hong Kong critics except for one, who was an in-house writer of a newspaper. Therefore, three of the Hong Kong critics had their reviews published in different newspapers within the ten-year time frame (2003 – 2013), which resulted in overlaps of critic numbers for Hong Kong newspapers (an example of British interview transcript is available in Appendix G and Hong Kong interview transcript in Appendix H).

The interviews with British and Hong Kong critics were conducted between December 2014 and October 2015. Depending on circumstances such as distance and the critics' preferences, the interviews were carried out either face-to-face, over the telephone or online instant messengers such as Skype. One Hong Kong critic preferred to answer the questions in

writing. Therefore, the interview schedule was sent to this critic by email and he emailed back his answers within two days.

Profiles of the British and Hong Kong critics interviewed are shown in Table 3-3.

Pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of the interviewees.

Table 3-3: Profiles of British and Hong Kong critics interviewed

Country / Region	Newspaper	Interviewee	Number of reviews in the corpus	Music background (1)	Experience in writing music criticism (years)	Mode of work (2)
UK	The Times	Jenny	17	Degree	35	FT
		Harry	11	Non-degree	11	PT
		Simon	1	PhD	>25	FT
	The Guardian	Emily	8	Degree	>40	PT
		Amanda	8	Degree	17	PT
		Jonathan	3	Non-degree	20	PT
		Nelson	3	PhD	9	PT
		David	2	Degree	33	PT
		Jason	5	Non-degree	>20	FT
	The Daily Telegraph	Robert	23	MA	>20	PT
		Tony	2	Non-degree	>23	PT
		Peter	5	PhD	>8	PT
Hong Kong	The Hong Kong Economic Journal	Chi Man	6	Non-degree	49	PT
		Tak Lam	3	Diplomas	>35	PT
		Tin Hei	3	Non-degree	>15	PT
		Ka Ming	28	Non-degree	11	PT
		Ching Fung	1	PhD	>15	PT
		Yu On	6	Non-degree	10	PT
		Wai Fung	2	MA	14	PT
	Ta Kung Pao	Chi Man	5			
		Tak Lam	1			
		Tin Hei	16			
		Chung Yuen	7	Non-degree	>25	PT
		Kin Yu	6	Degree	36	PT
		Sai Him	5	PhD	23	PT
		Wing Yee	6	Non-degree	3	PT
	Ming Pao Daily News	Shing Yat	4	Non-degree	17	PT

(1) Music background

Diploma: diploma in music
Degree: undergraduate degree in music
MA: master's degree in music
PhD: PhD in music
Non-degree: non-music degree

(2) Mode of work

FT: full-time
PT: part-time

All the British critics participated in the interviews are native speakers of English and the interviews were conducted in English. All the Hong Kong critics are native speakers of Cantonese or Mandarin, and their first written language is Chinese. Interviews with Hong Kong critics were conducted in the language of their choice: one critic chose to use Mandarin, one chose to use English, one preferred to answer the interview questions in English by email, and the rest of critics preferred to use Cantonese for their interviews.

The majority of the interviewees have substantial experience in writing music criticism. All British interviewees have been writing reviews for more than ten years, with the longest over forty years. Hong Kong critics' experience in music criticism range from three to almost fifty years. Eight out of twelve British interviewees are professionally trained in music: four are degree holders, one holds a Master's degree and three have a PhD in music. As regards the Hong Kong interviewees, one has diplomas in music, two hold an undergraduate degree, one has an MA in music and two hold a PhD in music. The majority of the interviewees in the UK and Hong Kong, regardless of the music background, have had some training in playing instruments. However, none of the interviewees in both regions have received training in writing music criticism. Most of them were self-taught. One critic in Hong Kong had received some training in writing reviews when studying for her degree in journalism.

Almost all of the critics interviewed only write concert reviews on a part-time basis. None of the Hong Kong interviewees are full-time critics. Only three British interviewees are full-time critics. Hong Kong critics claimed that writing concert reviews was only a hobby and that it was impossible to make a living out of that. Simon, one of the few British full-time critics, commented on his mode of work:

I don't have a very structured week, it is full time plus, but at least I've made my living on it, on music criticism and editing. And in lots of cities, you know, music critics are just people who sort of do it on a freelance basis, just at the end of another working day, or something else. So I think we are lucky here, but I think it's changing. (Simon)

3.4.2 Interview data analysis

3.4.2.1 *Transcription and coding of interview data*

A total of approximately 50 hours of interview data were audio-recorded, which consisted of fourteen interviews with British critics and twelve interviews with Hong Kong critics. The interviews were first transcribed in the language each interview was taken. Transcription is a process which transforms oral data to a textual form. Transcribing interviews is time-consuming but at the same time allows the researcher to familiarise with the data thoroughly before the coding starts (Dörnyei 2007). After that, the transcribed data were coded into various themes in order to organise and retrieve relevant information (Coffey and Atkinson 1996) for answering research questions 3 and 4.

Qualitative coding, as Dörnyei puts it, “involves highlighting extracts of the transcribed data and labelling these in a way that can be easily identified, retrieved, or grouped” (2007, p.250). Coding is a reflection of the researcher’s “analytical ideas” (Coffey and Atkinson 1996, p.27). A code is usually “a word or a short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña 2012, p.3).

According to Dörnyei (2007), qualitative coding is an “interactive process” (p.251). Considering the interactivity and complexity of the interview data collected, a qualitative data analysis software package, NVivo 10 was used to code the transcripts. Compared with manual coding, this computer assisted qualitative data analysis software “efficiently stores, organises, manages, and reconfigures your data to enable human analytic reflection” (Saldaña 2012, p.28). Apart from these benefits, NVivo 10 was easy to use, and it enabled the researcher to arrange the codes in a systematic and hierarchical structure of tree nodes. Thus the codes were organised according to the themes relevant to the research, and it allowed flexibility for the researcher to recode and add in new codes to the data as the analysis went on.

The coding was carried out with reference to the themes indicated in the interview schedule. I used the interview questions as a guiding tour to classify the data presented in the script. Apart from following the interview questions, all the interviewees were very generous in sharing their experiences of being music critics, together with their responses to my probing questions in a semi-structured interview setting. Therefore, the interview data obtained were very rich which resulted in a highly elaborate initial coding scheme: a total of 296 codes and sub-codes were generated from the first time coding. The initial coding enabled a detailed examination of the interview data and broke down the data into meaningful segments. However, the preliminary coding scheme was too cumbersome for a meaning framework to be generated.

Based on the initial coding, a second-level coding was launched to “go beyond a mere descriptive labelling of the relevant data segments” (Dörnyei 2007, p.252) in order to capture themes useful for answering the research questions. In fact, in qualitative interview coding, researchers often need to code and recode a number of times to identify and reorder data, notice and analyse relevant phenomenon in order to “find commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures” (Coffey and Atkinson 1996, p.29).

In the second-level coding, a number of closely related codes were clustered together under a broader category. For example, “Writer-reader relationship” and “Critic-musician relationship” were combined to form a new category “Critic-reader relationship”, under which sub-codes were created to differentiate the readership. By doing so I was able to analyse critics’ awareness on various groups of readership, i.e. general readers and professional musicians. All the transcripts were recoded again and some codes were modified. The revisited coding scheme has shrunk significantly to 87 codes and sub-codes which were categorised under seven big categories: (1) Background of music critic; (2) Music criticism for the media; (3) The role of the music critic; (4) Critic-reader relationship; (5) Writing concert review; (6) Factors that

affect writing; (7) Prompt card questions; and (8) Discourse-based questions. (A final version of the interview coding scheme is in Appendix I).

In the phase of analysing the interview data, critics' perspectives about the writing of music criticism, particularly evaluative strategies were compared and contrasted cross-culturally and intra-culturally in relation to the research questions.

3.4.2.2 Inter-rater reliability tests on coding

The inter-rater reliability test is an important step in qualitative analysis which “addresses the issue of whether independent researchers would discover the same phenomena or generate the same constructs in the same or similar setting” (LeCompte and Goetz 1982, p.32). Thus, a colleague of the researcher was invited to be the second coder of the interview coding scheme. The second coder was a PhD student in Applied Linguistics at the University of Essex. She was familiar with qualitative interview coding and analysis.

To conduct the inter-rater reliability test, one British transcript and one Hong Kong transcript along with the list of codes, coding description and examples were handed to the second coder. Both the British and Hong Kong interviews were conducted and transcribed in English, therefore, the second coder who was proficient in English was able to code both transcripts. Before the transcribing process started, the second coder was given a detailed explanation about the background of the research, the coding scheme, and the definitions of the codes. However, although the second coder was experienced in coding interview data, she was new to using NVivo for coding. Therefore, I was sitting next to the second coder during the process of coding and assisted the second coder to code the transcripts. It was understood between the second coder and me that there should be no interference or coaching from me during the inter-rater reliability, and the coding decision was made entirely by the second coder

herself. After the second coder had completed the coding, I calculated the percentages of inter-rater reliability which was achieved by using Kappa coefficient in NVivo. The agreement percentage was very high between the second coder and me (98.6%).

3.5 Summary

This chapter introduced the methodological framework and analytic scheme of the present study. The adoption of a mixed-method approach was justified. Details of data collection and analytical procedures regarding textual and interview analysis were explained. The findings will be presented and discussed in chapters 4-9.

Chapter 4 Results: Textual analysis of rhetorical acts in English concert reviews

This chapter addresses part of research question 1: How are evaluative acts used in English and Chinese concert reviews? The overall uses of evaluative acts in English and Chinese were presented in separate sections according to the following aspects derived from the data of the present study:

- i. Dimensions of rhetorical acts in concert reviews (*Section 4.2*);
- ii. Structural patterns of evaluation (*Section 4.3*);
- iii. Globality of concert evaluation (*Section 4.4*);
- iv. Specific aspects of the concerts targeted by evaluation (*Section 4.5*);
- v. Strengths of the evaluation, i.e. emphasised, unmarked and mitigated evaluation (*Section 4.6.1*);
- vi. Types of emphasised evaluation (*Section 4.6.2*);
- vii. Types of mitigated evaluation (*Section 4.6.3*).

This chapter mainly focuses on the results of analysis on evaluation in English reviews. Critics' views are also included where they help explain a particular textual feature. Evaluation in Chinese reviews will be analysed in next chapter.

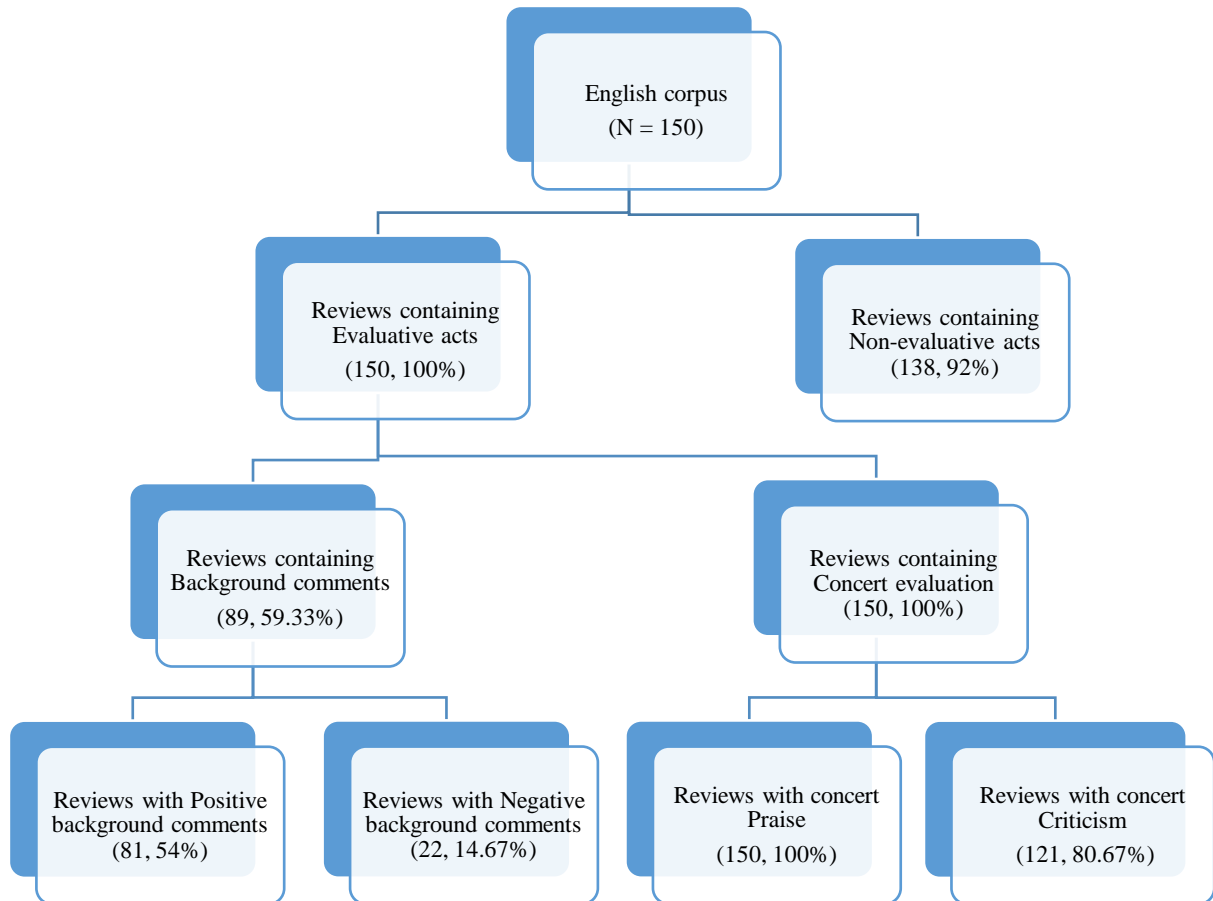
4.1 Dimensions of rhetorical acts in English concert reviews

This section describes the distributions of evaluative and non-evaluative acts in English concert reviews. *Section 4.1.1* presents the number of reviews containing each category of acts, including positive and negative evaluation in terms of *Background Comments* and *Concert Evaluation*, and *Non-evaluation*. *Section 4.1.2* further explores the frequency and percentage of each category in English concert reviews.

4.1.1 Occurrences of high level categories of acts in English concert reviews

The analysis shows that all the English reviews contain at least one instance of evaluation (Figure 4-1). A great majority of the reviews also contain non-evaluative parts of text (92%), which was not considered further as it is not a focus of the current research. Evaluation is further divided into *Background Comments* and *Concert Evaluation*. About 60% of the reviews contain *Background Comments* which evaluate aspects other than the concert itself. *Concert Evaluation* which comments on aspects of the concert appear in every review. This suggests that *Concert Evaluation* is a core component of English concert reviews.

The distribution of different types of evaluation in reviews also show that British critics might prefer praise to criticism. All reviews contain positive evaluation. Results indicate that 26 out of 150 (17.33%) reviews contain no negative evaluation at all, either on the background or the concert itself. Positive evaluation in both *Background Comments* and *Concert Evaluation* appears in more reviews than negative evaluation. The number of reviews which contain positive background comments (54%) are more than three times of those contained negative comments (14.67%). *Concert Evaluation* consists of *Praise* and *Criticism*. Praise appears in every review whereas 121 out of 150 (80.67%) reviews containing criticism, which means about 20% of the reviews contain only praise about the concert. This suggests that praise is an essential element for every English concert review and that English concert reviews might be mostly positive. (Figure 4-1)

Figure 4-1: The numbers and percentages of English reviews containing evaluative and non-evaluative acts

4.1.2 Mean frequencies of high level categories across English reviews

Nevertheless, the above picture is somewhat simplified as it does not distinguish between reviews that contain a greater or lesser number of occurrences of any given type of act. I therefore turn now to examining the results taking into account the numbers of acts of each type in each review. There were 2875 acts in total in the corpus of 150 English reviews, of which 2408 were evaluative including background comments and evaluation, and 467 were non-evaluative. Thus on average there were 19 acts per review, and as we see from Table 4-1, the mean percentage of evaluative acts across reviews was 82.85% and of non-evaluative 17.15%. It seemed that English reviews were predominantly evaluative because they contained 5 times more evaluative acts ($M = 16.05$, $SD = 5.29$) than non-evaluative acts ($M = 3.11$, SD

= 1.93), and a Wilcoxon test also indicated that the percentages of evaluative acts were significantly higher than those of non-evaluative acts ($Z = -10.578$, $p < .001$) (Table 4-1).

Table 4-1: The occurrences of evaluative and non-evaluative acts in English reviews

English concert reviews (N =150)				
Category of acts	Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
	No. of acts (total = 19)	% across reviews	No. of acts	% across reviews
Evaluative acts	16.05	82.85%	5.29	11.74%
Non-evaluative acts	3.11	17.15%	1.93	11.74%
Wilcoxon test	Evaluative acts vs. Non-evaluative acts: $Z = -10.578$ $p < .001$			

It is however worth noting that although the percentage of non-evaluative acts across reviews is low (17.15%), they occur in 92% of reviews (Figure 4-1). This shows that most reviews contained at least one or a small number of non-evaluative acts. In other words, although non-evaluative acts have a low frequency of occurrences, they are still a core component in English concert reviews.

Most of the evaluations focus on aspects of the concert. Table 4-2 indicates that most of the evaluations (94.01%) were about the concert, and the mean number of *Concert Evaluations* per review ($M = 15.11$, $SD = 5.19$) is almost 16 times the mean number of *Background Comments* ($M = 0.95$, $SD = 1.05$). A Wilcoxon test also shows that the percentages of *Concert Evaluations* are significantly higher than those of *Background Comments* ($Z = -10.714$, $p < .001$).

Despite the above observation that *Background Comments* are rare (5.99%), they are relatively widespread (59.33%) (Figure 4-1). On the other hand, the standard deviation of *Background Comments* is close to the mean (Table 4-2), which reflects a significant variation between reviews. In fact, 61 reviews contained no background comments at all. A considerable number of reviews contained 1 or 2 instances of background comments. Fewer reviews contain

more instances of *Background Comments*. It seems that though *Background Comments* are not a core component in English concert reviews, it is not uncommon for music critics to comment on aspects other than the concert itself.

Table 4-2: The occurrences of Background Comments and Concert Evaluation in English reviews

English concert reviews (N =150)				
Category of evaluative acts	Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
	No. of evaluative acts	% of evaluative acts	No. of evaluative acts	% of evaluative acts
Background Comments	0.95	5.99%	1.05	6.73%
Concert Evaluation	15.11	94.01%	5.19	6.73%
Wilcoxon test	Background Comments vs. Concert Evaluation: Z = -10.714 $p < .001$			

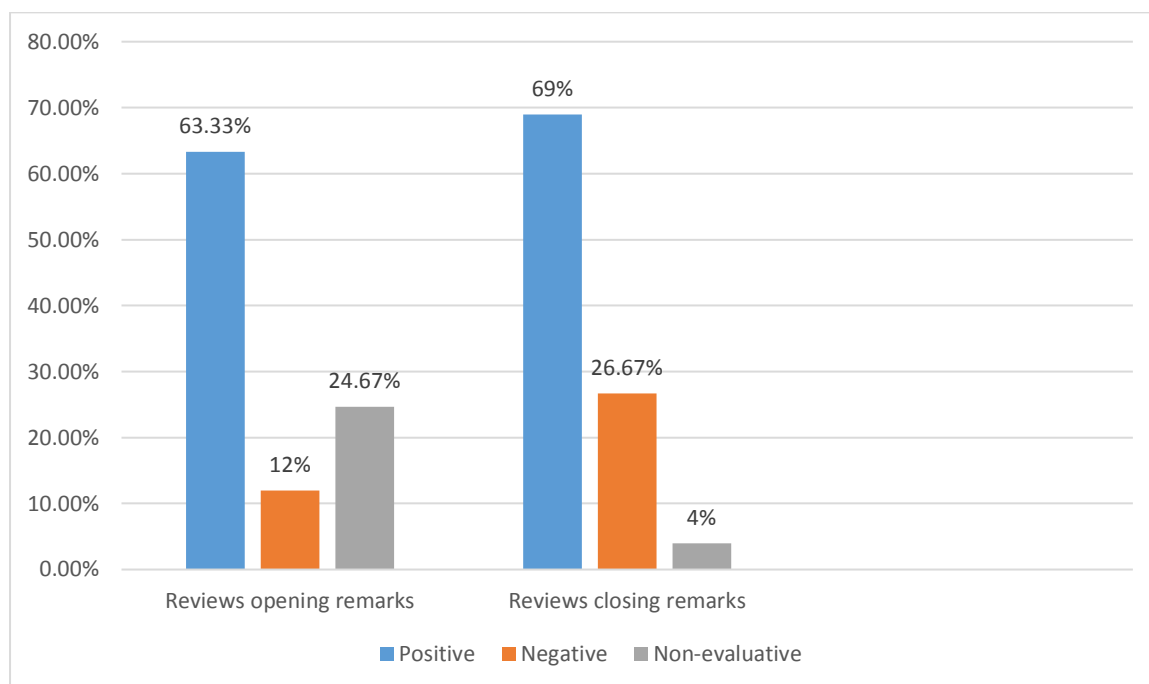
Positive evaluations significantly outnumber negative evaluations ($p < .001$) in both *Background comments* and *Concert Evaluation*. Positive background comments ($M = 0.79$, $SD = 0.89$) are almost 5 times as many as negative ones ($M = 0.16$, $SD = 0.40$). Praise acts concerning the concert constitute almost 70% of the total evaluative acts, which is more than doubles the occurrences of criticisms of the concert. On average a review contains 10.79 instances of praise of the concert ($SD = 4.07$), but only 4.31 instances of criticism ($SD = 3.78$) (Table 4-3). Thus, positive evaluation appears to be more popular in classical concert reviews than negative evaluation. In a similar genre, record reviews, praise acts significantly outnumber critical acts throughout the decades (Ha 2011). In English academic books reviews, it is also common that praise exceeds criticism (Gea Valor 2000; Hyland 2000; Mackiewicz 2007; Moreno and Suárez 2008b; Babaii 2011).

Table 4-3: The frequencies and percentages of positive and negative evaluative acts in English reviews
English concert reviews (N =150)

Category of evaluative acts		Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
		No. of evaluative acts	% of evaluative acts	No. of evaluative acts	% of evaluative acts
Background Comments	Positive	0.79	5.06%	0.89	5.78%
	Negative	0.16	0.93%	0.40	2.42%
Concert Evaluation	Praise	10.79	69.18%	4.07	20.16%
	Criticism	4.31	24.82%	3.78	19.24%
Wilcoxon test		Positive background vs. Negative background comments: $Z = -7.028$ $p < .001$			
		Praise vs. Criticism of concert evaluation: $Z = -9.210$ $p < .001$			

4.2 Structural patterns of evaluation

When looking at the structural patterns of English concert reviews, it was found that more reviews open and close with positive remarks than negative remarks (Figure 4-2). Almost two thirds of English reviews (95 out of 150) open positively while only 12% (18 out of 150) do so negatively. Similarly, more than two-thirds (104 out of 150) of reviews end positively, and only about a quarter (40 out of 150) close with a criticism. About a quarter (24.67%) of English reviews (37 out of 150) begin with non-evaluative information about the concert, and 4% of reviews (6 out of 150) end neutrally with non-evaluation.

Figure 4-2: The percentages of concert reviews opening or closing with evaluation (n = 150)

Opening or closing a review positively can “address both ideational and interpersonal issues, expressing cognitive judgements... [and] redress the threat” the reviewed author might face (Hyland 2000, p.55). In the case of concert reviews, a positive opening or ending might be able to save the face of the musicians / concert organisers and balance out the adverse effects caused by criticisms elsewhere in the concert review. In classical record reviews in English, most critics prefer to end the reviews on a positive note, and negative endings are rare in this review genre (Ha 2011). Similar trends are observed in the study of English academic book reviews of various disciplines (Hyland 2000) and about business communication (Mackiewicz 2007). While criticisms at salient locations such as the beginning or ending of a review can be “particularly noticeable and memorable” (Mackiewicz 2007, p.202), a positive opening or closing remark can both establish rapport with the readers and function as a mitigation strategy to soften the criticisms which appear in the review (Hyland 2000, p.53). The following extract shows how a review was opened with praise:

- (4-1) The *vibrant* drive of the Australian Chamber Orchestra's Beethoven programme made this last night of the Snape Proms a *memorable* affair. (EG03)

Two positive adjectives “vibrant” and “memorable” were used to praise the concert as a whole, which gives readers an overall positive impression at the beginning of the review.

In contrast, the same review ends with a negative note (Example 4-2). However, this criticism was specifically about the performer, not a global criticism which condemned the whole concert.

- (4-2) By contrast, the Piano Concerto No 4 in G major was *disappointing*; soloist Dejan Lazic was fluent enough, but *self-indulgent* to the point of *waywardness*, both in his tempi and his anachronistic cadenzas. (EG03)

On the other hand, sometimes critics choose to begin a review with a criticism (Example 4-3) and end with a praise (Example 4-4):

- (4-3) Kristjan Jarvi opened his latest LSO concert with the Four Sea Interludes from Britten's Peter Grimes, and they *didn't ideally* suit him. (EG40)
- (4-4) A *classy* mover, Jarvi *well-nigh danced his way through* the Concerto for Orchestra, *balancing a ferocious account of* the central Elegy with *great playfulness* elsewhere: a work that can often sound po-faced and a bit gaunt became a thing of *tremendous charm and wit as well as sadness. Wonderful*. (EG40)

In the Examples 4-3 and 4-4, although the review (EG40) begins with a criticism, it is only about the programme of the concert, not the concert as whole. The criticism is also softened by a mitigation (i.e. *didn't ideally*). The ending, on the other hand, praises unreservedly the performer with a lot more unmarked positive lexical items (e.g., *classy*, *wonderful*) and emphasised positive lexical items (e.g. *great*, *tremendous*). Thus, the mitigated opening criticism on a specific aspect of the concert does not seem to cause a great deal of damage, while the strong praise at the end may be able to redress criticisms in earlier parts of the review and leave with readers a positive memory about the concert reviewed. Therefore, it

seems that not only the position, the globality (comment on global or specific aspects of the concert) and the strength of praise or criticism may also affect the effect of an evaluation.

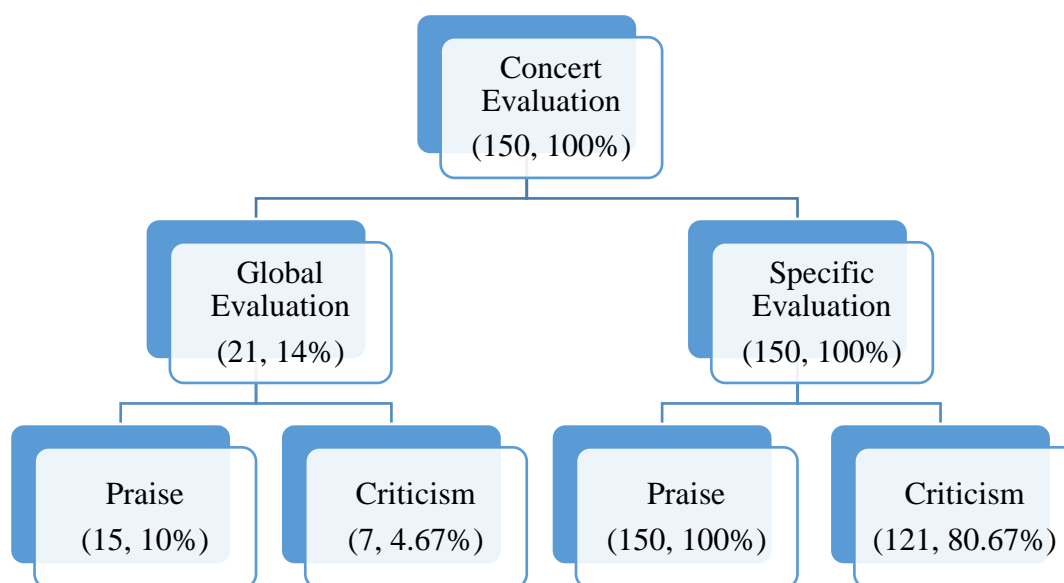
4.3 Globality of concert evaluation in English reviews

This section presents results on distributions of global and specific evaluations in English reviews. *Section 4.3.1* compares numbers of reviews containing positive and negative global evaluation and specific evaluation. *Section 4.3.2* addresses the frequencies and percentages of praise and criticism in global and specific evaluations respectively.

4.3.1 Global evaluation vs. Specific evaluation

Evaluation on specific aspects of the concert is more common than evaluation on the concert as a whole. All English reviews contain at least one evaluative act of the concert. Only 14% of the reviews contain *Global Evaluation*, but all contained *Specific Evaluation* of at least one aspect of the concert (Figure 4-3). Similar trends are observed regarding the frequencies of evaluation.

Figure 4-3: The numbers and percentages of English reviews containing global and specific evaluation (N = 150)



Out of a total number of 2266 evaluative acts about aspects of the concert, only 32 are global evaluation, which only constitutes about 1% of the concert evaluation. About 99% of the evaluative acts concern specific aspects of a concert. On average a review contains 71 times more instances of *Specific Evaluation* ($M = 14.89$, $SD = 5.21$) than *Global Evaluation* ($M = 0.21$, $SD = 0.62$). A Wilcoxon test confirms that the percentages of evaluation on specific aspects of a concert are significantly higher than those of global evaluation of a concert ($p < .001$). (Table 4-4)

Table 4-4: The frequencies and percentages of global and specific concert evaluation in English reviews
English concert reviews (N =150)

Category of concert evaluative acts	Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
	No. of acts	% of concert evaluations	No. of acts	% of concert evaluations
Global Evaluation	0.21	1.47%	0.62	4.49%
Specific Evaluation	14.89	98.53%	5.21	4.49%
Wilcoxon test	Global Evaluation vs. Specific Evaluation: $Z = -11.574$ $p < .001$			

It is not surprising that the frequencies of global evaluation are much lower than specific evaluation. By definition one can hardly evaluate globally more than once in a review without risk of repetition, while specific features are by nature different from each other and could therefore elicit more evaluations even if each aspect was only commented on once. However, it is interesting to notice that the mean of global evaluation is much lower than 1 ($M = 0.21$, in Table 4-4). As mentioned above, only 14% of the reviews contain global evaluation, suggesting that British critics are not keen to condense their individual evaluations of separate features into one overall judgment.

Ha (2011) has similar observations in her study of record reviews. She suggests that critics preferred more detailed evaluation on specific aspects for two reasons: helping readers to make purchase decisions; “demonstrating their professionalism and establishing a personal reputation” (p.355) in the music discourse community through specific commentary. Moreover,

in today's British newspapers, it is compulsory that critics give star rating (1 to 5 stars, 1 star the worst and 5 stars the best) as an overall score to the concert they review. In other words, critics already gave their global evaluation through star rating and it might not be necessary to take up limited word count to make another general comment.

4.3.2 Praise and Criticism

Praise and criticism on specific aspects of the concert significantly outnumber global evaluations. Contrary to the findings of Hyland (2000) on English academic book reviews, praise is most concerned with specific aspects of the concert. The number of reviews containing *Specific Praise* is ten times of that of *Global Praise*. While all reviews have *Specific Praise* (100% of reviews) only 15 reviews had *Global Praise* (10% of reviews) (Figure 4-3). On average each review contains 10.63 instances of *Specific Praise* (SD = 3.99) but only 0.16 instance of *Global Praise*. A Wilcoxon test proves that the percentage of *Specific Praise* significantly exceeds that of *Global Praise* (Table 4-5). In a study of a similar genre to concert reviews, the evolution of English record reviews (Ha 2011), praise is seen to have been more specific in recent years. A generalising positive comment as below has thus become rarer nowadays:

(4-5) *An auspicious beginning to the series.* (EG37)

Table 4-5: The frequencies and percentages of praise and criticism in global and specific concert evaluation in English reviews

English concert reviews (N =150)					
Praise/criticism in concert evaluation		Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
		No. of acts	% of concert evaluations	No. of acts	% of concert evaluations
Global Evaluation	Praise	0.16	1.10%	0.57	4.14%
	Criticism	0.05	0.37%	0.25	1.83%
Specific Evaluation	Praise	10.63	72.42%	3.99	20.13%
	Criticism	4.26	26.11%	3.73	20.17%
Wilcoxon test		Global praise vs. specific praise: Z = -15.018 p < .001			
		Global criticism vs. specific criticism: Z = -13.652 p < .001			
		Global praise vs. Global criticism: Z = -1.867 p = .062			
		Specific praise vs. Specific criticism: Z = -9.263 p < .001			

Regarding criticism, the number of reviews containing *Specific Criticism* is 17 times of that of *Global Criticism* (Figure 4-3). On average every review contains 4.26 instances of *Specific Criticism* but only 0.05 instance of *Global Criticism* (Table 4-5). *Global Criticism* evaluates the concert as a whole negatively. For example,

(4-6) *Thus far, it was a disappointing evening.* (ED45)

Music critics sparsely apply *Global Criticism* as such in concert reviews. One of the reasons could be that condemning the entire work with global criticism could be “a particularly face-threatening act” (Hyland 2000, p. 48). A music critic also mentions in the interview that it is hard to give an overall comment to a concert, because there are so many aspects, such as composition, performance, and so on.

Praise exceeds criticism in both global and specific aspects of the concert. As shown in Figure 4-3, 10% of the reviews contain global praise about the concert, which is twice the

amount of reviews containing global criticism. On the other hand, all reviews of this study praise specific aspects of the concert, and majority of the reviews (80.67%) have specific criticism.

Furthermore, the mean percentages of global praise are higher than those of global criticism though not significantly ($p = .062$), and the percentages of specific praise are significantly higher than those of specific criticism ($p < .001$) (Table 4-5). In other words, praise seems to be more favoured than criticism with respect to both global and specific aspects of English concert reviews. British critics tend to praise the positives more than criticise the negatives of a concert.

4.4 Specific aspects of the concert targeted by the evaluative acts in English reviews

This section focuses on targets of evaluation on aspects of the concert. *Section 4.4.1* describes the coverage of praise and criticism of each aspect in concert reviews. *Section 4.4.2* compares the mean frequencies and percentages of praise and criticism on each aspect of the concert.

4.4.1 Range of occurrence of evaluation of specific aspects of the concert across English reviews

There are nine specific aspects of the concert targeted by evaluation: *Acoustics*, *Audience behaviour*, *Composer/Composition*, *Instruments*, *Performer/Performance*, *Programme*, *Programme notes*, *Venue*, and *Other aspects* of the concert.

Performer/Performance is the aspect being praised and criticised the most in English reviews. Almost all reviews contain praise (98.67%) regarding the performance aspect of the concert, and 69.33% of the reviews contain criticism on this aspect. The second most widely occurring evaluative aspect is *Composer/Composition*, which the majority of the reviews (82%) praised and more than a quarter of the reviews contained criticism of (27.33%). About a fifth

of the reviews (21.33%) commented positively on the *Programme* of the concert, and a tenth of them (10%) commented negatively on it. *Acoustics*, *Audience Behaviour*, *Instruments*, *Programme notes*, *Venue* and *Other Aspects* of the concert did not seem to attract much attention of the critics.

According to Grice's Cooperative Principle (Grice, Cole et al. 1975) and Sperber and Wilson's (1986) Relevance Theory, the speaker aims to provide information that is relevant to the supposed reader. In fact, a substantial amount of studies in both academic genres (Rorschach 1986; Bazerman 1988; Swales 1990; Frank 1992; Hyland 2000; Hyland 2001) and non-academic genres (Connor and Upton 2004; Fu and Hyland 2014) show that writers take their potential readers' interests into consideration when constructing their pieces. The results in this study therefore reflect that British music critics believe that *Performer/Performance* and *Composer/Composition* are the aspects that readers are most interested in. This assumption has been confirmed by critics during the interviews as will be discussed in *Chapter 5*. On the whole for almost every aspect of the concert, the number of reviews containing praise was greater than that of the reviews containing criticism. (Figure 4-4 and Figure 4-5)

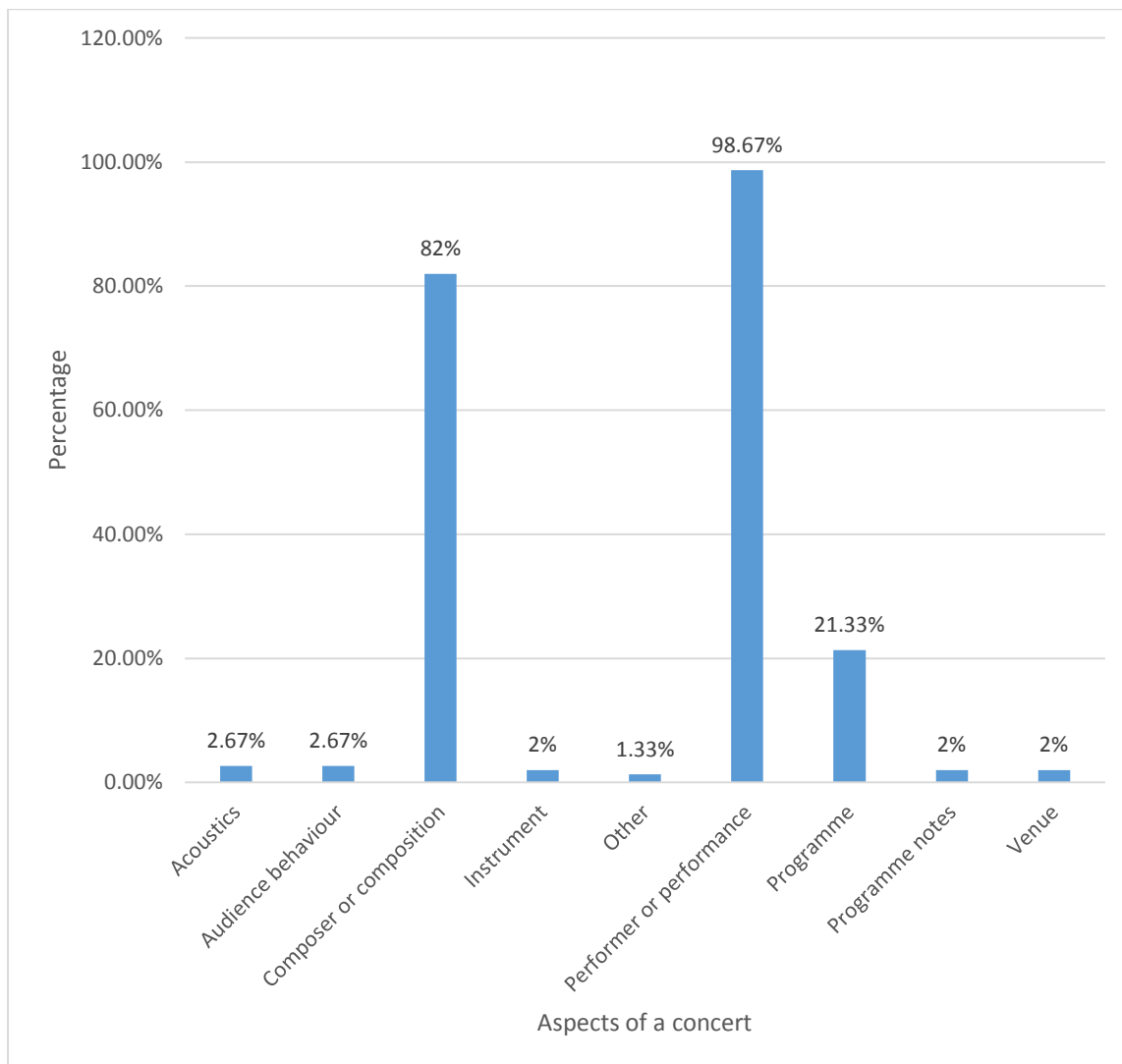
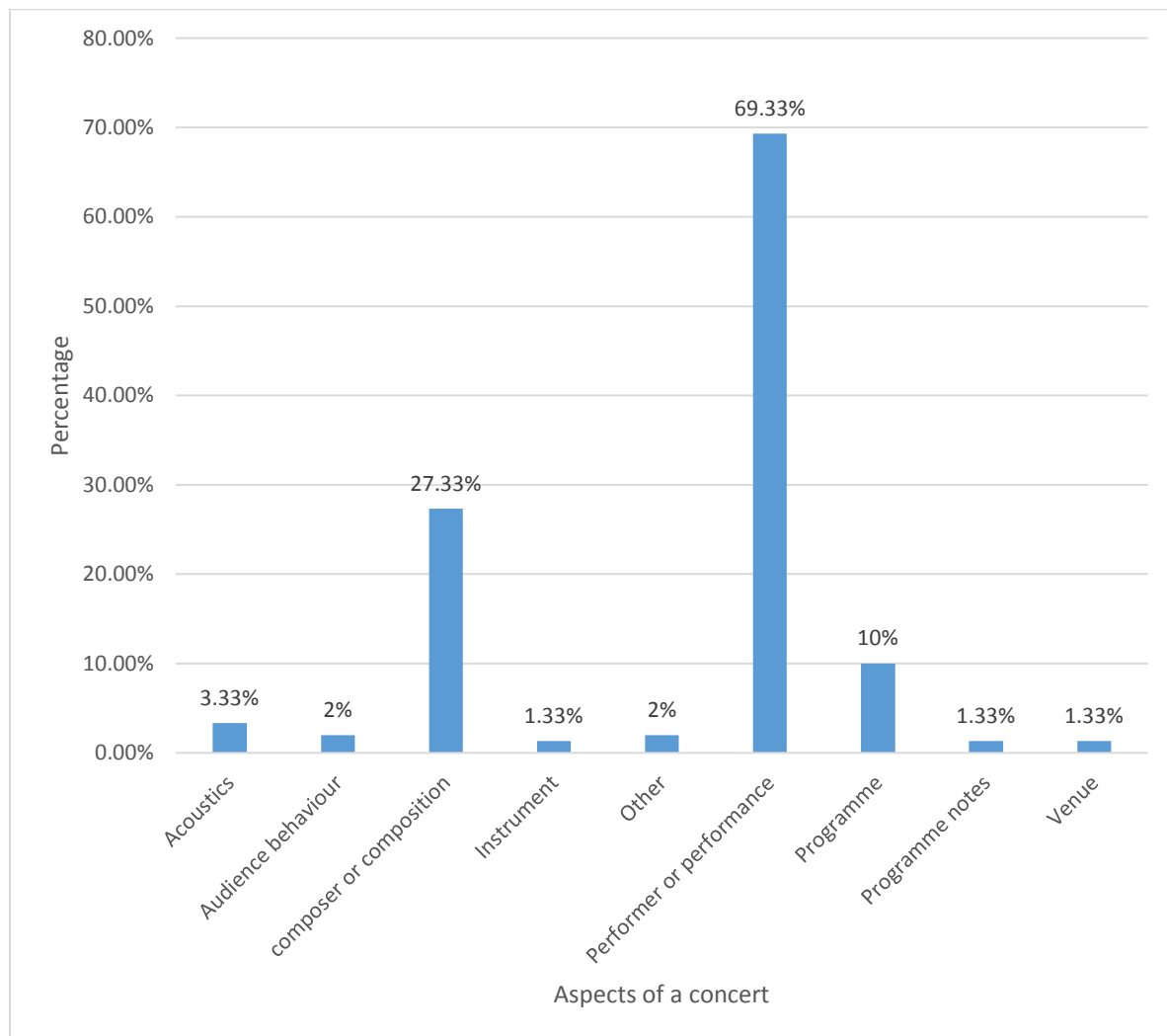
Figure 4-4: The percentages of English reviews containing praise on specific aspects of the concert (n=150)

Figure 4-5: The percentages of English reviews containing criticism on specific aspects of the concert (n=150)

4.4.2 Mean frequencies of evaluation of specific aspects of the concert across English reviews

Results in Figure 4-4 and Figure 4-5 show that *Performer/Performance* and *Composer/Composition* are the two most widely occurring aspects of evaluation in English concert reviews. Similarly, these two aspects record the highest frequencies in both praise and criticism (Table 4-6). It is worth noting that the total percentage of specific criticism is only 80 percent, because one in five of reviews did not contain criticism.

Table 4-6 shows that on average more than two-thirds of the specific praise concerned *Performer/Performance* (68.65%), and this was the aspect praised the most in English reviews.

Similarly, this aspect has attracted most criticism as well (58.98%). Like record reviews (Ha 2011), the quality of performance always seemed to be the most important aspect of evaluation in music criticism. On average there were more than 7 instances of praise ($M = 7.33$, $SD = 3.81$) and more than 3 instances of criticism ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 3.47$) on the aspect of performance per review. Such high frequencies could be due to separate evaluations given to different performers and pieces of music at a concert. The second most praised and criticised aspect was *Composer/Composition*.

Table 4-6: The mean frequencies and percentages of praise and criticism of specific aspects of the concert in English reviews

English concert reviews (N =150)					
Specific aspects of praise/criticism in concert evaluation		Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
		No. of acts	% of specific evaluation	No. of acts	% of specific evaluation
Praise	<i>Acoustics</i>	0.03	0.18%	0.16	1.11%
	<i>Audience Behaviour</i>	0.03	0.42%	0.16	3.07%
	<i>Composer/Composition</i>	2.88	27.39%	2.64	23.55%
	<i>Instrument</i>	0.03	0.29%	0.20	2.05%
	<i>Performer/Performance</i>	7.33	68.65%	3.81	24.51%
	<i>Programme</i>	0.25	2.43%	0.57	5.40%
	<i>Programme notes</i>	0.03	0.24%	0.27	1.76%
	<i>Venue</i>	0.02	0.17%	0.14	1.23%
	<i>Other Aspects</i>	0.03	0.23%	0.20	2.28%
Criticism	<i>Acoustics</i>	0.04	0.90%	0.23	5.42%
	<i>Audience Behaviour</i>	0.03	0.63%	0.20	4.97%
	<i>Composer/Composition</i>	0.73	15.83%	1.56	30.65%
	<i>Instrument</i>	0.02	0.47%	0.34	4.38%
	<i>Performer/Performance</i>	3.22	58.98%	3.47	43.46%
	<i>Programme</i>	0.13	2.57%	0.42	10.24%
	<i>Programme notes</i>	0.07	0.70%	0.47	6.08%
	<i>Venue</i>	0.05	0.34%	0.18	3.09%
	<i>Other Aspects</i>	0.02	0.25%	0.14	1.93%

Note: The percentage of English reviews containing criticism on the concert = 80.67%

A non-parametric Friedman test of differences in percentage of praise between the nine specific aspects measured was conducted and gave a Chi-squared value of 960.621 which was highly significant ($p < .001$). A followed up Wilcoxon test indicated that the percentage of

praise of *Performer/Performance* is significantly higher than that of *Composer/Composition* in the English corpus. The result of a Friedman test of specific criticism also indicated a significant difference ($p < .001$) with a Chi-square value of 545.422. Criticism of *Performer/Performance* is again significantly higher than that of *Composer/Composition*, as indicated by a Wilcoxon test ($p < .001$) (Table 4-7). It is possible that classical concerts often feature already established works for financial consideration, as audiences might be more willing to pay for listening to a work they already know than a new composition. It is thus less likely for critics to spend limited word count to evaluate a composition which might have been given ample analyses already. One exception is with new works. Critics mentioned in the interviews said that they would spend more time on preparation for the premiere of a new composition or a little known piece, and would dedicate more space to it in the review. On the other hand, a performance is unique to a concert and cannot be replicated. In other words, performance is an aspect that is both important in music industry and has news value in press. Thus, *Performer/Performance* has been the most reviewed feature of a concert.

Wilcoxon tests were also conducted to compare the differences between praise and criticism on the same aspect of concert evaluation (Table 4-7). The results indicated that the percentages of praise of *Composer/Composition* significantly exceeded those of criticism ($p < .001$). However, differences between praise and criticism of other specific aspects were not significant.

One possible explanation for praise on *Composer/Composition* to significantly exceed criticism is that many classical concerts feature already established composers, for examples, such as Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart. It is unlikely that these well-known works would attract a lot of negative comments. On the other hand, praise for another most evaluated aspect of a concert, *Performer/Performance*, exceeds criticism but not significantly. British critics seemed to prefer balanced opinions, as reflected in the interviews. They did not want to diminish their

credibility to their readers by giving just positive comments. While it was unlikely for a professionally trained concert musician to give a very bad performance, critics felt that they needed to be responsible to their readers and point out not only the strengths but also weaknesses of a performer.

Table 4-7: Wilcoxon tests results for percentages of praise and criticism of specific aspects of the concert in English reviews

Variables for comparison	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
Praise of <i>Performer/Performance</i> vs. Praise of <i>Composer/Composition</i>	-7.996	< .001
Criticism of <i>Performer/Performance</i> vs. Criticism of <i>Composer/Composition</i>	-6.482	< .001
Praise vs. Criticism of <i>Acoustics</i>	-1.481	.139
Praise vs. Criticism of <i>Audience Behaviour</i>	-0.338	.735
Praise vs. Criticism of <i>Composer/Composition</i>	-4.652	< .001
Praise vs. Criticism of <i>Instrument</i>	0.000	1.000
Praise vs. Criticism of <i>Performer/Performance</i>	-2.170	.030
Praise vs. Criticism of <i>Programme</i>	-0.379	.705
Praise vs. Criticism of <i>Programme Notes</i>	-0.405	.686
Praise vs. Criticism of <i>Venue</i>	-0.405	.686
Praise vs. Criticism of <i>Other Aspects</i>	-0.406	.684

4.5 Strengths of evaluation in English reviews

This section focuses on the types of praise and criticism differentiated by their strengths of evaluation. *Section 4.5.1* gives an overview of emphasised, unmarked and mitigated evaluations. *Section 4.5.2* discusses various types of emphasised praise and criticism. Types of mitigated praise and criticism are presented in *Section 4.5.3*.

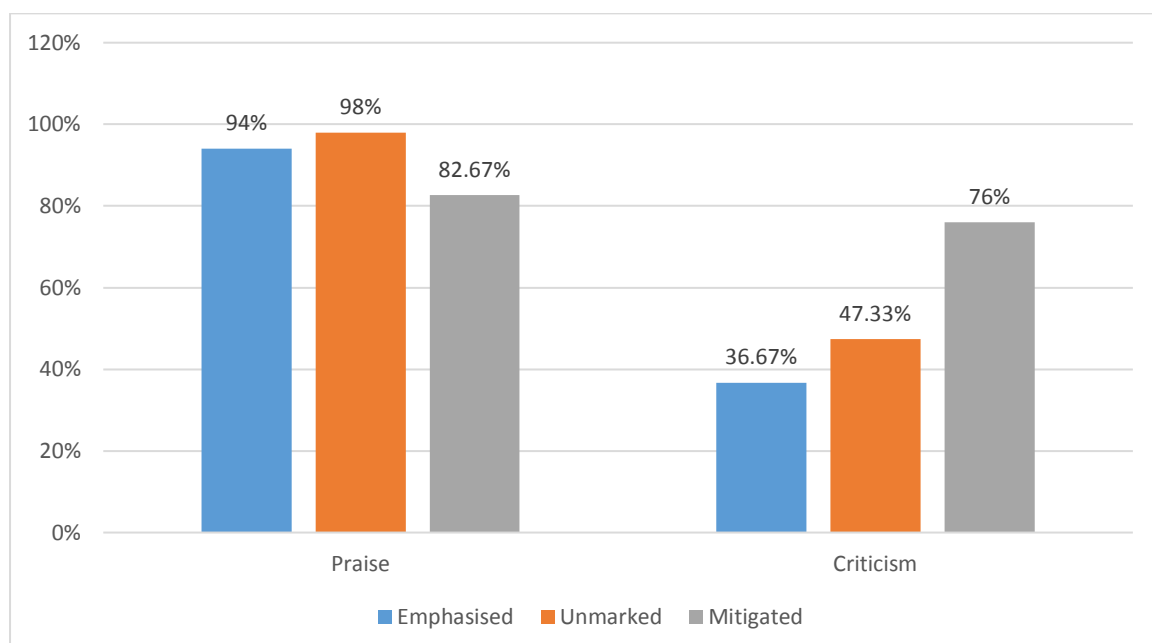
4.5.1 The overall trend: Emphasised, Unmarked and Mitigated Evaluations

In concert reviews both praise and criticism featured a number of strategies to reinforce or soften evaluation. *Unmarked Evaluation* expresses praise or criticism without strengthening or softening it. Examples of *Unmarked Praise* (Example 4-6) and *Unmarked Criticism* (Example 4-7) are below, with the parts of unmarked evaluations in bold:

- (4-6) *Martyn Brabbins, Cheltenham's new artistic director, was **a safe pair of hands** in conducting the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra through Manfred's rites of passage.* (ED02)
- (4-7) *But the impact is **superficial**, as the music **veers from one attention-seeking idea to the next**.* (EG28)

Emphasised Evaluation contains strategies such as boosters, comparison, humour (praise), and impoliteness (criticism) to make an evaluation stronger. Detailed discussions of emphasised praise and criticism can be seen in *Section 4.5.2*. *Mitigated Evaluation* consists of a number of mitigation strategies of praise and criticism, respectively. A detailed discussion of mitigated praise and criticism is provided in *Section 4.5.3*.

Figure 4-6: The percentages of English reviews containing praise and criticism acts of various strengths (n = 150)



As shown in Figure 4-6, most of the English reviews were not mitigated, i.e. contained at least one instance of *Unmarked Praise* (98%) or *Emphasised Praise* (94%). *Mitigated Praise* also recorded a high percentage of occurrences in English reviews (82.67%). Similar trends were observed in the mean frequencies of evaluation. As Table 4-8 indicates, *Unmarked Praise* was the most common type of praise, with an average of 4.65 instances per review (SD = 2.09), which accounted for 45.52% of the total instances of praise. *Emphasised Praise* was also common in reviews; a third (34.10%) of the praise acts fell in this category. On average there were 3.81 instances of *Emphasised Praise* per review (SD = 2.36). Hence, with the widest coverage and highest frequency, *Unmarked Praise* seemed to be the most prominent type of praise in English reviews. Followed up Wilcoxon tests (Table 4-9) indicated that both unmarked and emphasised praise significantly exceeded *Mitigated Praise*, suggesting that British critics were generous in giving praise.

Table 4-8: The frequencies and percentages of emphasised, unmarked and mitigated evaluation in English reviews
English concert reviews (N =150)

Praise/criticism in concert evaluation		Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
		No. of acts	% of praise/criticism of the concert	No. of acts	% of praise/criticism of the concert
Praise	Emphasised	3.81	34.10%	2.36	17.02%
	Unmarked	4.65	45.52%	2.09	19.85%
	Mitigated	2.27	19.72%	1.89	14.46%
Criticism	Emphasised	0.71	11.11%	1.21	18.71%
	Unmarked	0.78	15.74%	1.06	23.03%
	Mitigated	2.83	53.82%	2.67	36.81%

The picture for criticism was nevertheless a very different picture for criticism. *Emphasised Criticism* and *Unmarked Criticism* had much lower occurrences compared with praise. Only 36.67% and 47.33% of the reviews had one instance of *Emphasised* and *Unmarked Criticism* respectively, with an average of less than one emphasised or unmarked critical act per review. *Mitigated Criticism* instead occurred in most reviews amongst criticism. About

three quarters (76%) of the reviews had at least one instance of *Mitigated Criticism*. Mitigation was the most prominent type of evaluation for criticism, which accounted for more than half (53.82%) of the critical acts. On average every review contained 2.83 instances of *Mitigated Criticism* ($SD = 2.67$). Non-parametric Friedman tests followed by Wilcoxon tests also indicated significant differences between all levels of evaluation and between praise and criticism, except between emphasised and unmarked criticisms (Table 4-9).

Table 4-9: Wilcoxon tests results for percentages of praise and criticism of specific aspects of the concert in English reviews

Variables for comparison	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
Emphasised praise vs. unmarked praise	-4.050	< .001
Unmarked praise vs. mitigated praise	-8.121	< .001
Mitigated praise vs. emphasised praise	-6.293	< .001
Emphasised criticism vs. unmarked criticism	-1.817	= .069
Unmarked criticism vs. mitigated criticism	-7.416	< .001
Mitigated criticism vs. emphasised criticism	-8.257	< .001
Emphasised praise vs. emphasised criticism	-8.883	< .001
Unmarked praise vs. unmarked criticism	-10.153	< .001
Mitigated praise vs. mitigated criticism	-1.609	= .108

Perhaps critics' reflections on their writing can explain why they are less emphasised and more reserved with their criticisms. When asked about their styles of criticism, half of the British critics claimed that they tend to be more reserved with their criticism. Although the other half of critics claimed to be more expressive with their criticism, some of them showed concerns about hurting musicians' feelings. As a result, they softened some of their criticisms with mitigation.

When comparing across praise and criticism, it is noted that the percentages of praise significantly exceeded criticism in evaluations which are not mitigated (*Emphasised* and *Unmarked*) ($p < .001$). However, mitigated criticism significantly exceeded mitigated praise ($p < .001$) (Table 4-9). It seems that praise in the English concert reviews is more generous and criticism more mitigated, which is similar to the findings of Ha's (2011) study about evaluation

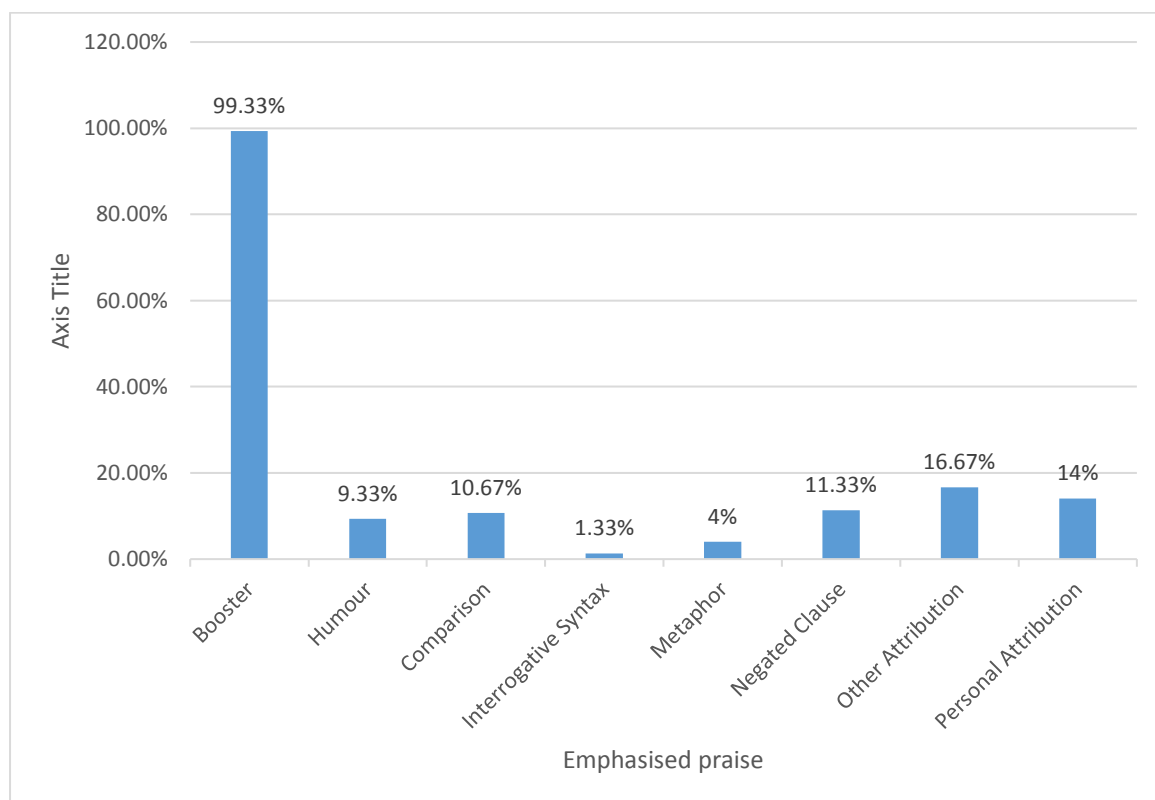
in record reviews. A possibility is that mitigation is needed more with criticism to minimise face-threatening acts (Goffman 1967). A British critic states in the interview that one gets less challenged for their enthusiasm than they do for criticism (Jonathan). Therefore, critics seem to be more reserved in giving their criticism than praise. Mitigated praise, on the other hand, can be used to make the evaluation sound more objective (Ha 2011).

4.5.2 Types of emphasised evaluation

4.5.2.1 Emphasised praise

As shown in Figure 4-6, 94% of the English reviews contained emphasised praise, which represented a third (34.10%) of the total number of praise acts (Table 4-8). There were altogether eight types of emphasised praise: *Booster*, *Comparison*, *Humour*, *Interrogative Syntax*, *Metaphor*, *Negated Clause*, *Other Attribution*, and *Personal Attribution* (Figure 4-7).

Figure 4-7: The percentages of English reviews containing individual types of emphasised praise (n=150)



Booster was the most common type amongst all emphasised praises. Almost all English reviews contained at least one instance of *Booster* praise (Figure 4-7), and on average four out of five instances of emphasised praise are *Boosters*, with a mean frequency of 3.05 acts (SD = 1.80) per review (Table 4-10). Critics seem to favour largely using adjectives, adverbs and exclamation marks to express their strong appreciation of a concert (Example 4-8).

(4-8) *Like everything else in the concert, it was performed with **tremendous** intensity and care for detail.* (ED31)

Other types of emphasised praise acts seem to be much less popular compared to *Booster*. The second most common act, *Other Attribution*, is a strategy which critics made their praise stronger by quoting from or mentioning the reaction of a third party to support their comments. This strategy occurred in 16.67% (25 out of 150) of English reviews, with an average frequency of 3.99% (M = 0.19, SD = 0.44). In Example 4-9, the effect of praise on the performance was reinforced by describing the excitement of the entire audience.

(4-9) *After the Prokofiev, the encores began, **the entire hall swaying and clapping to the strains of Tico, tico.*** (ED50)

Personal Attribution was found in 14% of the reviews (21 out of 150), with an average frequency of 3.21% (M = 0.18, SD = 0.49). Critics strengthen the praise by supporting it with their personal credentials (Hyland 2000). For example,

(4-10) ***I** was repeatedly beguiled by the moments of exquisite touch from Perahia.* (ED03)

The other types of emphasised praise were not applied as frequently in English reviews. *Humour*, *Comparison*, *Interrogative Syntax*, *Metaphor*, and *Negated Clause* appeared in less than 10% of the reviews (i.e. 20 reviews) each (Figure 4-7). They have relatively low

frequencies as well (Table 4-10). Examples of these emphasised praise acts can be seen in Chapter 3.

Table 4-10: The frequencies and percentages of strategies for emphasised praise and criticism in English reviews

English concert reviews (N =150)					
Emphasised acts of praise/criticism in concert evaluation		Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
		No. of acts	% of emphasised praise / criticism acts	No. of acts	% of emphasised praise / criticism acts
Praise	<i>Booster</i>	3.05	79.18%	1.80	28.19%
	<i>Comparison</i>	0.13	2.88%	0.41	10.60%
	<i>Humour</i>	0.11	1.85%	0.35	6.29%
	<i>Interrogative Syntax</i>	0.01	0.39%	0.12	4.14%
	<i>Metaphor</i>	0.05	0.85%	0.24	4.49%
	<i>Negated Clause</i>	0.12	2.55%	0.35	8.39%
	<i>Other Attribution</i>	0.19	3.99%	0.44	11.48%
	<i>Personal attribution</i>	0.18	3.21%	0.49	8.97%
Criticism	<i>Booster</i>	0.53	28.78%	0.92	43.27%
	<i>Comparison</i>	0.01	0.22%	0.08	2.72%
	<i>Impoliteness</i>	0.13	5.70%	0.44	20.03%
	<i>Interrogative Syntax</i>	0.05	1.97%	0.24	11.74%

Note: The percentage of reviews containing emphasised praise = 94%

The percentage of reviews containing emphasised criticism = 36.67%

4.5.2.2 Emphasised criticism

Compared with emphasised praise, emphasised criticism occurs in far fewer reviews (Figure 4-6) and its frequency is significantly lower than that of emphasised praise acts (Table 4-9). Only 11.11% of the critical acts were emphasised (Table 4-8). Critics also used fewer evaluation strategies than praise to emphasise their criticism.

There are four types of emphasise criticism: *Booster*, *Impoliteness*, *Comparison*, and *Interrogative Syntax* (Table 4-10). As in the case of emphasised praise, *Booster* is the most commonly emphasised critical. About a third of the English reviews (49 out of 150) contain at least one instance of *Booster* to strengthen their criticism (Figure 4-8). The mean frequency of

Booster ($M = 0.53$, $SD = 0.92$) was also the highest (28.78%) among all types of emphasised criticism (7.87%) (Table 4-10). An extract of criticism reinforced by a booster “exactly” is illustrated as follows:

- (4-11) First impressions of tenor Sergei Semishkur were that his heroic ringing tone was *exactly* wrong for the vain, arrogant Oedipus. (ED37)

Results indicate that 9.33% of the reviews (14 out of 150) contained at least one instance of *Impoliteness* (Figure 4-8), with a mean frequency of 5.70% ($M = 0.13$, $SD = 0.44$) (Table 4-10). An example of *Impoliteness* can be seen below, in which the critic used a positive word “compliment” to convey a sarcastic remark against the compositions:

- (4-12) The only compliment that can be paid to it is that if all six pieces were terrible, at least each was terrible in its own way. (EG02)

There is another example of *Impoliteness* as follows:

- (4-13) The phrase "a scream and an outrage" describes Nico Muhly's ideal evening at home. Showcasing the musicians and ideas that populate his daily life, Muhly's weekend festival sought to bring a living-room spirit to the Barbican: as he put it, "making a mess of its pristine spaces". Sadly, he succeeded. (EG47)

In the interview, the critic analysed the critical act that he applied in the above comment:

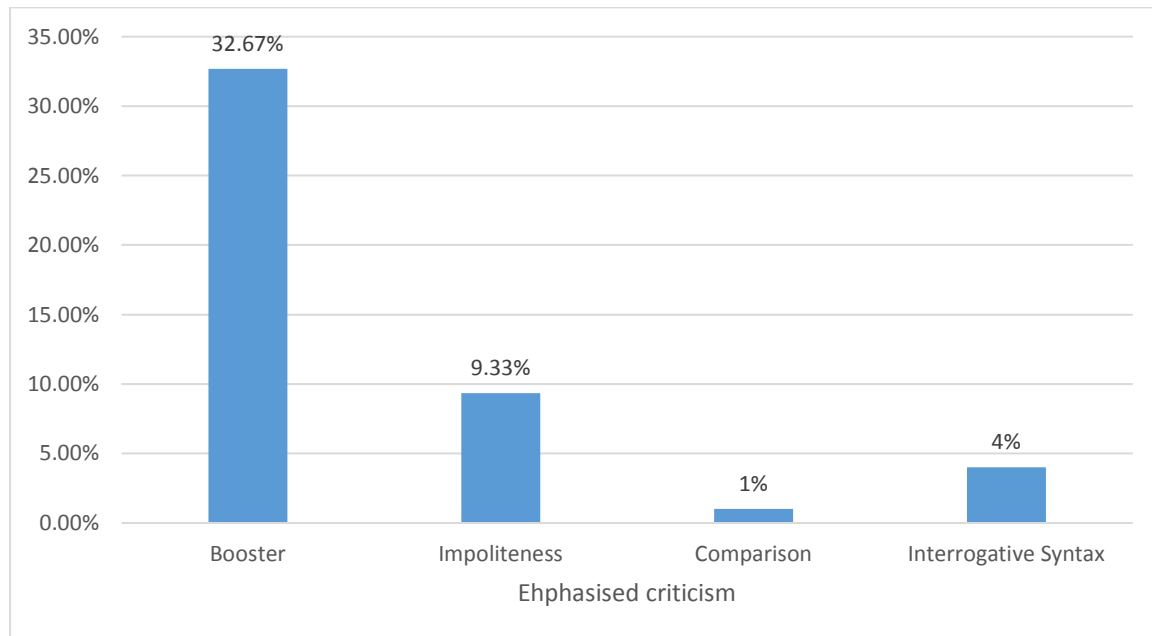
Because I'm writing his words, and then I said "yeah, you succeeded making a mess of it". It's sarcastic because that's not what he meant. So I meant he just messed up the opportunity to do something really good. (Nelson)

Nelson stated that he was quite angry about a talented composer wasting his opportunity to present “real good things” to his 2000 audience in the concert hall. Therefore, he decided to let his anger out by strengthening his criticism.

Very few reviews contain *Interrogative Syntax* (6 out of 150, 4%) and *Comparison* (1 out of 150, 0.01%) as emphasised criticism (Figure 4-8). Examples can be seen in the *Chapter 3*.

In short, critics seem to be more at ease with strengthening their praise than criticism.

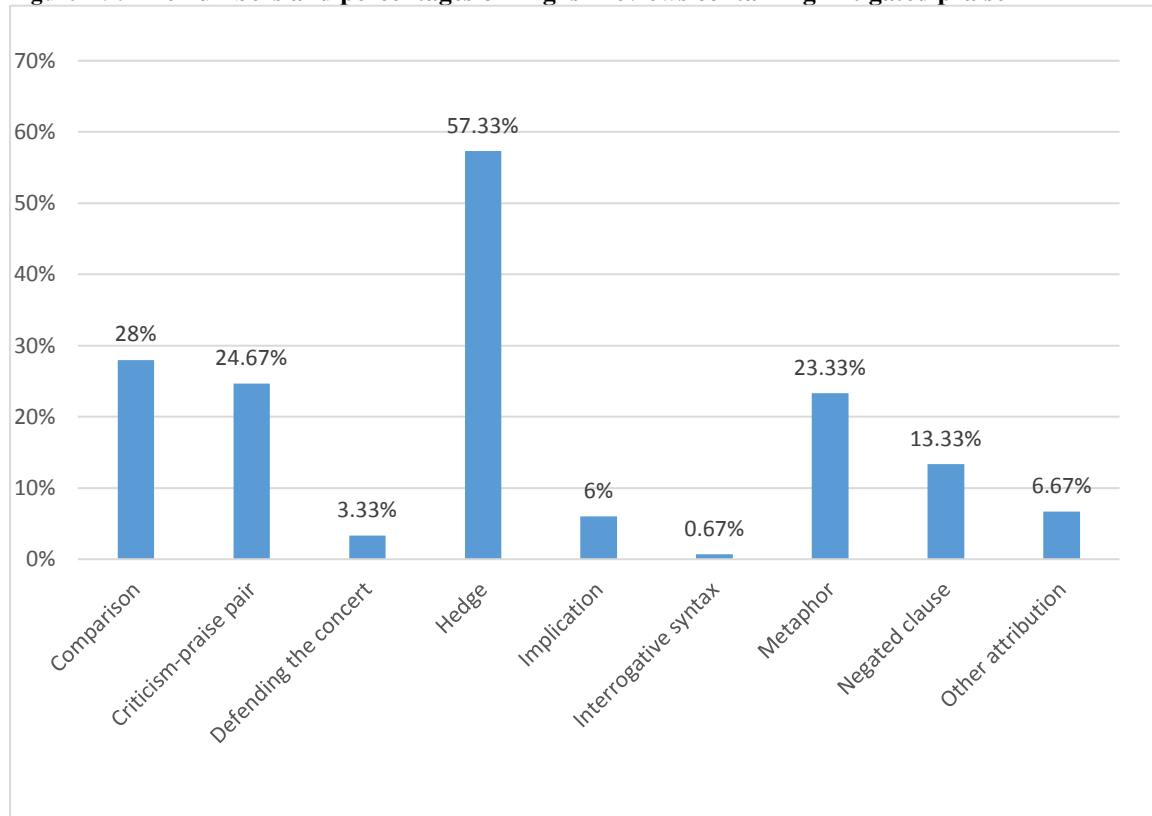
Figure 4-8: The percentages of English reviews containing different types of emphasised criticism (n=150)



4.5.3 Mitigated evaluation

4.5.3.1 Types of mitigated praise

There are nine types of mitigated praise: *Comparison*, *Criticism-praise pair*, *Defending the concert*, *Hedge*, *Implication*, *Interrogative syntax*, *Metaphor*, *Negated clause*, and *Other attribution* (Figure 4-9).

Figure 4-9: The numbers and percentages of English reviews containing mitigated praise

As Figure 4-6 shows, majority of reviews (82.67%) have at least one instance of mitigated praise, of which *Hedge* is the most common type. More than half of reviews contain hedged praise (Figure 4-9). *Hedge* ($M = 0.93$, $SD = 0.97$) also has the highest mean frequency among all mitigation strategies (Table 4-11). In the extract below, an indefinite quantifier “some” is used to mitigate the praise of a composition:

(4-12) Its parallel melodic lines exposed *some* relaxed tuning. (EG24)

Table 4-11: The frequencies and percentages of mitigation strategies for praise and criticism in English reviews
English concert reviews (N =150)

Mitigation strategies of praise/criticism in concert evaluation		Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
		No. of acts	% of mitigated concert praise / criticism	No. of acts	% of mitigated concert praise / criticism
Praise	<i>Comparison</i>	0.34	14.98%	0.60	29.18%
	<i>Criticism-praise pair</i>	0.33	10.57%	0.64	22.30%
	<i>Defending the concert</i>	0.04	0.68%	0.23	3.79%
	<i>Hedge</i>	0.93	33.95%	0.97	35.84%
	<i>Implication</i>	0.06	1.66%	0.24	7.45%
	<i>Interrogative syntax</i>	0.01	0.67%	0.08	8.16%
	<i>Metaphor</i>	0.35	11.13%	0.81	23.85%
	<i>Negated clause</i>	0.15	6.02%	0.39	19.08%
	<i>Other attribution</i>	0.07	3.00%	0.25	13.49%
Criticism	<i>Comparison</i>	0.05	1.11%	0.24	5.93%
	<i>Explaining the problem</i>	0.11	2.73%	0.31	9.04%
	<i>Hedge</i>	1.27	35.48%	1.34	34.22%
	<i>Hypothetical statement</i>	0.13	3.78%	0.41	14.23%
	<i>Implication</i>	0.20	5.34%	0.46	15.53%
	<i>Interrogative syntax</i>	0.01	0.22%	0.08	2.72%
	<i>Metaphor</i>	0.09	3.27%	0.31	14.16%
	<i>Negative humour</i>	0.03	1.15%	0.16	8.88%
	<i>Other attribution</i>	0.05	1.27%	0.24	8.80%
	<i>Personal attribution</i>	0.19	4.35%	0.50	11.45%
	<i>Praise-criticism pair</i>	0.64	16.17%	0.88	22.82%
	<i>Recasting problem for future improvements</i>	0.07	1.34%	0.29	5.86%

Note: The percentage of reviews containing mitigated praise = 82.67%

The percentage of reviews containing mitigated criticism = 76%

Comparison, *Criticism-Praise Pair*, and *Metaphor* are also relatively common types of mitigated praise. Each of these strategies appears in more than 20% of reviews (Figure 4-9).

Instead of directly giving praise, *Comparison*, with a mean frequency rate of 14.98% (M = 0.34, SD = 0.60) (Table 4-11), weakens the praise act by comparing the aspect of concert to a similar, but inferior event. In the following example, the critic praised the conductor Mackerras by comparing him with other conductors:

- (4-13) *In his programme note, Mackerras tells us Brahms's performing style was described by contemporaries as amazingly flexible, liable to change in tempo from bar to bar. What's interesting about these descriptions is their ambiguity. A certain type of conductor could take them as a cue for a rapturous, hazy style not far from Debussy. But not Mackerras. (ED35)*

There is no obvious comment on whether “*a certain type of conductor*” is good or bad. However, “*a rapturous, hazy style not far from Debussy*” could be understood as a negative remark, since playing Brahms in a way similar to playing Debussy suggests a stylistic misinterpretation. Thus, “*But not Mackerras*” hints that Mackerras was better than those conductors who interpreted Brahms in an inappropriate style. Yet compared with an unmarked praise such as “Mackerras was better than a certain type of conductor who mistook Brahms for Debussy”, Example 4-13 weakens the praise of the conductor by making it less straightforwardly positive.

As Table 4-11 shows, *Criticism-Praise Pair* has a mean frequency rate of 10.57% ($M = 0.33$, $SD = 0.64$). A negative comment is placed before the positive comment in order to make the praise sound more balanced. In the following example, the positive comment (underlined) on a performance was mitigated by a negative comment (italicised) before it:

- (4-15) *The Stravinsky suffered from occasional imperfections of ensemble, **but was impeccable in its judgment of mood.** (EG40)*

The force of praise “*was impeccable in its judgment of mood*” is weakened by the criticism in the first half of the sentence, “*The Stravinsky suffered from occasional imperfections of ensemble*”.

Criticism-praise pair is a type of mitigation praise/criticism strategy frequently appeared in English reviews. At least two critics reflected in the interviews that they were

trying to strike a balance in their evaluation. David, for example, explained that he used the P-C pairs in 3-star reviews to address both good and bad qualities that coexisted in such concerts:

I'm trying to be fair because there are good things and there are less good things. It is very easy to write a review which is a rave review, which everything is terrible. Those are so easy. It's harder when something is in the middle, good qualities and bad qualities, and you have to be fair to both. (David)

Robert, on the other hand, account for his uses of P-C pairs to the ambiguity of nature of art:

I feel it's the nature of art, I think. By nature, it's ambiguous. You want get it which is clear, you don't want to confuse people. But often the strong impression that created by a piece of work of art is some vivid impression comes from the fact that it's two-sided: it's brilliant in one way, but lacking in another, maybe. That's often what happens, especially with the young performer. It's true to the nature of experience I think. Opposites come together. (Robert)

He tries to make his readers understand the ambiguity of art by presenting both the good and bad sides at the same time.

Metaphor had a mean frequency rate of 11.13% ($M = 0.35$, $SD = 0.81$). Similar to *Comparison*, it can either strengthen or weaken a praise act, depending on the context. The following example illustrated the use of metaphor to convey praise in a less direct way:

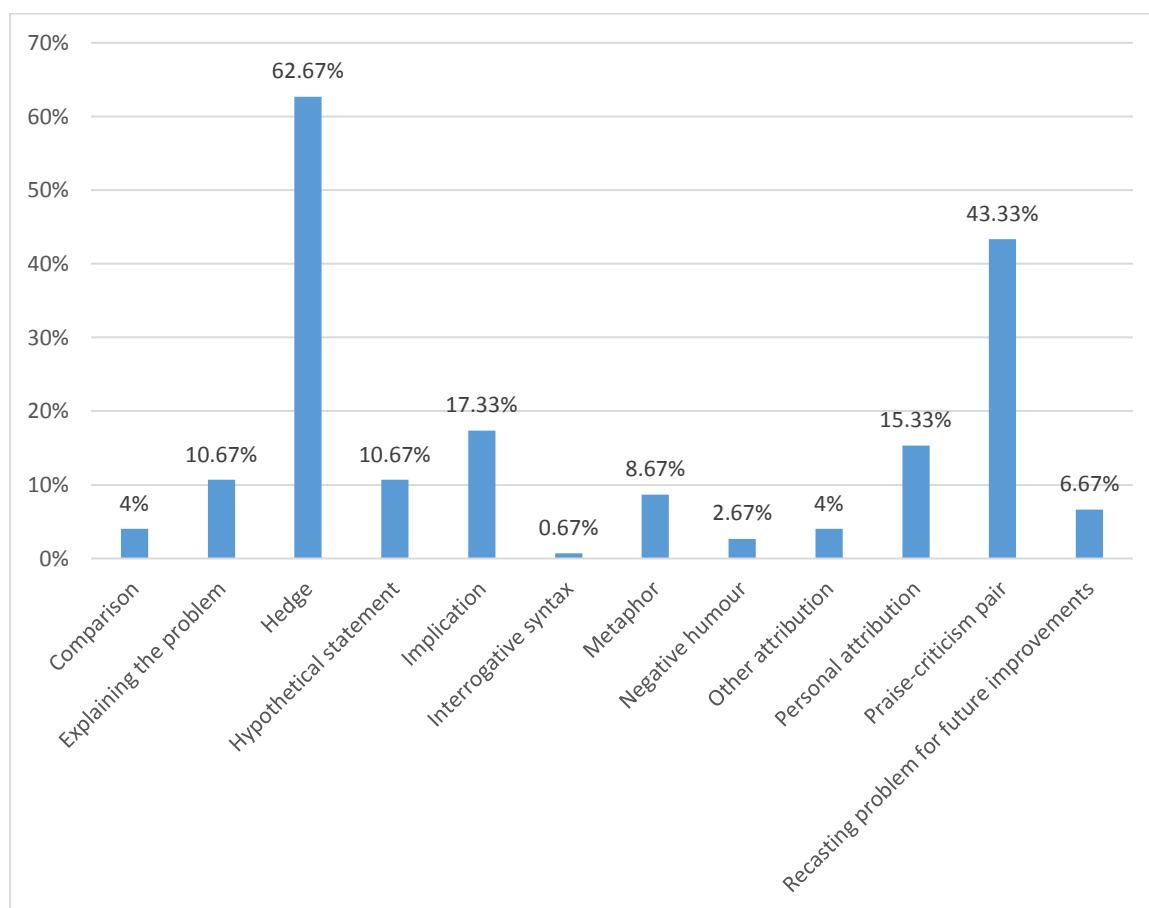
- (4-16) For once, you could smell the cheap perfume and sweaty desire of the Buenos Aires dance halls. (ET19)

The other types of mitigated praise, i.e. *Defending the Concert*, *Implication*, *Interrogative Syntax*, *Negated Clause*, and *Other Attribution* were less common, both in their coverage in the corpus and their frequencies (Figure 4-7, Table 4-11). Examples of these mitigated praise types can be seen in *Chapter 3*.

4.5.3.2 Types of mitigated criticism

As shown in Figure 4-6, mitigated criticism is the most common type of criticism in English reviews. Three quarters (76%) of the reviews contain mitigated criticism. More than half (53.36%) of the critical acts are mitigated (Table 4-8). Mitigated criticisms on the concert significantly outnumber both unmarked and emphasised criticism ($p < .001$) (Table 4-9). There are twelve types of mitigated criticism: *Comparison*, *Explaining the problem*, *Hedge*, *Hypothetical statement*, *Implication*, *Interrogative syntax*, *Metaphor*, *Other attribution*, *Negative humour*, *Personal attribution*, *Praise-criticism pair*, and *Recasting the problem for future improvements* (Figure 4-10).

Figure 4-10: The percentages of English reviews containing mitigated criticism (n = 150)



As in the case of mitigated praise, *Hedge* is also the most common type of mitigated criticism, with both the highest occurrences in reviews and the highest mean frequency per

review. Nearly two-thirds of reviews (62.67%) contain hedged criticism (Figure 4-10), and on average every English has 1.27 instances of hedged criticism ($SD = 1.34$) (Table 4-11). In the extract below, the adverb “quite” was used to weaken the criticism “didn’t find them at one”:

- (4-17) The first half didn't *quite* find them at one with Murray Perahia in Beethoven's mercurial Fourth Piano Concerto. (ED03)

Praise-Criticism Pair is another type of mitigated criticism with a high occurrence rate, which appears in 43.33% of the reviews (Figure 4-10). 16.17% ($M = 0.64$, $SD = 0.88$) of the mitigated criticisms are *Praise-Criticism Pairs* (Table 4-11). The following extract shows an example of mitigating a critical act by putting a praise act before it:

- (4-18) *Both are powerful stimuli, but in the concerto the interplay of serene Gaelic themes and ominous orchestral turbulence is sometimes confusing rather than dramatic.* (ET19)

The criticism about the composition would have sounded stronger without the praise in the beginning of the sentence.

Other types of mitigated criticism were relatively less commonly applied than *Hedge* and *P-C pair* (Figure 4-10, Table 4-11). Examples of other types of criticism can be seen in Chapter 3.

4.6 Summary

To sum up, evaluation appears in all English reviews. The majority (82.85%) of the rhetorical acts are evaluative, which significantly outnumber non-evaluative acts. However, as non-evaluation occurs in almost all reviews (92%), it is still a core component in English concert reviews. Within evaluation, concert evaluation appears to be significantly more prominent than background comments, both in terms of their coverage and frequency.

Considerably more reviews open or close with positive remarks than negative remarks. In fact, the average frequency of positive comments significantly exceeds negative comments across reviews, both in concert evaluation and background comments.

Evaluation of specific aspects of the concert appears in every concert review. Only a small number of reviews contain global evaluation (14%). The occurrences of specific evaluation significantly outnumber global evaluation, of which praise significantly exceeds criticism in both global and specific aspects of the concert. *Performer/Performance* is the most praised and criticised aspects of the concert, followed by *Composer/Composition*.

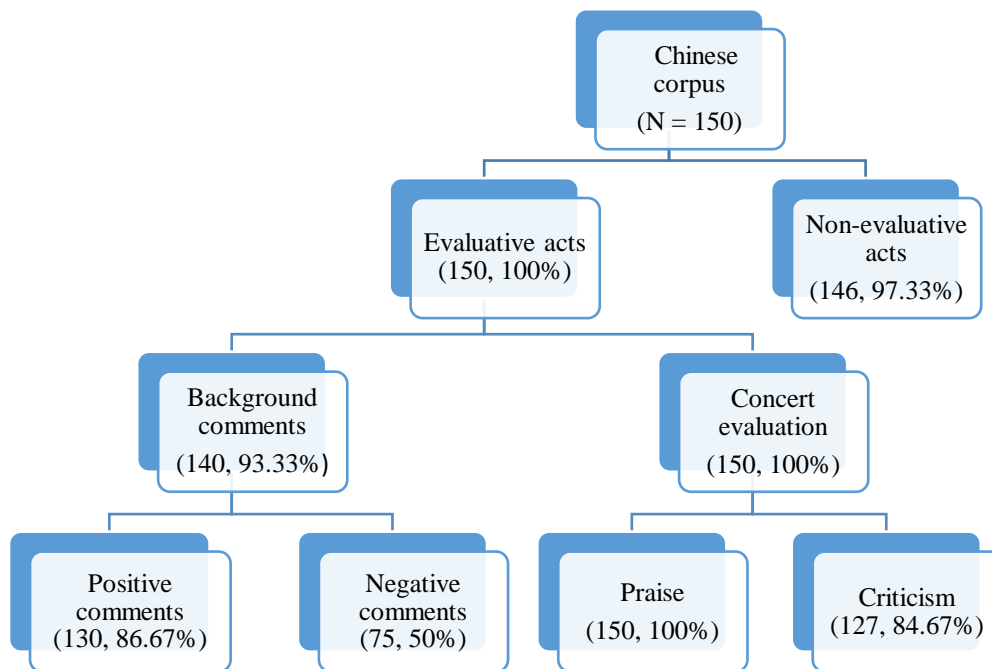
As far as the strength of concert evaluation is concerned, critics seem to be more enthusiastic with their praise than with criticism. Emphasised praise is found in most reviews, and unmarked praise records the highest frequency across reviews. Mitigated praise has the lowest frequency amongst emphasised, unmarked and mitigated praise. In contrast, mitigated criticism is the most prominent type of criticism, both in terms of coverage and frequency. English critics thus seem to be more generous with their praise but more reserved with their criticism. Booster is the most common type of emphasised evaluation, both in praise and criticism. Hedge is most popular both for mitigated praise and criticism.

Chapter 5 Results: Textual analysis of rhetorical acts in Chinese concert reviews

This chapter continues to answer Research Question 1 about the uses of evaluative acts in Chinese concert reviews. *Section 5.1* focuses on the occurrences of evaluation and non-evaluation in Chinese reviews. *Section 5.2* discusses the structural patterns of evaluation. *Section 5.3* reports on the distributions of global and specific evaluation. *Section 5.4* presents results of praise and criticism on specific aspects of the concert. *Section 5.5* focuses on various types of praise and criticism to emphasise or mitigate an evaluation.

5.1 Dimensions of rhetorical acts in Chinese concert reviews

All the Chinese reviews contain evaluation. Most of the reviews (97.33%) contain non-evaluation (Figure 5-1). However, the frequency of evaluative acts is much higher than non-evaluative acts (Table 5-1). Results show that 3274 out of 4062 acts in Chinese reviews are evaluative, and only 788 acts are non-evaluative. On average every review contains 21.83 instances of evaluation ($SD = 9.40$), and only 5.25 instances of non-evaluation ($SD = 3.61$). The average frequency of evaluative acts is four times that of the non-evaluative acts. A Wilcoxon test also indicated that the percentage of evaluative acts is significantly higher than that of non-evaluative acts ($Z = -10.609, p < .001$) (Table 5-1). Chinese concert reviews seem to be predominantly evaluative as all reviews contained evaluative acts and evaluative acts significantly outnumber non-evaluative acts. Non-evaluation, on the other hand, though showing a low frequency of occurrences (19.14%), occurs in most reviews. This means that though non-evaluation is relatively less significant than evaluation, it still is a core component in Chinese concert reviews.

Figure 5-1: The numbers and percentages of Chinese reviews containing evaluative and non-evaluative acts**Table 5-1: The frequencies and percentages of evaluative and non-evaluative acts in Chinese reviews**

Chinese concert reviews (N =150)				
Category of acts	Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
	No. of acts	% across reviews	No. of acts	% across reviews
Evaluative acts	21.83	80.86%	9.40	10.62%
Non-evaluative acts	5.25	19.14%	3.61	10.62%
Wilcoxon test	Evaluative acts vs. Non-evaluative acts: $Z = -10.609$ $P < .001$			

Evaluation consists of Background Comments and Concert Evaluation. Background Comments appear in the majority (93.33%) of the reviews, and only 4 reviews out of 150 (2.67%) do not comment on issues other than the concert itself (Figure 5-1). However, only 16.17% of total evaluative acts are background comments. On average each review contains 3.04 instances of Background Comments (SD = 2.30) (Table 5-1). Thus, though Background

Comments occur with a relatively low mean frequency of occurrences, they appear in most Chinese concert reviews and are a key component of those reviews.

All reviews contain Concert Evaluation (Figure 5-1). The majority of the evaluation in Chinese concert reviews is on aspects of the concert. On average 83.33% of the evaluative acts are about the concert. There are 18.79 instances of Concert Evaluation per review ($SD = 9.43$) (Table 5-1). In other words, the percentage of concert evaluative acts is almost 8 times that of background comments. A Wilcoxon test also shows that concert evaluative acts significantly outnumber background comments (Table 5-2). It seems that evaluation in Chinese reviews focuses prominently on aspects of the concert.

Table 5-2: The frequencies and percentages of Background Comments and Concert Evaluation in Chinese reviews

Chinese concert reviews (N =150)				
Category of evaluative acts	Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
	No. of acts	% of evaluative acts	No. of acts	% of evaluative acts
Background Comments	3.04	16.17%	2.30	12.95%
Concert Evaluation	18.79	83.83%	9.43	12.95%
Wilcoxon test	Background Comments vs. Concert Evaluation: $Z = -10.529$ $p < .001$			

When taking a closer look at the components of evaluation, it is observed that more reviews contain positive rather than negative evaluation in both *Background Comments* and *Concert Evaluation*. All reviews contain positive evaluation. There are 16 reviews (10.67%) containing no negative evaluation at all, either on the background or on the concert itself. Positive *Background Comments* appear in 130 reviews (86.67%) and negative *Background Comments* appear in only 75 reviews (50%) (Figure 5-1). Praise of the concert appears in every

review, and the majority of the reviews (84.67%) contain at least one instance of criticism of the concert. It is further observed that in both *Background Comments* and *Concert Evaluation*, positive evaluation significantly outnumbers negative evaluation ($P < .001$). On average every review contains 2.17 instances of positive *Background Comments* and only 0.87 instances of negative comments. There is an average of 11.64 instances of praise on concert per review, but only 7.15 instances of criticism (Table 5-3).

Table 5-3: The occurrences of positive and negative evaluative acts in Chinese reviews
Chinese concert reviews (N =150)

Category of evaluative acts		Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
		No. of acts	% of evaluative acts	No. of acts	% of evaluative acts
Background Comments	Positive	2.17	12.19%	1.83	11.47%
	Negative	0.87	3.98%	1.20	5.61%
Concert Evaluation	Praise	11.64	55.28%	5.53	20.19%
	Criticism	7.15	28.55%	6.76	20.21%
Wilcoxon test		Positive background vs. Negative background comments: $Z = -7.298$ $P < .001$			
		Praise vs. Criticism of concert evaluation: $Z = -6.990$ $P < .001$			

The above analyses show that more Chinese concert reviews contain positive evaluation about both the concert and background information, and there is a significantly higher frequency of positive evaluative acts on both aspects of evaluation as well. The tendency of critics praising the positives more and criticising the negatives less is therefore revealed.

5.2 Structural patterns of evaluation

As in the case of English reviews, Hong Kong critics seem to prefer opening and closing their reviews with positive remarks rather than with negative remarks (Figure 5-2). Half of the reviews (75 out of 150) begin positively either by commenting on the concert itself or about the background of the concert. An example of beginning a review with a general praise about the concert is as follows:

- (5-1) 我聽的第三場青年音樂會是八月十二日晚「小交」的「音樂音樂講我知」，是一場**別開生面**用音樂來說故事的節目。(CM14)

(The third youth concert I heard was ‘Music Tells Me’ by Hong Kong Sifonietta on the 12th of August, *a spectacular show* which used music to tell stories.)

On the other hand, only 7 reviews begin negatively, of which 6 are about aspects other than the concert itself. Only one review (Example 5-2) starts by criticising the concert itself, and it is partly a softened criticism – implying criticism through a seemingly positive comment:

- (5-2) 人家開開心心地慶祝創校四十周年，搞一個合唱團特大的音樂會，值得尊重；聽過後，從欣賞音樂的角度寫一點意見，亦無不可罷。倘若有仁人長者感到本文掃興或澆了一盆冷水，筆者只能說，那音樂會其實亦有佳句，例如官美如的指揮。(CK14)

(It was laudable that they celebrated their university’s 40th anniversary with a concert of a massive choir. It should not be a problem to give some feedback from the perspective of music appreciation after the show. If someone thinks this article is discouraging, the writer can only say that there was also something good about the concert, such as the conducting of Koon Mei Yu.)

In the above example, “It should not be a problem to give some feedback from the perspective of music appreciation” and “If someone thinks this article is discouraging” imply the critic’s negative view of the concert. The praise of the act of organising a huge celebratory concert and the performance of the conductor, though make the criticism less harsh, and also imply that the overall standard of concert was below satisfactory.

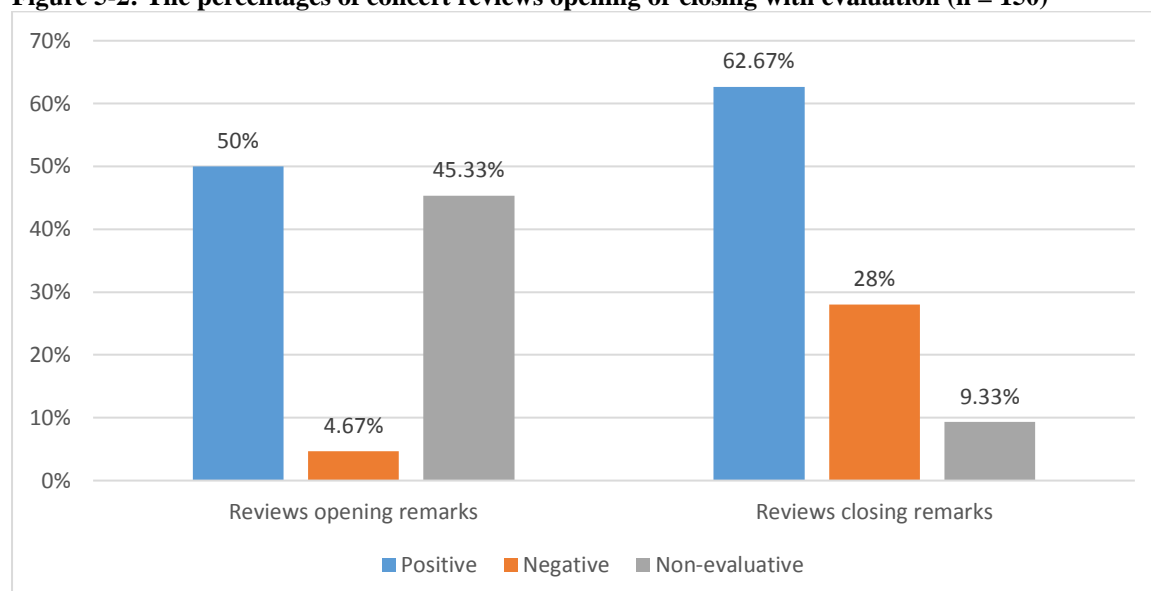
Almost two-thirds of the reviews (94 out of 150) end on a positive note, which is more than double the number of reviews ending negatively (42 out of 150). However, it is interesting to note that reviews ending with criticism are five times more numerous than reviews beginning negatively. It is also interesting that none of the closing criticisms condemns the concert as a whole. Critics seem to be cautious about concluding their reviews with an act which could be very face-threatening. Therefore, the ending criticism acts are either background comments or about specific aspects of the concert, which could be less face-threatening than ending a review with a global criticism. An example of ending a review with a specific criticism (on the aspect of *Performer/Performance*) is as follows:

(5-3) 以此世界標準的尺度來衡量，港樂有待百尺竿頭更進一步。(CJ44)

(Judging by this world-class standard, Hong Kong Philharmonic needs to further improve themselves.)

Hong Kong critics also seem to prefer opening their reviews without an evaluation. Nearly half (45.33%, 68 out of 150) of Chinese reviews begin neutrally with non-evaluative remarks, and 9.33% (14 out of 150) of the reviews end this way (Figure 5-2).

Figure 5-2: The percentages of concert reviews opening or closing with evaluation (n = 150)



5.3 Globality of concert evaluation

All Chinese reviews contain evaluation about the concert, of which only 20% represent global evaluation. However, all contain evaluation on specific aspects of the concert (Figure 5-3). It is also noted that the frequency of global evaluative acts per review is much lower than that of specific evaluative acts. 98.10% of the concert evaluative acts are on specific aspects (M = 18.54, SD = 9.53) and only 1.90% are global comments about the concert (M = 0.25, SD = 0.53). A Wilcoxon test also indicated that the percentage of specific evaluative acts per review is significantly higher than that of global evaluative acts ($p < .001$) (Table 5-4). It seems that Chinese concert reviews focus primarily on more detailed evaluation on aspects of the concert, rather than commenting on the concert as a whole. Critics might like to demonstrate their professionalism and establish their personal reputation by giving specific comments (Ha 2011).

Figure 5-3: The numbers and percentages of Chinese reviews containing global and specific evaluation (N = 150)

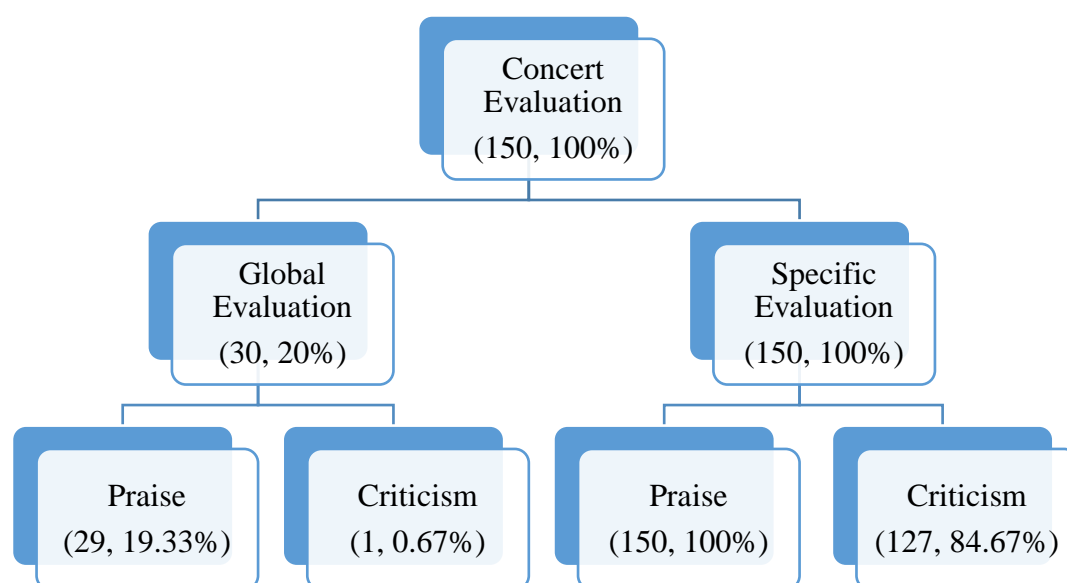


Table 5-4: The occurrences of global and specific concert evaluation

Chinese concert reviews (N =150)

Category of concert evaluative acts	Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
	No. of acts	% of concert evaluations	No. of acts	% of concert evaluations
Global Evaluation	0.25	1.90%	0.53	4.45%
Specific Evaluation	18.54	98.10%	9.53	4.45%
Wilcoxon test	Global Evaluation vs. Specific Evaluation: $Z = -11.369$ $P < .001$			

As Figure 5-3 and Table 5-5 demonstrate, more Chinese concert reviews contain praise than criticism, both globally and specifically. While only one Chinese review contains one instance of global criticism (Example 5-3), 19.33% of the reviews (29 out of 150) contain global praise, which is exemplified below:

(5-4) 總括來說，這是十分精彩的港樂音樂會 (CK19)

(On the whole, this was a very amazing Hong Kong Philharmonic concert.)

Reviews having specific praise also outnumber reviews with specific criticism. Specific praise appears in all reviews and specific criticism is found in 84.67% (127 out of 150) of the reviews. The frequencies of specific praise also significantly exceed specific criticism (Table 5-5). On average every review contains 11.40 instances of specific praise and only 7.14 instances of specific criticism. In other words, Chinese critics tend to praise the positives more than criticise the negatives in their reviews.

Table 5-5: The numbers and percentages of praise and criticism in global and specific concert evaluation
Chinese concert reviews (N =150)

Praise/criticism in concert evaluation		Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
		No. of acts	% of concert evaluations	No. of acts	% of concert evaluations
Global Evaluation	Praise	0.24	1.87%	0.53	4.45%
	Criticism	0.01	0.03%	0.08	0.33%
Specific Evaluation	Praise	11.40	64.41%	5.58	22.75%
	Criticism	7.14	33.69%	6.75	23.31%
Wilcoxon test		Global praise vs. specific praise: $Z = -10.627$ $p < .001$			
		Global criticism vs. specific criticism: $Z = -9.779$ $p < .001$			
		Global praise vs. Global criticism: $Z = -4.734$ $p < .001$			
		Specific praise vs. Specific criticism: $Z = -6.797$ $p < .001$			

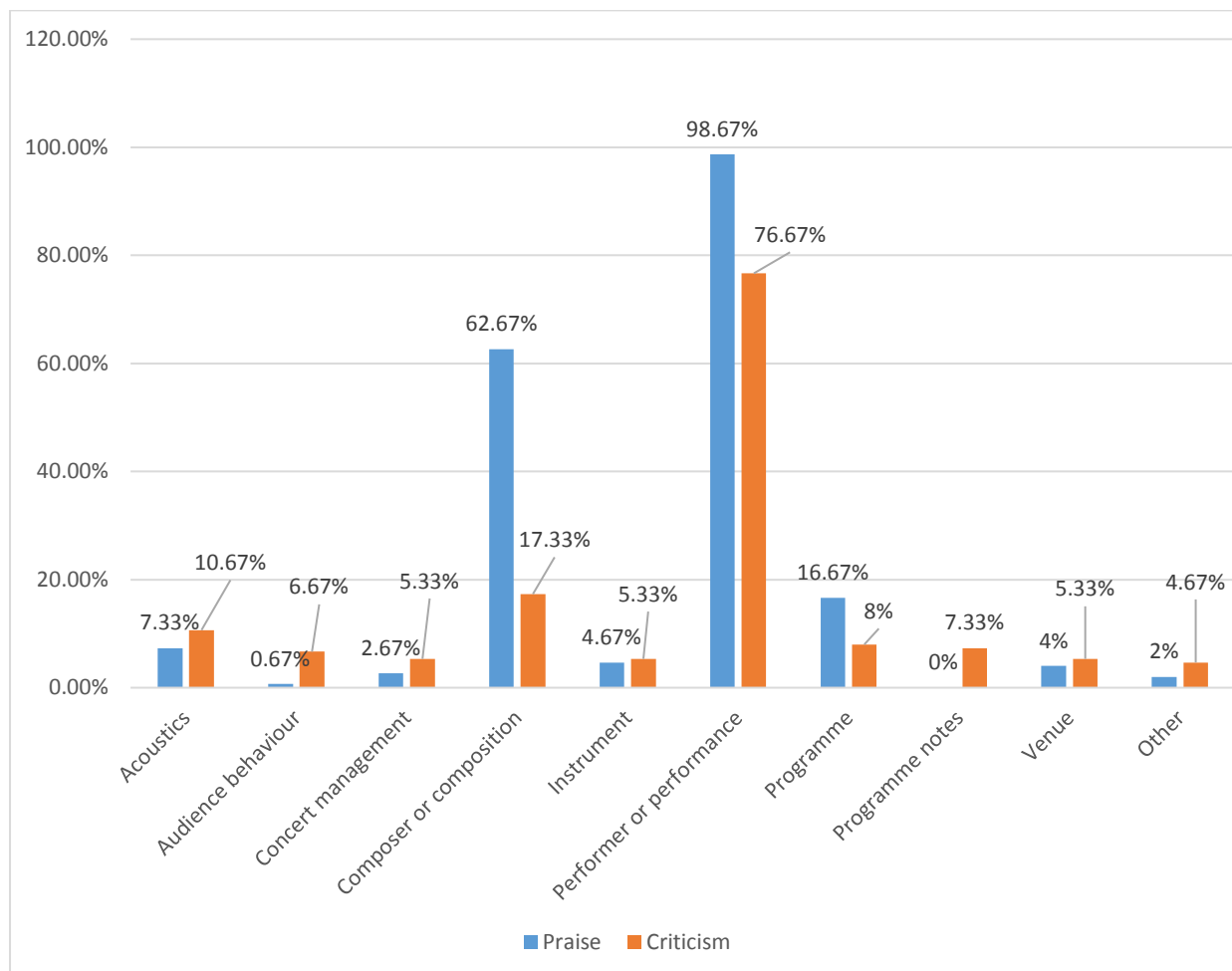
5.4 Specific aspects of the concert targeted by the evaluative acts

5.4.1 Praise acts on specific aspects of the concert

Praise acts on aspects of the concert are not evenly distributed. Most praises are dedicated to two specific aspects: *Performer/Performance* and *Composer/Composition*. These two aspects took up almost 95% of the total number of specific praise acts, of which a vast majority were dedicated to the aspect of performance.

As shown in Figure 5-4, almost all reviews (98.67%) contain praise on *Performer/Performance* (148 out of 150), which also attracts the most instances of praise among all aspects of the concert. More than three quarters (77.42%) of the specific praise acts are on the performance of the concert (Table 5-6). In other words, on average each review contain 8.89 instances of praise on performance ($SD = 5.25$).

Figure 5-4: The percentages of Chinese reviews containing praise and criticism on specific aspects of the concert (N = 150)



Composer/Composition is the second most praised aspect of the concert, which appears in 62.67% of Chinese reviews (94 out of 150) (Figure 5-4). On average 17.02% of the specific praise acts per review are about *Composer/Composition* ($M = 1.93$, $SD = 2.90$) (Table 4-6). Reviews praising aspects other than performance and composition seem to be considerably less frequent (Figure 5-4). The third most praised aspect, *Programme*, is only found in 16.67% of

the reviews, with an average frequency of 0.24 instance per review (SD = 0.65) (Table 5-6). *Programme Notes* is an aspect not being praised at all. *Audience Behaviour* is the second least praised aspect of the concert. Only one review contains two instances of praise on this aspect, one of which is exemplified below:

(5-5) 誰說香港沒有第一流的古典音樂聽眾？(CM19)

(Who said there was no first class classical music audience in Hong Kong?)

Table 5-6: The frequencies and percentages of praise on specific aspects of the concert
Chinese concert reviews (N =150)

Specific aspects of praise in concert evaluation		Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
		No. of acts	% of specific evaluation	No. of acts	% of specific evaluation
Praise	<i>Acoustics</i>	0.13	1.08%	0.56	4.58%
	<i>Audience Behaviour</i>	0.01	0.15%	0.16	1.81%
	<i>Composer/Composition</i>	1.93	17.02%	2.90	21.71%
	<i>Concert Management</i>	0.03	0.20%	0.16	1.21%
	<i>Instrument</i>	0.07	0.84%	0.34	4.85%
	<i>Performer/Performance</i>	8.89	77.42%	5.25	23.46%
	<i>Programme</i>	0.24	2.42%	0.65	6.32%
	<i>Programme notes</i>	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00%
	<i>Venue</i>	0.08	0.69%	0.46	3.82%
	<i>Other Aspects</i>	0.02	0.18%	0.14	1.30%

5.4.2 Criticism on specific aspects of the concert

Similar to praise, *Performer/Performance* is the most criticised aspect of the concert which appears in most reviews. About three quarters (76.67%) of the reviews contain criticism on this aspect (115 out of 150). Almost two-thirds (64.16%) of the specific critical acts are on

performance, with an average of 5.94 instances per review ($SD = 6.30$), which is also the highest frequency amongst all the specific aspects being criticised. On the other hand, 17.33% of the reviews (26 out of 150) contain criticism on *Composer/Composition* (Figure 5-3), and 5.55% of the specific critical acts are on this aspect ($M = 0.33$, $SD = 0.82$) (Table 5-7). Aspects other than performance and composition record appear in fewer reviews. They have comparatively lower frequencies of instances as well.

Table 5-7: The frequencies and percentages of criticism on specific aspects of the concert
Chinese concert reviews ($N = 150$)

Specific aspects of criticism in concert evaluation		Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
		No. of acts	% of specific evaluation	No. of acts	% of specific evaluation
Criticism	<i>Acoustics</i>	0.19	2.68%	0.70	11.42%
	<i>Audience Behaviour</i>	0.10	1.23%	0.40	6.13%
	<i>Composer/Composition</i>	0.33	5.55%	0.82	16.61%
	<i>Concert Management</i>	0.09	0.98%	0.43	4.99%
	<i>Instrument</i>	0.10	1.45%	0.47	7.22%
	<i>Performer/Performance</i>	5.94	64.16%	6.30	39.85%
	<i>Programme</i>	0.13	3.55%	0.60	16.24%
	<i>Programme notes</i>	0.09	1.96%	0.35	10.36%
	<i>Venue</i>	0.09	2.13%	0.41	10.89%
	<i>Other Aspects</i>	0.07	0.97%	0.39	5.49%

Note: Percentage of reviews containing specific concert criticism = 84.67%

5.4.3 Summary

Of the various specific aspects of the concert, *Performer/Performance* is the most frequent aspect of evaluation, both in praise and criticism. A Friedman test proves that the frequencies of *Performer/Performance* on both praise and criticism significantly exceed all

other specific aspects of the concert. Wilcoxon tests also indicated that praise and critical acts on performance significantly exceed *Composer/Composition*, the second most evaluated aspect of the concert ($p < .001$) (Table 5-8).

Wilcoxon tests were also conducted to compare the differences between praise and criticism on each aspect of concert evaluation (Table 5-8). The results indicated that the percentages of praise on *Performer/Performance*, and *Composer/Composition* significantly exceed that of criticism ($p < .001$). Same as with global evaluations, critics seem to favour praise more than criticism in evaluating specific aspects of the concert.

However, frequencies of both praise and criticism on the other seven aspects are very low (Table 5-6, Table 5-7). In other words, in Chinese concert reviews, the strengths and weaknesses of features regarding *Acoustics*, *Instruments*, *Venue* and so on are not valued as much as qualities of performance or composition, as critics might assume their readers were not interested in those aspects of the concert.

Table 5-8: Wilcoxon tests results

Variables for comparison	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
Praise on <i>Performer/Performance</i> vs. Praise on <i>Composer/Composition</i>	-9.470	< .001
Criticism on <i>Performer/Performance</i> vs. Criticism on <i>Composer/Composition</i>	-8.824	< .001
Praise vs. Criticism on <i>Acoustics</i>	-1.673	.094
Praise vs. Criticism on <i>Audience Behaviour</i>	-2.223	.026
Praise vs. Criticism on <i>Composer/Composition</i>	-6.140	< .001
Praise vs. Criticism on <i>Instrument</i>	-0.785	.433
Praise vs. Criticism on <i>Performer/Performance</i>	-3.616	< .001
Praise vs. Criticism on <i>Programme</i>	-0.487	.626
Praise vs. Criticism on <i>Programme Notes</i>	-2.938	.003
Praise vs. Criticism on <i>Venue</i>	-1.503	.133
Praise vs. Criticism on <i>Other Aspects</i>	-2.075	.038

5.5 Strengths of evaluations

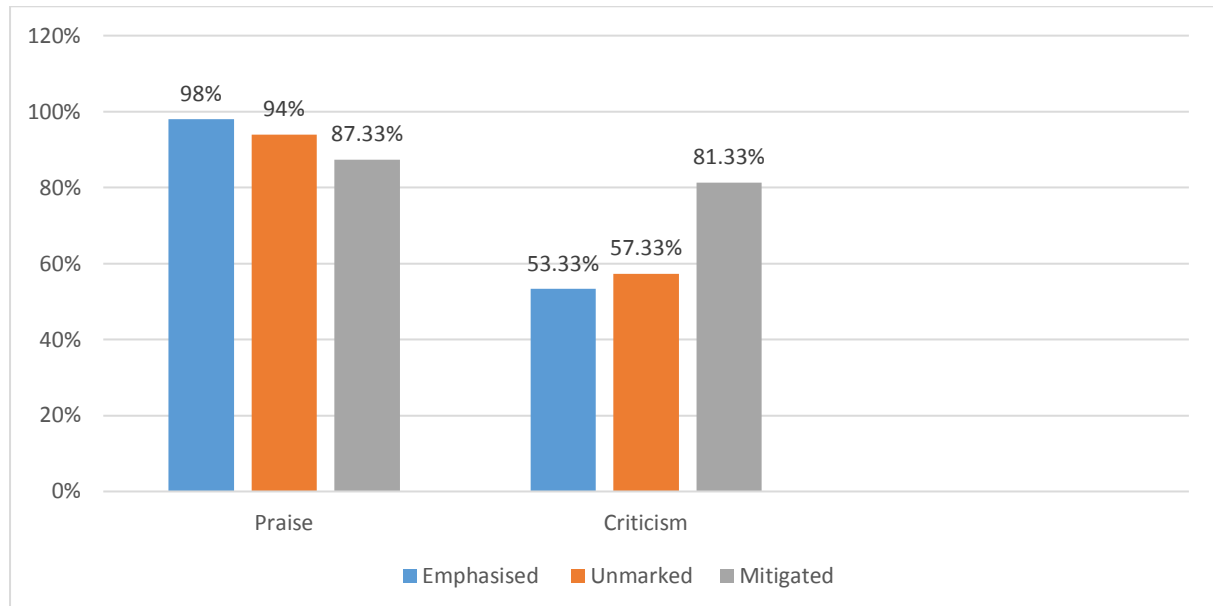
This section discusses distributions and occurrences of praise and criticism of various strength levels. Details of praise can be found in *Section 5.5.1*, and criticism in *Section 5.5.2*. Results indicate that praise in the Chinese corpus is mostly unreserved while criticism is mostly mitigated.

5.5.1 Praise

5.5.1.1 The overall trend: *Emphasised, Unmarked and Mitigated Praise*

Hong Kong critics seem to be generous with their positive evaluation. As shown in Figure 5-5, all Chinese reviews contain praise, and most of these acts are unreserved, i.e. three quarters of the praise acts are either emphasised or unmarked (Table 5-9).

Figure 5-5: The percentages of Chinese reviews containing praise and criticism acts of various strengths



Emphasised Praise is the most common type of praise. Only 3 reviews do not contain *Emphasised Praise*. 42.30% of the total praise acts in Chinese reviews are emphasised, with an

average of 4.61 instances per review (SD = 2.54) (Table 5-9). A detailed discussion of types of *Emphasised Praise* acts is provided in *Section 5.5.1.2*.

Unmarked Praise is the second most common type of praise among Chinese reviews. Most (94%) of the reviews contain unmarked praise, with an average of 4.08 instances per review. Critics are also keen to give out their praise in a straight-forward manner, for example:

- (5-6) Franck 的奏鳴曲是浪漫樂派傑出小提琴作品 (CJ29)
(Franck's Sonata is an *outstanding* violin work of Romanticism.)

Although *Mitigated Praise* is the least common type of praise act, it still appears in the majority (87.33%) of the Chinese reviews (Figure 5-5). As indicated in Table 5-9, about a quarter of the praise acts (24.31%) are mitigated. On average there are 2.95 instances of *Mitigated Praise* act per review (SD = 2.47). More discussion about *Mitigated Praise* is in *Section 5.5.1.3*.

Table 5-9: The frequencies and percentages of evaluation of different strengths in Chinese reviews
Chinese concert reviews (N =150)

Praise/criticism in concert evaluation		Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
		No. of acts	% of praise/criticism of the concert	No. of acts	% of praise/criticism of the concert
Praise	Emphasised	4.61	42.30%	2.54	19.47%
	Unmarked	4.08	33.39%	3.02	17.70%
	Mitigated	2.95	24.31%	2.47	17.13%
Criticism	Emphasised	1.10	13.41%	1.42	18.84%
	Unmarked	1.45	15.40%	1.94	17.60%
	Mitigated	4.60	55.86%	4.43	32.92%

Note: Percentage of reviews containing specific concert criticism = 84.67%

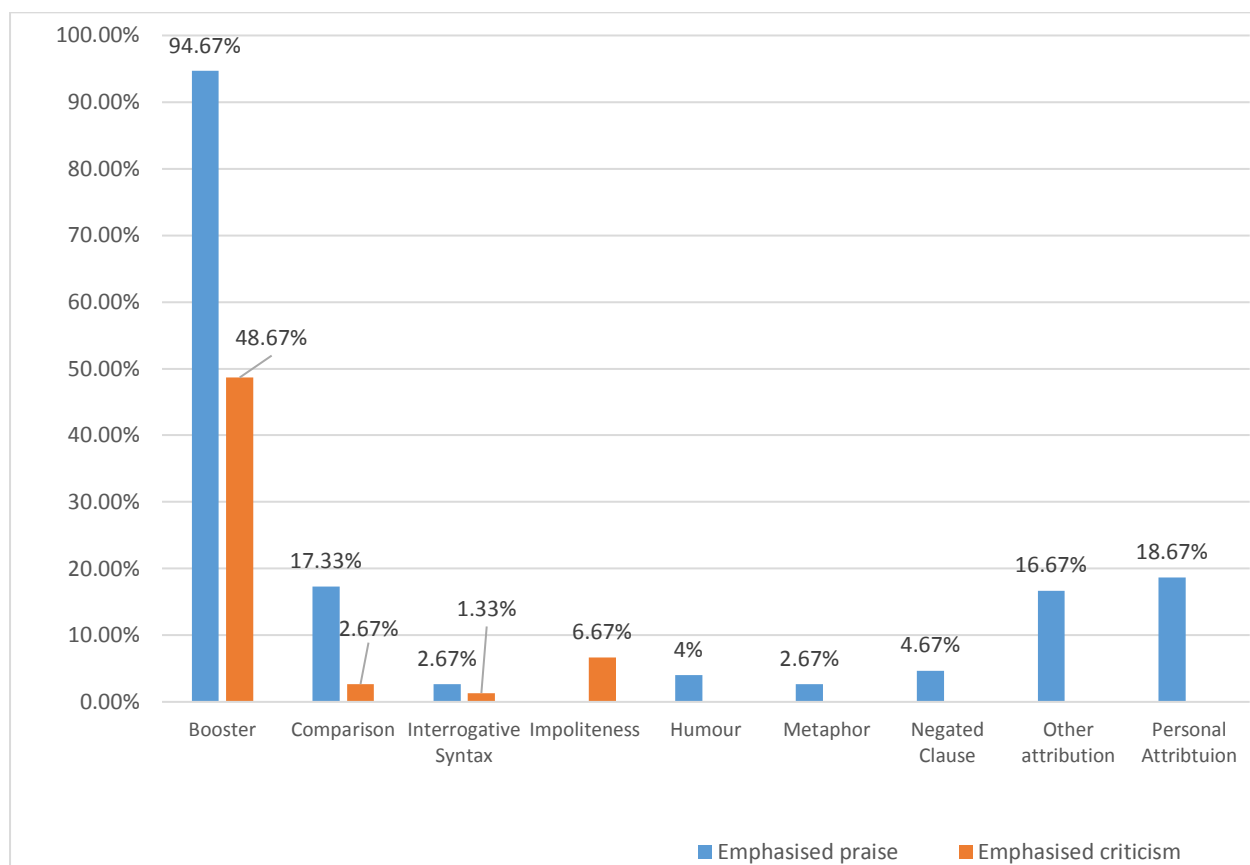
5.5.1.2 Emphasised praise

Of the eight types of *Emphasised Praise*, i.e. *Booster*, *Comparison*, *Interrogative Syntax*, *Humour*, *Metaphor*, *Negated Clause*, *Other Attribution*, and *Personal Attribution*, *Booster* is the most commonly applied emphasis praise strategy. As many as 94.67% of the reviews (142 out of 150) contain boosters to reinforce praise (Figure 5-6). On average every review has 3.77 instances of *Booster* ($SD = 2.33$), i.e. 80.05% of emphasised praise acts (Table 5-10). A Friedman test shows that *Booster* significantly outnumbers other emphasised praise strategies ($X^2 = 864.902, p < .001$). An example of critic using boosters to strengthen the praise is as follows:

(5-7) 港樂在此二樂章中奏得**相當**精采 (CJ44)

(Hong Kong Philharmonic played *very* fantastically in these two movements)

Figure 5-6: The numbers and percentages of Chinese reviews applying emphasised evaluation strategies



Personal Attribution, *Other Attribution* and *Comparison* appear in more than 10% of the reviews respectively (Figure 5-6). These types of emphasised praise, together with *Interrogative Syntax* and *Metaphor*, can either reinforce or soften a praise, depending on the context of the utterance (See Chapter 3). *Personal Attribution*, the second most common emphasis praise act, is found in 28 out of 150 reviews with a mean frequency of 0.25 (SD = 0.58). In the extract below, the critic reinforces the praise by putting in his personal feelings in the evaluation:

- (5-8) 我幾乎熟悉這首協奏曲的每一個音符，它們又讓我想起那些久遠的歲月，想起那些已經離世的人們，感情不禁隨之起伏，眼眶裡倏忽充滿了淚水。(CK50)

(I was familiar with almost every note of this concerto. They made me think of those long gone days and those who have passed away. My emotions fluctuated (with the music) and my eyes suddenly filled with tears.)

About the same number of reviews contain *Comparison* (17.33%) and *Other Attribution* (16.67%) (Figure 5-6). *Comparison* has a mean frequency of 0.23 (SD = 0.56) instances per review (Table 5-10). In the following example, the critic stresses his praise of performers of the orchestra BRSO (Symphonie Orchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks) by claiming that they were even better than those of the best orchestra in the world (the Berlin Philharmonic):

- (5-9) 常有人將樂手的搖頭擺腦跟全情投入扯上關係，例如說柏林愛樂的樂手會旁若無人地搖曳。B R S O 樂手則是投入得連做多餘動作的空間也沒有。(CJ02)

(People often make a correlation between performers' head movements with their degree of focus. For example, performers of the Berlin Philharmonic would shake their heads when playing as nobody's around. However, performers of BRSO were so focused that they did not even have the space to make extra movements.)

Other Attribution has a mean frequency of 0.20 (SD = 0.49) instances per review. As the following example illustrates, the conductor's presence was emphasised by describing the audience and other performers' reactions:

- (5-10) Jansons 所散發出的電力，直把觀眾及樂手都凝住。(CJ 02)

(The electrical force emitted by Janson *totally solidified both the audience and players.*)

The types of emphasised praise not applied as frequently in Chinese reviews include *Negated Clause*, *Humour*, *Metaphor* and *Interrogative Syntax*, which appear in less than 10 reviews each (Figure 5-6). They have low mean frequencies as well (Table 5-10). A rare example of *Humour* is as follows:

(5-11) 完後到後台請這位指揮大師簽名，和他握手時看到他的熱情面孔，差點對他說：「大師，你在世界上又多了一個粉絲」。(CM23)

(After the show I went to the backstage for the maestro's autograph. Looking at his friendly face at handshakes, I almost said to him: "Maestro, you've got one more 'vermicelli' in this world.)

"Vermicelli" is a homonym of 'fan' in Mandarin Chinese, and a fashionable way among young Chinese people to express their affection for popular idols. Here the critic as a mature and established professional sounding like a teen fan brought an unexpected comic effect to this review.

Table 5-10: The frequencies and percentages of emphasised praise and criticism in Chinese reviews

Chinese concert reviews (N =150)

Emphasis strategies of praise/criticism in concert evaluation		Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
		No. of acts	% of emphasised praise / criticism acts	No. of acts	% of emphasised praise / criticism acts
Praise	<i>Booster</i>	3.77	80.05%	2.33	27.46%
	<i>Comparison</i>	0.23	5.19%	0.56	14.91%
	<i>Interrogative syntax</i>	0.03	0.61%	0.21	3.93%
	<i>Humour</i>	0.05	0.94%	0.24	5.08%
	<i>Metaphor</i>	0.03	0.42%	0.16	2.70%
	<i>Negated clause</i>	0.05	0.82%	0.25	3.91%
	<i>Other attribution</i>	0.20	5.34%	0.49	15.58%
	<i>Personal attribution</i>	0.25	4.63%	0.58	10.86%
Criticism	<i>Booster</i>	0.99	46.84%	1.36	48.96%
	<i>Comparison</i>	0.03	2.17%	0.16	14.17%
	<i>Interrogative syntax</i>	0.01	0.50%	0.12	4.55%
	<i>Impoliteness</i>	0.07	3.82%	0.29	16.15%

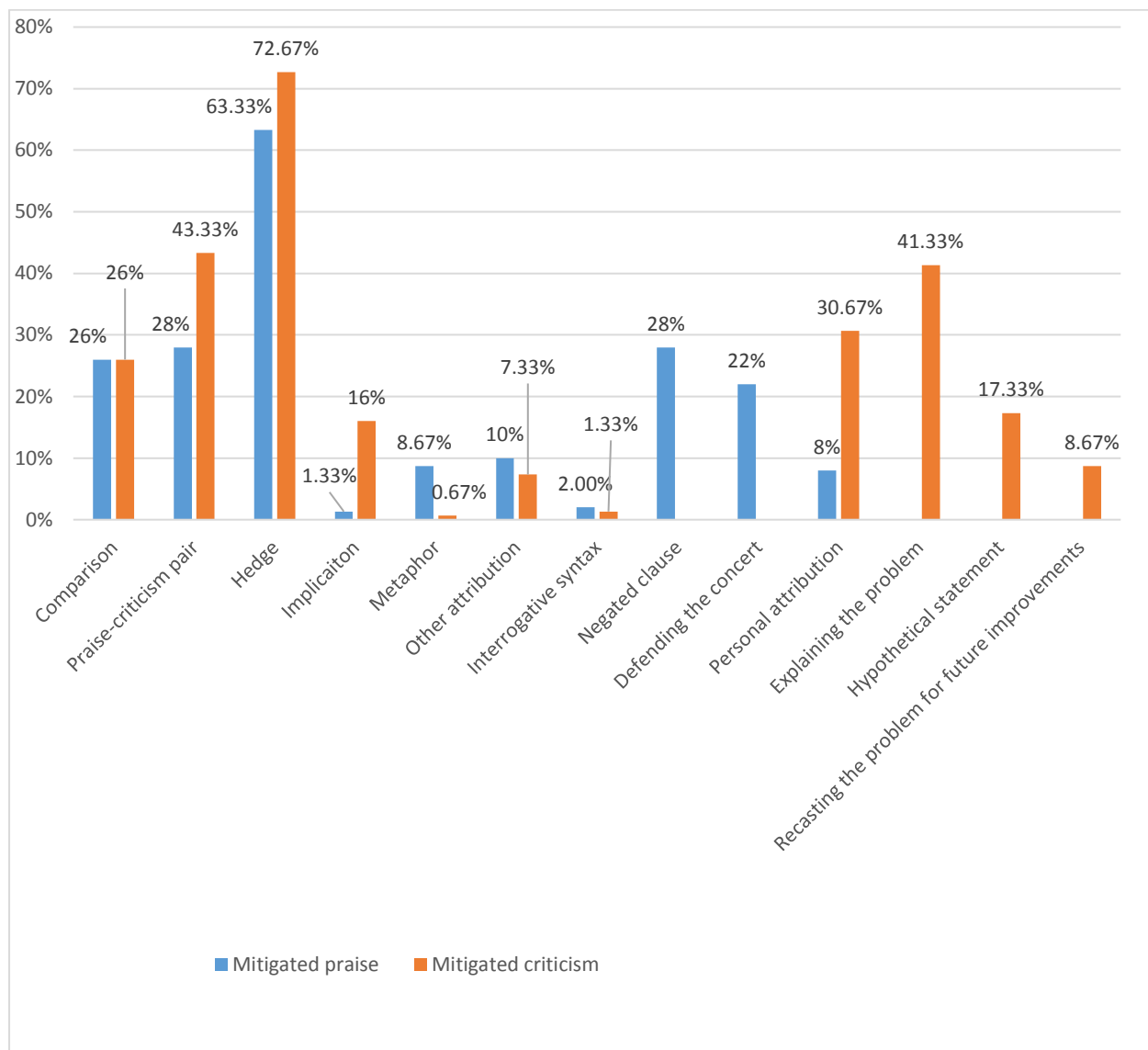
Note: Percentage of Chinese reviews containing emphasised praise = 98%

Percentage of Chinese reviews containing emphasised criticism = 53.33%

5.5.1.3 Mitigated praise

There are ten types of mitigated praise: *Comparison*, *Criticism-praise pair*, *Hedge*, *Implication*, *Metaphor*, *Personal attribution*, *Other attribution*, *Interrogative syntax*, *Negated clause*, and *Defending the concert* (Figure 5-7).

Figure 5-7: The percentages of Chinese reviews containing mitigated evaluative acts (N = 150)



Hedge appears in the highest number of Chinese reviews (63.33%, 95 out of 150) (Figure 5-7). It also shows the highest mean frequency amongst all mitigated praise acts ($M =$

1.21, SD = 1.37) (Table 5-11). It seems common for Hong Kong critics to use hedge to weaken their praise, for example:

- (5-12) 郎朗下半場演奏的這四首，和他上半場的莫扎特一樣，技巧**幾近**無懈可擊。
(CK47)

(The four pieces that Lang Lang played at the second half of the concert, were the same as his Mozart at the first half, *almost* flawless in techniques.)

Criticism-Praise Pair and *Negated Clause* both appear in 28% of Chinese reviews respectively (42 out of 150). On average each review contains 0.41 instances of *P-C Pair* (S = 0.80). Critics weaken the effect of praise by criticising the aspect first. For example,

- (5-13) ...雖然有些關節眼處也許不夠火花，但總體還是極優秀的。(CK16)
(...Although there might have lacked sparks at certain key places, on the whole it was very outstanding.)

There is an average of 0.36 instances of *Negated Clause* per review (SD = 0.67). For example,

- (5-14) ...其實聽這部分，已可想像 Kempf 的終曲**不會太差**。(CJ25)
(...Actually after listening to this part, one could already imagine that Kempf's Finale *wouldn't be too bad*.)

Comparison and *Defending the Concert* each appear in about a quarter of the reviews. *Comparison* as a type of mitigation occupies 8.92% of the mitigated praise (M = 0.31, SD = 0.57). Different from *Comparison* of emphasised praise (Example 5-9), a mitigated praise of *Comparison* conveys positive evaluation implicitly, as illustrated in the following extract:

- (5-15) 他對於「柴六」的演繹，頗似列寧格勒愛樂的指揮大師穆拉汶斯基
(Y.Mravinski) (CM20)
(His interpretation of Tchaikovsky Symphony was quite similar to Mravinsky,
Master conductor from Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra.)

Here, the conductor (Jurowsky) is not given a straight-forward evaluation. Instead he is compared to a great Soviet-Russian conductor who was famous for interpreting Russian composers' works. Therefore, suggesting Jurowsky's conducting is similar to that of Mravinsky's should be regarded as a compliment.

Defending the Concert is a type of act unique in mitigated praise. Usually the critic starts by stating negative opinions about the aspect of concert, followed by the critic's justification of the flaw. The whole instance of comment thus ends with a positive note. 8.13% of mitigated praise acts were from *Defending the Concert* ($M = 0.25$, $SD = 0.51$). For example:

- (5-16) 指揮在三重奏部分拖得太慢，黑暗的感覺過強，不過這樂章正有憤怒逐漸吞噬優雅的意思 (CJ11)
(The conductor dragged too much at the trio part, which made the dark feelings too strong. But this was exactly what this movement meant: anger gradually devour elegance.)

Implication, Metaphor, Personal attribution, Other attribution and *Interrogative syntax* are less commonly occurred types of mitigated praise, both in their coverage in the corpus and their frequencies of occurrences (Figure 5-7, Table 5-11).

Table 5-11: The frequencies and percentages of mitigated praise in Chinese reviews
Chinese concert reviews (N =150)

Mitigated praise acts	Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
	No. of acts	% of mitigated concert praise	No. of acts	% of mitigated concert praise
<i>Comparison</i>	0.31	8.92%	0.57	19.72%
<i>Criticism-praise pair</i>	0.41	10.32%	0.80	21.20%
<i>Hedge</i>	1.21	36.47%	1.37	35.31%
<i>Implication</i>	0.08	3.04%	0.27	13.34%
<i>Metaphor</i>	0.09	2.90%	0.28	11.71%
<i>Other attribution</i>	0.12	3.85%	0.43	14.52%
<i>Negated clause</i>	0.36	10.34%	0.67	21.22%
<i>Defend the concert</i>	0.25	8.13%	0.51	19.28%
<i>Interrogative syntax</i>	0.02	0.35%	0.14	2.51%
<i>Personal attribution</i>	0.09	3.02%	0.31	12.07%

Note: The percentage of reviews containing mitigated praise = 87.33%

5.5.2 Criticism

5.5.2.1 The overall trend: Emphasised, Unmarked and Mitigated critical acts

An *Emphasised Criticism* makes a criticism stronger and a *Mitigated Criticism* weakens a criticism. Detailed discussions of emphasised and mitigated criticisms can be seen in *Sections 5.5.2.2 and 5.5.2.3* respectively. *Unmarked Criticism*, on the other hand, is neutral criticism neither reinforced or weakened by an evaluation strategy. An example of *Unmarked Criticism* is as follows:

(5-17) 迪華特餘地留得過多，削弱刺激的感覺。(CJ12)

(De Waart has left too much space, which weakened the excitement.)

As shown in Figure 5-5, *Mitigated Criticism* is the most widely occurring category of criticism, and is found in 81.33% of Chinese reviews (122 out of 150). *Mitigated Criticism* is also the most frequently used category of criticism. More than half (55.82%) of critical evaluative acts are mitigated. On average each review contains 4.60 instances of *Mitigated Criticism* ($SD = 4.43$) (Table 5-9). *Unmarked* and *Emphasised Criticisms* occur in 57% and 54% of the reviews respectively, which seem to be less common compared with *Mitigated Criticism*. On average each review contains 1.45 instances of *Unmarked Criticism* ($SD = 1.94$) and 1.13 instances of *Emphasised Criticism* ($SD = 1.48$). It seems that Hong Kong critics prefer to be more reserved with their criticism about the concert. To further look into this matter, Hong Kong critics were asked to comment on their own critical attitudes in interviews. Detailed discussion regarding the interview results can be found in Section 7.5.2.

5.5.2.2 *Emphasised criticism*

As Table 5-9 indicates, only 13.41% of the critical acts are emphasised. *Emphasised criticism* consists of 4 types of acts: *Booster*, *Comparison*, *Interrogative syntax*, and *Impoliteness*. *Booster* is the most widely occurring emphasised criticism. Almost half of Chinese reviews (48.67%) contain *Boosters* to make criticism stronger. The vast majority of emphasised criticism contains *Boosters* (46.84%). On average there are 0.99 instances of *Booster* act per review ($SD = 1.36$) (Table 5-10). An example of emphasised criticism using a booster is as follows:

(5-18) 一隊世界級樂團竟然可以將一首馬勒名作演奏得如此平板，實在教人難以置信。(CK21)

(It was **indeed** unbelievable that a world class orchestra would **actually** perform a Mahler masterpiece **so** plainly.)

Impoliteness, on the other hand, appears in only 10 (6.67%) Chinese reviews (Figure 5-6). Out of 1072 instances of criticism, only 11 contain *Impoliteness*. As an *Impoliteness* act intends to hurt one's face instead of saving it, critics might use it very sparingly to avoid conflicts within a small community of classical music professionals. In the extract below, an impolite comment is made to emphasise the orchestra's weakness by mocking it for being "competent (稱職)" at not controlling their volume properly.

- (5-19) 港樂於演奏該曲時音部平衡太均勻、音量變化不足，**輕聲時不夠輕聲，大聲時卻如常地吶喊——港樂銅管部一向在這些方面很稱職。**(CK13)

(Hong Kong Philharmonic were too balanced with their voice parts and lacked contrast in volume. ***Not soft enough when it should be soft, and shouting as usual when it should be loud – the brass section of Hong Kong Philharmonic has always been competent in aspects like this.***)

Only 4 reviews (2.67%) use *Comparison* (Example 5-20) and 2 reviews (1.33%) use *Interrogative syntax* (Example 5-21) to emphasise their criticisms.

- (5-20) 後半場的《小紅帽》故事，作曲家帕特森(P.Patterson)像是在為卡通片作配音，表面上五彩繽紛，**但音樂感實在不能與普羅可菲也夫的《彼德與狼》相提並論。**(CM14)

(Regarding (the composition on) the Hoodie Red story in the second half of the concert, the composer P.Patterson is like composing music for a cartoon programme. It is colourful on the surface, ***but it is indeed not in the same league with Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf.***)

- (5-21) 如果感受到這慢板的靈性、虔誠、痛苦，**怎能容忍樂師大大力地拉？**(CJ14)
(***How could he tolerate his musicians play so forcefully if he felt the spirit, faith and pain in this Andante movement?***)

5.5.2.3 Mitigated criticism

The majority of the critical acts are mitigated (Table 5-9). There are altogether twelve types of mitigated criticism, of which *Hedge* is found in most reviews (109 out of 150) (Figure 5-7) and is applied most frequently among mitigated critical acts (Table 5-12). On average every review contains 1.87 instances of hedged criticism (SD = 1.98). Chinese critics seem to favour using hedges to soften their criticism, for instance:

- (5-22) 這些作品不似很適合嘉斯坦的風格 (CK52)
(These works *did not seem* to suit Gerstein's style.)

Praise-criticism Pair is the second most common type of mitigated critical acts. Results indicate that 65 out of 150 (43.33%) reviews contain at least one instance of *P-C Pair* (Figure 5-7). On average each review contains 0.77 instances of *P-C Pair* (SD = 1.16). The critical force is diffused by having a praise before the criticism. For example,

- (5-23) 末句高長音她竟然能以漸強而後漸弱唱出，太棒了，不過，有炫耀技巧之疑。
(CK23)
(She was able to sing the high long note at the last phrase with crescendo followed by diminuendo, which was really fantastic. However, it looked like she was showing off her skills.)

In the above extract, the criticism lies in the second half, which criticises the soprano for being showy. The force of criticism is weakened by the praise of her skills before the criticism.

Comparison, *Personal attribution* and *Explaining the Problem* are also popular types of mitigated critical acts (Figure 5-7, Table 5-12). The extract below, on the other hand, illustrates how *Comparison* is used to mitigate a critical act:

- (5-24) 似乎貝多芬第九的演出更能表現她的風格與潛質。(CJ30)
(Perhaps the performance of Beethoven No. 9 was better at reflecting her style and potential.)

In this review, the critic criticised the conductor of her performance of Beethoven Symphony No. 1. Instead of using a straight-forward criticism “her conducting of Beethoven No.1 did not reflect her style and potential”, the above evaluation softens the force of criticism by comparing it to a better performance.

Implication, *Metaphor*, *Negative Humour*, *Other Attribution*, *Hypothetical Statement*, *Interrogative Syntax*, and *Recasting the Problem for Future Improvements* are less common,

both in their coverage in the reviews and their frequencies of occurrence (Figure 5-7, Table 5-12).

Table 5-12: The frequencies and percentages of mitigated criticism in Chinese reviews

Chinese concert reviews (N =150)

Mitigated criticism	Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
	No. of acts	% of mitigated concert criticism	No. of acts	% of mitigated concert criticism
<i>Comparison</i>	0.31	5.58%	0.58	11.23%
<i>Explaining the problem</i>	0.58	10.46%	0.85	16.01%
<i>Hedge</i>	1.87	36.00%	1.98	29.72%
<i>Hypothetical statement</i>	0.21	2.90%	0.50	7.15%
<i>Implication</i>	0.22	4.09%	0.59	13.52%
<i>Interrogative syntax</i>	0.01	0.13%	0.12	1.10%
<i>Metaphor</i>	0.01	0.06%	0.08	0.74%
<i>Negative humour</i>	0.03	0.61%	0.16	4.63%
<i>Other attribution</i>	0.09	1.33%	0.35	5.60%
<i>Personal attribution</i>	0.41	7.02%	0.79	14.00%
<i>Praise-criticism pair</i>	0.77	11.73%	1.16	16.80%
<i>Recasting the problem for future improvements</i>	0.09	1.43%	0.28	5.79%

Note: The percentage of reviews containing mitigated criticism = 81.33%

5.6 Summary

To sum up, all Chinese reviews contain evaluation. The majority (80.86%) of the rhetorical acts are evaluative, and significantly outnumber non-evaluative acts. Despite its low frequencies, non-evaluation is still a core component in Chinese concert reviews as it occurs in almost all reviews (146 out of 150, 97.33%). Of the two types of evaluation, concert evaluation

appears in all Chinese reviews. Background comment is also found in almost all Chinese reviews (140 out of 150). However, the average frequency of concert evaluation significantly exceeds that of background comments, concert evaluation is thus more prominent than background comments in Chinese reviews. The numbers of reviews opening and closing with positive comments greatly exceed those with negative comments. Further to this, the average frequency of positive comments significantly exceeds negative comments across reviews, both in concert evaluation and background comments.

Regarding concert evaluation, every review contains at least one instance of evaluation on specific aspects of the concert. Only 20% of the reviews contain global evaluation. The average frequency of specific evaluation significantly outnumbers global evaluation across reviews, of which praise significantly exceeds criticism in both global and specific aspects of the concert. *Performer/Performance* is the most praised and criticised aspect of the concert, followed by *Composer/Composition*.

Chinese critics seem to be more generous with their praise but more reserved with their criticism. Of the three strength levels of evaluation, emphasised praise appears in most reviews and with the highest average frequency of occurrence followed by unmarked praise. Mitigated praise is found in the lowest number of reviews and with the lowest frequency of occurrence. Contrastingly, in criticism, most critical acts are mitigated. Mitigated critical acts are found in most reviews. Emphasised criticism, on the other hand, appears to be least common in criticism. *Booster* is the most common emphasised evaluative strategy, both in praise and criticism. *Hedge* is the most popular strategy both for mitigated praise and criticism.

Chapter 6 Comparison between English and Chinese concert reviews

This chapter presents a comparison between the English and Chinese concert reviews in order to answer RQ2: What are the similarities and differences in the uses of evaluative acts between Chinese and English concert reviews?

6.1 An overview of similarities and differences between English and Chinese reviews

Overall, English and Chinese reviews show more similarities than differences in their general patterns. First of all, both groups are primarily evaluative, with the number of evaluative acts significantly exceeding non-evaluative acts (*Section 6.2*). Both groups open and close more frequently with positive remarks than with negative ones. However, more English reviews open and close positively than Chinese reviews, while more Chinese reviews open and close with non-evaluation than English reviews (*Section 6.3*). Both groups contain more positive than negative evaluations, including comments on aspects of the concert and background comments (*Section 6.4*). Performance and composition are the two most evaluated aspects of a concert in both groups (*Section 6.5*). Most praise acts in both groups are unreserved or not mitigated (unmarked or emphasised), whereas most critical acts are mitigated. However, Chinese critics tend to be more emphatic with their praise than their British counterparts, given that emphasised praise is the most common type of praise in Chinese reviews, and unmarked praise is most frequent in English reviews. The star rating, an editorial compulsory mandate only applied in English reviews, is sometimes used strategically to mitigate criticism (*Section 6.6*). Table 6-1 shows an overview of similarities and differences between English and Chinese reviews.

Table 6-1: Comparing general features regarding concert evaluative acts in English and Chinese reviews

Cross-cultural similarities	Cross-cultural differences
<i>Occurrences of rhetorical acts</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both evaluation and non-evaluation were core components Evaluation > non-evaluation 	<i>Average number of acts</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chinese > English
<i>Structural patterns</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening: positive > negative Closing: positive > negative 	<i>Opening and closing with positive remarks</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English > Chinese <i>Opening and closing with non-evaluation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chinese > English
<i>Most evaluated aspects</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performer/Performance Composer/Composition 	
<i>Frequencies of evaluations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive > negative 	<i>Positive evaluations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English > Chinese <i>Negative evaluations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English > Chinese
<i>Strengths of evaluation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most critical acts: mitigated Most praise acts: unreserved or not mitigated (unmarked or emphasised) 	<i>Most frequently applied type of praise</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English: Unmarked Chinese: Emphasised
<i>Most frequent emphasis strategy (both praise and criticism):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Booster <i>Most frequent mitigation strategy (both praise and criticism):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hedge 	
<i>Range of evaluative strategies:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A larger range of praise strategies than critical strategies to emphasise evaluation A larger range of critical strategies than praise strategies to mitigate evaluation 	
	<i>Only exists in English reviews:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The star rating system <i>Only exist in Chinese reviews:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation on <i>Concert Management</i> <i>Personal attribution</i> as a mitigation strategy of praise

“>” indicates a significant difference between the two elements for comparison

6.2 Distributions of rhetorical acts in concert reviews

The textual analyses show that Chinese reviews contain more rhetorical acts in both evaluation and non-evaluation than English reviews. There are altogether 2875 acts in the English corpus, with an average of 19.17 rhetorical acts per review. There are 4062 acts in the Chinese corpus, with an average of 27.08 acts per review. The average frequency of rhetorical acts in the Chinese group exceeds the English group by 41%. On average an English review contains 356 words and a Chinese review contains 1525 characters. With the ambiguities in segmenting Chinese words (Ge, Pratt et al. 1999; Teahan, Wen et al. 2000), it might be difficult to account for the differences by referring to word length. However, since single-character and two-character words are in general most frequent in Chinese language, it is sensible to assume that Chinese reviews are longer, which allows more space for critics to discuss various aspects of the concert.

As analysed in *Sections 4.1 and 5.1*, all English and Chinese reviews contain evaluation. More than 80% of the rhetorical acts in both groups are evaluative. On the other hand, most of the reviews in each group contain non-evaluation, although its occurrence is much lower than evaluation for both corpora. It can therefore be said that evaluative and non-evaluative information are both core components of both English and Chinese concert reviews. A Mann-Whitney test however indicated significant differences between the proportions of the two components across groups (Table 6-2). The proportion of evaluative acts in English reviews is significantly higher than in Chinese reviews. In contrast, Chinese reviews have a significantly higher percentage of non-evaluative acts. British critics seem to put more focus on evaluation than their Hong Kong counterparts. On the other hand, Hong Kong critics tend to give more non-evaluative background information than British critics. A possible explanation is that with the more limited space for English reviews, British critics might need to be focused on the most

crucial aspects in their reviews – evaluations. Critics’ views on this issue are detailed in *Section 8.2.1*.

Table 6-2: The occurrences of evaluative and non-evaluative acts in English and Chinese reviews

English concert reviews (N =150)					Chinese concert reviews (N = 150)			
Category of acts	Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation		Mean (per review)		Std. Deviation	
	No. of acts	% across reviews	No. of acts	% across reviews	No. of acts	% across reviews	No. of acts	% across reviews
Evaluative acts	16.05	82.85%	5.29	11.74%	21.83	80.86%	9.40	10.62%
Non-evaluative acts	3.11	17.15%	1.93	11.74%	5.25	19.14%	3.61	10.62%
Mann-Whitney test	Chinese vs. English: $Z = 21091.500$ $p = 0.048$							

6.3 Overall structural patterns

When looking at the overall structure of English and Chinese reviews, it is observed that in both groups a significantly higher number of reviews open and close with positive comments (Table 6-3). Such results are in line with findings of Gea Valor (2000), Ha (2011) and Mackiewicz (2007). Criticism at salient locations such as opening and ending can be very face-threatening, because they are “particularly noticeable and memorable” (Mackiewicz 2007, p. 202). Opening or closing a review positively, on the other hand, can “address both ideational and interpersonal issues, expressing cognitive judgements... [and] redress the threat” the reviewed author might face (Hyland 2000, p.55). Thus, a positive opening or closing remark can function as a mitigation strategy to soften the criticisms embedded in the review.

The numbers of English reviews which open or close positively are greater than Chinese reviews. More Chinese reviews begin and end with neutral non-evaluative remarks than

English reviews. In fact, nearly half (45.33%) of the Chinese reviews begin with non-evaluation, which is neither face-threatening nor face-saving.

Table 6-3: The numbers and percentages of concert reviews opening or closing with evaluation

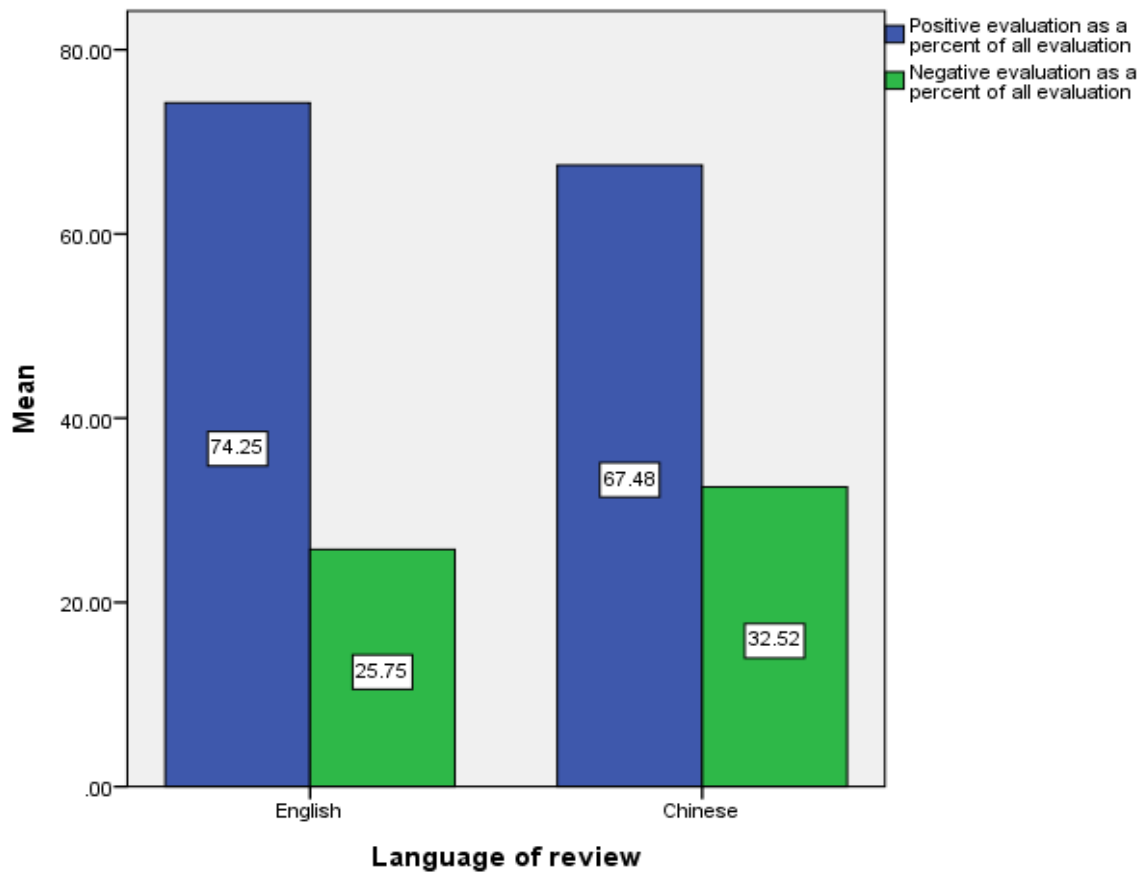
		Number of English concert reviews (N = 150)	Number of Chinese concert reviews (N = 150)
Reviews opening remarks	Positive	95 (63.33%)	75 (50%)
	Negative	18 (12%)	7 (4.67%)
	Non-evaluative	37 (24.67%)	68 (45.33%)
Reviews closing remarks	Positive	104 (69.33%)	94 (62.67%)
	Negative	40 (26.67%)	42 (28%)
	Non-evaluative	6 (4%)	14 (9.33%)

6.4 The proportions of positive and negative evaluations

This section compares the overall proportions of positive and negative evaluations intra-culturally and cross-culturally. Polarity of the components of evaluation, i.e. background comments and concert evaluation, are also compared and contrasted.

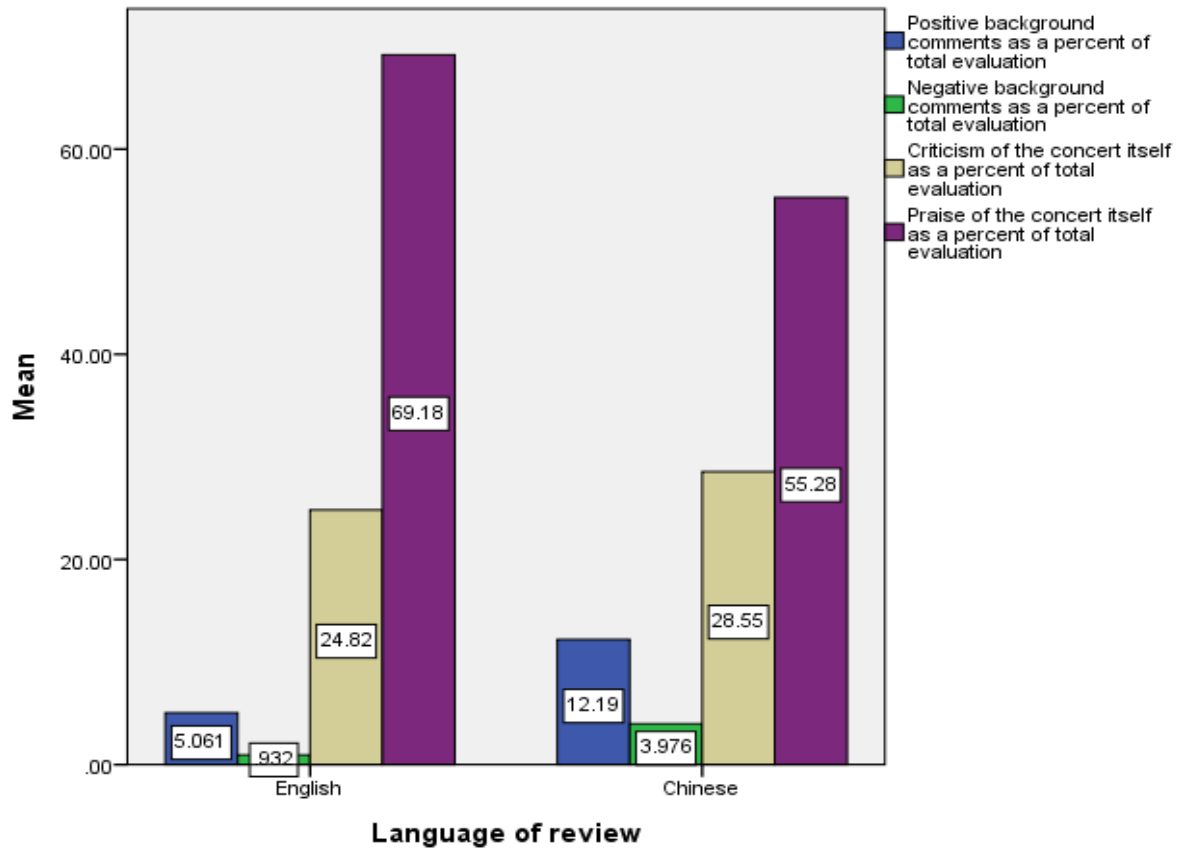
Positive evaluation significantly exceeds negative evaluation in both groups (*Sections 4.1 and 5.1*). As shown in Figure 6-1, approximately three quarters of evaluative acts in English reviews are positive, and about two thirds in Chinese reviews are positive. The results of a Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks test also indicated that the percentage of occurrences of positive evaluation significantly exceeds negative evaluation in both English ($Z = -9.596, p < .001$) and Chinese corpora ($Z = -7.909, p < .001$). It seems that British and Hong Kong critics are on the whole more positive in their evaluations.

Figure 6-1: The percentages of positive and negative evaluative acts in English and Chinese concert reviews (n=150)



When taking a closer look at the components of evaluations, it is observed that positive background comments and concert evaluation significantly outnumber their corresponding negative remarks in both groups (see *Sections 4.1.2 and 5.1*). Figure 6-2 indicates that for both English and Chinese reviews, praise of aspects of the concert occupies more than half of the total instances of evaluation. In English reviews, 69.18% of its evaluation is praise of the concert, which is almost triple the amount of criticism of the concert (24.82%). Positive background comments (5.06%), on the other hand, are more than 5 times the number of negative background comments (0.932%). Similarly, in Chinese reviews, 55.28% of the evaluation is praise of the aspects of concert, which is almost double that of criticism of the concert (28.55%). Positive background comments in Chinese reviews are about three times that of the negative ones.

Figure 6-2: The percentages of positive and negative evaluative acts in aspects of background and concert evaluation



Furthermore, praise on aspects of the concert appears in all English and Chinese reviews. It is also worth noting that not all English and Chinese reviews contain negative comments. About 20% of the English reviews and 15% of the Chinese reviews do not include criticism about the concert at all (Table 6-4). In other words, these reviews contain only positive comments about the concert.

Table 6-4: The numbers and percentages of English and Chinese concerts containing positive and negative evaluations

Evaluative acts		Number and percentage of English reviews (n = 150)	Number and percentage of Chinese reviews (n = 150)
Background comments	Positive	81 (54%)	130 (86.67%)
	Negative	22 (14.67%)	75 (50%)
Concert evaluations	Praise	150 (100%)	150 (100%)
	Criticism	121 (80.67%)	127 (84.67%)
Mann-Whitney test (English vs. Chinese reviews)	Positive vs. negative evaluations		$U = 9166.000$ $p = 0.005$

A cross-cultural comparison was also conducted to discuss the similarities and differences between English and Chinese reviews in this aspect. As shown in Table 6-4, a Mann-Whitney test indicated that the percentage of positive evaluations in English reviews significantly exceeds Chinese reviews ($U = 9166.000, p = 0.005$). Followed-up Mann-Whitney tests indicated the proportions of both positive and negative background comments in the Chinese group significantly exceed the English group (Negative background comments: $U = 6696.500, p < .001$; Positive background comments: $U = 7160.500, p < .001$). On the other hand, percentage of the praise of on aspects of the concert in English reviews is significantly higher than in Chinese reviews ($U = 7024.500, p < .001$). Percentage of concert criticism in Chinese reviews exceeds English, though there has been no significant difference between the two groups in their proportions of concert criticism ($U = 10068.000, p = 0.115$). Thus, it might be possible that British critics are in general more positive than Hong Kong critics. Hong Kong critics praise and criticise more than British critics about aspects other than the concert itself, while British critics praise more than their Hong Kong counterparts on aspects about the concert. However, the degree of positiveness should not be determined by occurrences of acts alone. I will compare the distributions (*Section 6.5*) and strengths of evaluative acts (*Section 6.6*) in both corpora for a fuller picture of the evaluation patterns across languages.

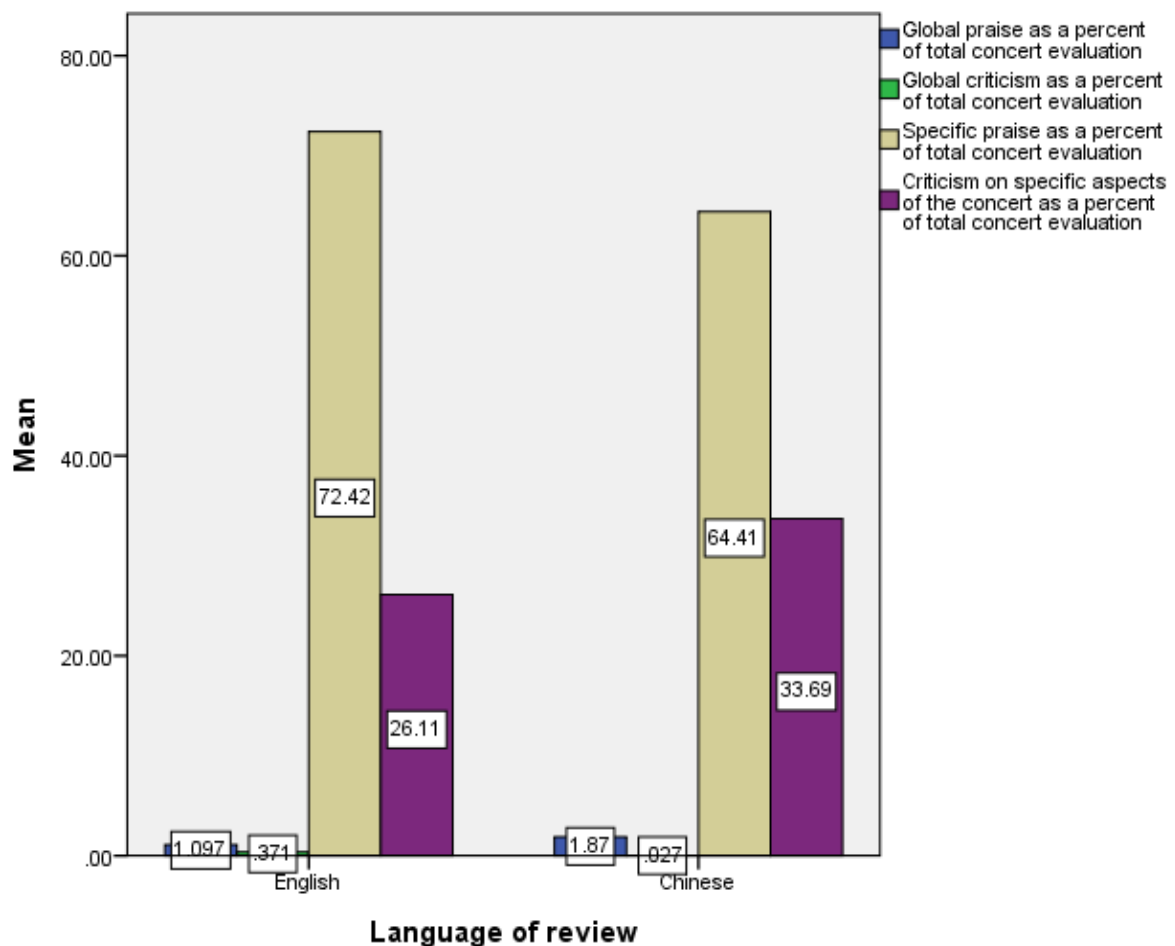
6.5 Dimensions of concert evaluation

Concert evaluation is a prominent component in both corpora, which predominantly targets specific aspects of the concert (*Sections 4.3.1 and 5.3*). As shown in Figure 6-3, more than 98% of the evaluative acts in English and Chinese reviews respectively are on specific aspects of the concert. Less than 2% of the evaluations in each group are global comments. Critics from both groups praise significantly more than criticise both global and specific aspects of the concert (details in *Sections 4.4.1 and 5.4.1*). In both groups, the majority of the concert

evaluations are praise acts on specific aspects of the concert. Nearly three quarters (72.42%) of total evaluations in English and two thirds (64.41%) in Chinese are praises on specific aspects of the concert. About a quarter (26.11%) of the evaluations in English and a third (33.69%) in Chinese are specific criticisms.

Followed-up Mann-Whitney tests indicated that across the groups, the proportion of specific praise in the English corpus significantly exceeds Chinese ($U = 8927.000, p = 0.002$). Chinese reviews, on the other hand, contain a significantly higher proportion of specific critical acts than English reviews ($U = 9141.500, p = 0.005$). The proportions of global praise and criticism are however too small to be compared and contrasted in this study.

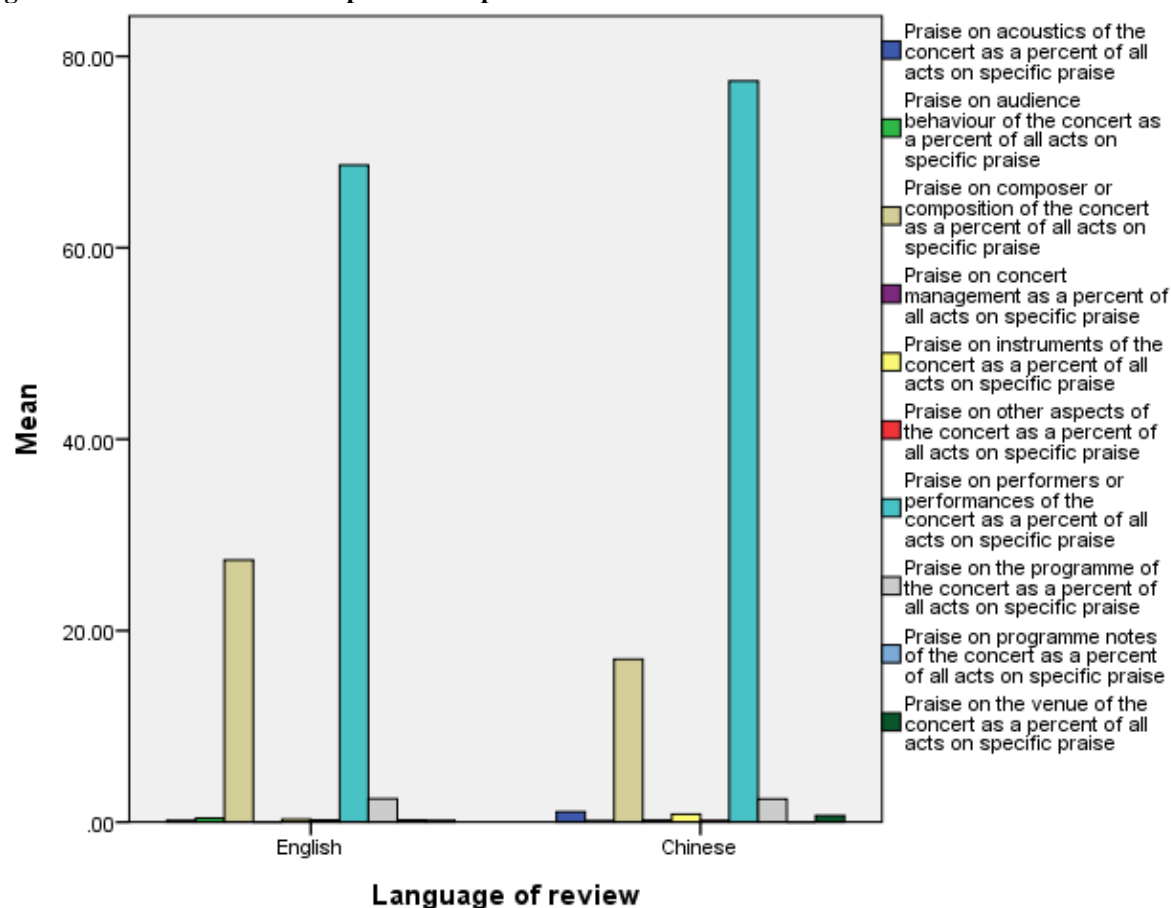
Figure 6-3: The distributions of global and specific evaluations



Regarding aspects of the concert, music itself seems to be the priority of evaluation for both British and Hong Kong critics. Quality of performance is given most attention within this category, followed by the standard and selection of compositions (Figure 6-4 and Figure 6-5).

In English reviews, about two-thirds of the specific praise are on *Performer/Performance* (68.65%), and more than a quarter are on *Composer/Composition* (27.39%). In Chinese reviews, more than three quarters of the praise are on *Performer/Performance* (77.42%), and 17.02% are on *Composer and Composition* (Figure 6-4 and Table 6-5). Similarly, these two aspects are also evaluated the most in English record reviews (Ha 2011). A non-parametric Friedman test of differences among praise on specific aspects of the concert was conducted and rendered a Chi-square value of 960.621 for English reviews which is highly significant ($p < .001$), and a Chi-square result value of 855.539 for Chinese reviews which is also highly significant ($p < .001$). Followed-up non-parametric Wilcoxon tests indicated that the praise on *Performer/Performance* is statistically significantly higher than the praise on *Composer/Composition* in both English reviews ($Z = -7.996, p < .001$) and Chinese reviews ($Z = -9.470, p < .001$). Thus quality of performance seems to be the most prominent aspect of the concert to evaluate for both groups. Other aspects of the concert, such as acoustics, instruments, audience behaviour, programme, programme notes, and venue, are given much less attention by both British and Hong Kong critics Figure 6-4 and Table 6-5).

Comparing the two groups cross-culturally, a Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there is a significantly higher proportion of praise, on performance aspect of the concert ($\chi^2 = 13.149, p = < .001$) in Chinese reviews, and a significantly higher proportion of praise on the composition aspect in English reviews ($\chi^2 = 20.470, p = < .001$). In other words, Hong Kong critics praise much more than their British counterparts on the performance of a concert, while British critics praise the aspect of composition significantly more than Hong Kong critics.

Figure 6-4: The distributions of praise on aspects of the concert**Table 6-5: Frequencies and percentages of praise on specific aspects of the concert**

Specific aspects of praise in concert evaluation	English concert reviews (n = 150)		Chinese concert reviews (n = 150)	
	No. of acts	% of specific praise	No. of acts	% of specific praise
<i>Acoustics</i>	0.03	0.18%	0.13	1.08%
<i>Audience Behaviour</i>	0.03	0.42%	0.01	0.15%
<i>Composer/Composition</i>	2.88	27.39%	1.93	17.02%
<i>Concert Management</i>	0.00	0.00%	0.03	0.20%
<i>Instrument</i>	0.03	0.29%	0.07	0.84%
<i>Performer/Performance</i>	7.33	68.65%	8.89	77.42%
<i>Programme</i>	0.25	2.43%	0.24	2.42%
<i>Programme notes</i>	0.03	0.24%	0.00	0.00%
<i>Venue</i>	0.02	0.17%	0.08	0.69%
<i>Other Aspects</i>	0.03	0.23%	0.02	0.18%

As for criticism, more than half of the criticism is of *Performer/Performance*, in both English and Chinese. *Composer/Composition* takes up to 15.83% and 5.55% of the specific criticism in English and Chinese reviews respectively (Figure 6-5 and Table 6-6). A non-parametric Friedman test of differences among criticisms of specific aspects of the concert was conducted and rendered a Chi-square value of 545.422 for English reviews which is highly significant ($p < .001$), and a Chi-square result value of 533.149 for Chinese reviews which is also highly significant ($p < .001$). Followed-up non-parametric Wilcoxon signed ranks tests indicated that the criticism of *Performer/Performance* is statistically significantly higher than the criticism of *Composer/Composition* in both English reviews ($Z = -6.482, p < .001$) and Chinese reviews ($Z = -8.824, p < .001$). Same as with praise, other aspects of the concert other than performance and composition, are criticised much less in both languages. A Kruskal-Wallis test, nevertheless, shows no significant difference across the two languages in their criticism of specific aspects of the concert.

Figure 6-5: The distributions of criticism on aspects of the concert

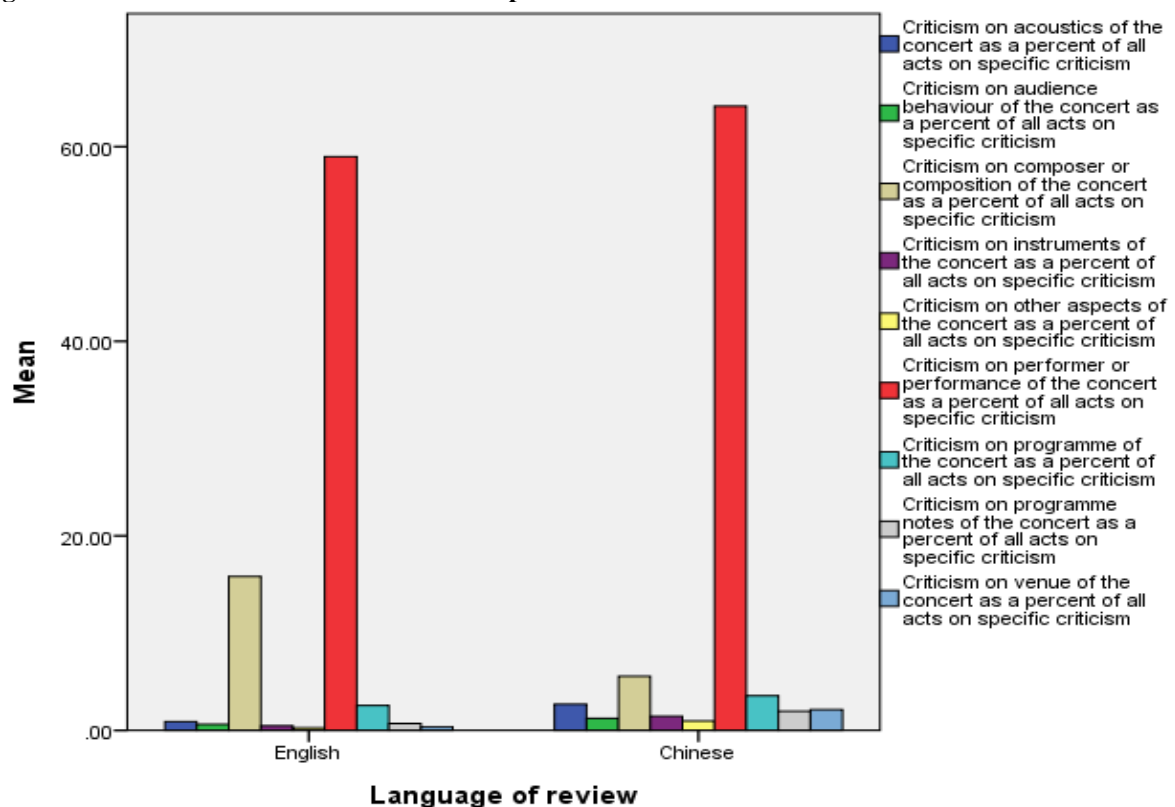


Table 6-6: Frequencies and percentages of criticism on specific aspects of the concert

Specific aspects of criticism in concert evaluation	English concert reviews (n = 150)		Chinese concert reviews (n = 150)	
	No. of acts	% of specific criticism	No. of acts	% of specific criticism
<i>Acoustics</i>	0.04	0.90%	0.19	2.68%
<i>Audience Behaviour</i>	0.03	0.63%	0.10	1.23%
<i>Composer/Composition</i>	0.73	15.83%	0.33	5.55%
<i>Concert Management</i>	0.00	0.00%	0.09	0.98%
<i>Instrument</i>	0.02	0.47%	0.10	1.45%
<i>Performer/Performance</i>	3.22	58.98%	5.94	64.16%
<i>Programme</i>	0.13	2.57%	0.13	3.55%
<i>Programme notes</i>	0.07	0.70%	0.09	1.96%
<i>Venue</i>	0.05	0.34%	0.09	2.13%
<i>Other Aspects</i>	0.02	0.25%	0.07	0.97%

It is worth noting that evaluations on *Concert Management* only occur in Chinese reviews. Results indicate that 8 out of 150 reviews comment on this aspect, with a total 13 instances of praise and 4 instances of criticism. Hong Kong critics would comment on the standard of management work for the concert, and its impact on quality of the concert. In the example below, the critic complains about the adverse effect poor service at the concert hall had on the show:

- (6-1) Kempf彈完第二樂章停了良久，不敢貿然開始終曲，卻被帶位員當成彈完，帶遲到觀眾入座。。。擾擾攘攘大煞風景。(CJ25)

[Kempf paused for a long time after the second movement, as he did not intend to start the finale hastily. But an usher thought it was finished and took late comers to their seats...The hustle and bustle has indeed spoilt the show]

British critics do not comment on management of the concert. Thus, this aspect might not be considered as a relevant factor that needs to be commented on in English reviews.

In short, critics in both languages show similar trends in terms of what they comment on. Both British and Hong Kong critics focus primarily on specific aspects of the concert, rather than giving global comments. Proportions of global and specific praise and criticism again prove that both British and Hong Kong critics tend to praise significantly more than criticise in their reviews. When comparing cross-culturally, it is revealed that British critics make more specific praises than Hong Kong critics, while Hong Kong critics criticise more on specific aspects than their British counterparts. Evaluations are predominantly on performances, followed by compositions in both groups. Hong Kong critics have one extra aspect of the concert to comment on: *Concert Management*.

6.6 Strengths of concert evaluation

When looking at concert evaluation, both British and Hong Kong critics again seem to be rather generous with their praise. The majority of their praise acts are either emphasised or unmarked. As Figure 6-6 shows, the most common praise acts in English reviews are unmarked (45.52%), and in Chinese reviews are emphasised (42.30%). A Mann-Whitney test shows that the proportion of emphasised praise acts in Chinese reviews significantly exceeds that of in English reviews ($U = 8611.500, p < .001$). Thus, Hong Kong critics tend to be more expressive than their British counterparts when praising the concert. Mitigated praise is the least common type in both groups.

Conversely, critics in both cultures seem to be more reserved with their critical comments. More than half of their criticisms are mitigated. Emphasised criticism, which strengthens the face-threatening act, appears least in both groups (Figure 6-7). The results reveal that critics from both groups tend to soften their criticisms rather than making them stronger.

According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, praise and criticism are closely related to potential face threats. In line with Hyland and Diani's (2009) claim that spiteful criticism can cause severe damage to one's face, emphasised criticism does not seem to be favoured by critics across the two writing cultures. However, though lavish praise is regarded as "superficial and indiscriminating" (Hyland and Diani 2009, p.9), critics from both groups seem to not be against the idea of gushing out their praise expressively, especially Hong Kong critics. More details regarding this issue can be seen in *chapter 8* and *chapter 9*, where critics shared their concerns about criticising musicians. Mitigated praise and criticism, on the other hand, are largely applied in concert review evaluation for the sake of face-saving (Hyland 2000; Ha 2011).

Figure 6-6: The percentages of praise acts of levels of strengths

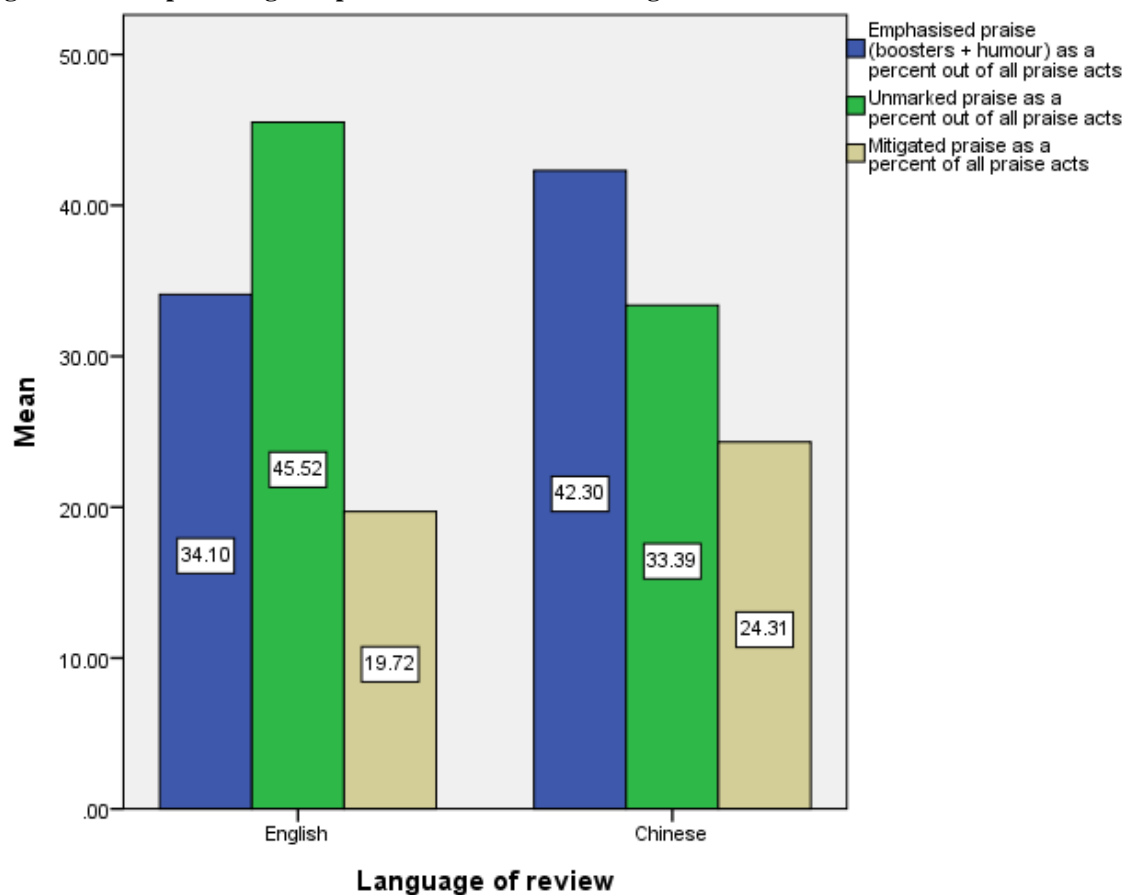
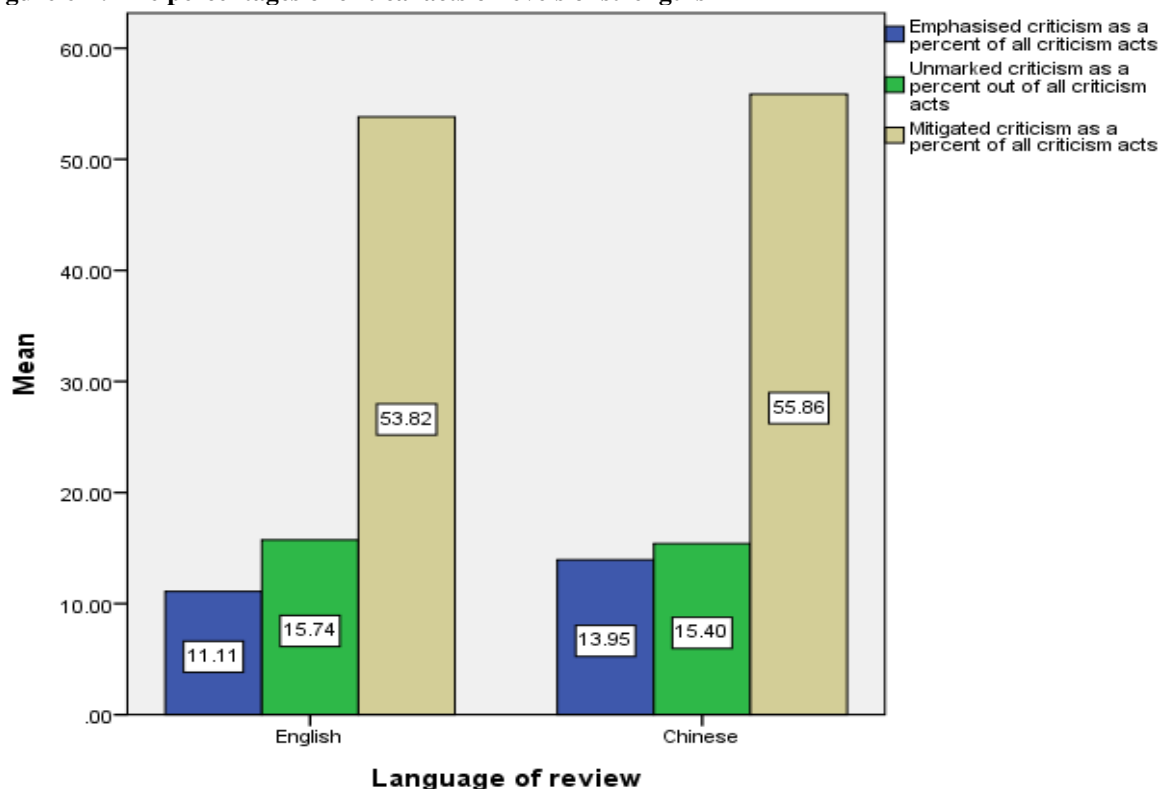


Figure 6-7: The percentages of critical acts of levels of strengths

6.6.1 Emphasised evaluations

This section compares the use of various types of emphasised praise and criticism in English and Chinese concert reviews. First of all, both groups apply more strategies to emphasise their praise than criticism. There are 8 types of emphasised praise and only 4 types of emphasised criticism (Figures 6-8 & 6-9). Both British and Hong Kong critics seem to use more embellishment with their emphasised praise than criticism. As an emphasised praise reinforces one's positive face, critics might be more willing to use it more commonly. Emphasised criticism, on the other hand, can be used to demonstrate that the critic is not just being polite, but is being "balanced and truthful" as well (Shaw 2009, p.224). More discussion of individual types of emphasised praise can be found in *Section 6.6.1.1*, and individual types of emphasised criticism in *Section 6.6.1.2*.

6.6.1.1 Emphasised praise

Booster is predominantly applied in both groups to emphasise their praise acts. Textual analysis results show that 79.18% of the emphasised acts in the English corpus and 80.05% in the Chinese corpus contain at least one instance of *Booster* (Figure 6-8 and Table 6-7). It is observed that both English and Chinese critics use similar types of boosters to emphasise their praise acts, such as adverbs (e.g. *very*, *absolutely*, *extremely*), comparative or superlative forms (e.g. *more effective*, *the most impressive*), determiner (e.g. *such*, *every*), and punctuations (e.g. exclamation mark “!”, quotation mark “...”).

Other emphasised praise and critical strategies, however, are applied much less frequently by British and Hong Kong critics. The second most common emphasised praise strategy in English reviews is *Other attribution*, and in Chinese reviews it is *Personal attribution*. The least common type of emphasised praise is *Interrogative syntax* in English reviews, and *Interrogative syntax* and *Metaphor* in Chinese reviews (Figure 6-8 and Table 6-7).

Figure 6-8: The percentages of emphasised praise strategies

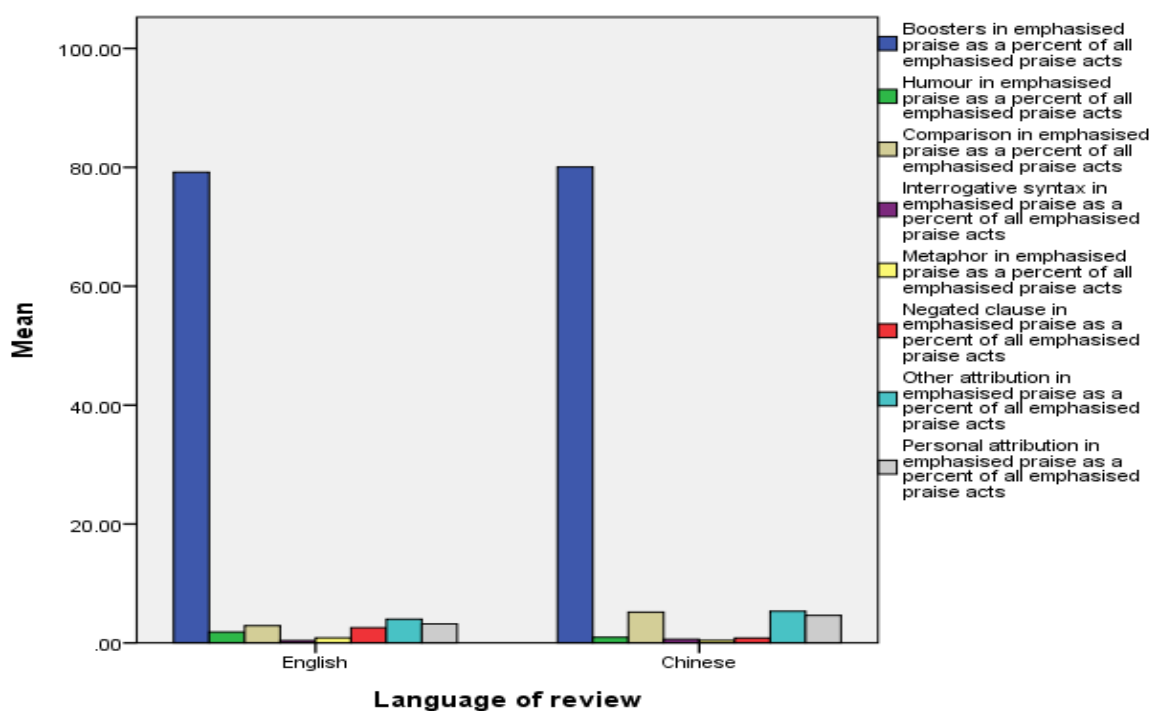


Table 6-7: Frequencies and percentages of types of emphasised praise

Types of emphasised praise	English concert reviews (n = 150)		Chinese concert reviews (n = 150)	
	No. of acts	% of emphasised praise	No. of acts	% of emphasised praise
<i>Booster</i>	3.05	79.18%	3.77	80.05%
<i>Humour</i>	0.13	2.88%	0.23	5.19%
<i>Comparison</i>	0.11	1.85%	0.03	0.61%
<i>Interrogative syntax</i>	0.01	0.39%	0.05	0.94%
<i>Metaphor</i>	0.05	0.85%	0.03	0.42%
<i>Negated clause</i>	0.12	2.55%	0.05	0.82%
<i>Other attribution</i>	0.19	3.99%	0.20	5.34%
<i>Personal attribution</i>	0.18	3.21%	0.25	4.63%

6.6.1.2 Emphasised criticism

Similar to emphasised praises, *Booster* is the predominant strategy to reinforce critical acts in both groups (Figure 6-9 and Table 6-8). *Booster* in emphasised criticism has a mean frequency of 0.53 (28.78%) in English reviews and a mean frequency of 0.99 (46.84%) in Chinese reviews, which are the highest in both groups. Apart from the common types of boosters found in both groups, it is interesting to note that only Chinese reviews contain slangs as a way to strengthen the force of criticising the misbehaviour of audience:

- (6-2) 希望古典音樂會的觀眾都能明白，正如俗語有云：「唔出聲有人話你啞」，就算不即時拍掌，也不會有人說你不懂欣賞的。(CJ65)
 [Hope audience of classical concerts can all understand, *as it's commonly said: "nobody calls you a mute if you keep your mouth shut"*. Nobody would say that you do not know how to appreciate the music if you do not clap immediately.]

Hong Kong critics write their reviews in modern Chinese written language. Casual and informal Cantonese colloquial writing, though sometimes appearing in Hong Kong newspapers,

very rarely appears in classical concert reviews. In Example 6-2, the Cantonese slang “唔出聲冇人話你啞” (*nobody calls you a mute if you keep your mouth shut*) stands out for being different from the rest of the text stylistically, and thus reinforces its criticism about the audience for clapping at an inappropriate time. No slang has been spotted in English reviews.

Impoliteness is the second most commonly applied strategy to emphasise criticism in both groups, which records a mean frequency of 0.13 (5.70%) in English reviews and a mean frequency of 0.07 (3.82%) in Chinese reviews. *Impoliteness* intends to hurt one's face rather than saving it (Beebe 1995; Culpeper 1996; Culpeper, Bousfield et al. 2003). One difference has been observed between the English and Chinese group over the use of impoliteness: no instance has been found of criticism against the performer's look in English reviews, whereas there are a few in Chinese reviews which are coded as *Impoliteness*. For example:

- (6-3) 哥列利區顯然是一個大明星，人過中年，作風不改，走進台前坐下就彈，毫無表情（和月前來港獻藝的朗朗正相反），**像一具殭屍**。(CJ43)
[Obviously Igor Stravinsky is a superstar, who did not change his style at midage. He started playing straight away once he sat down. There was no expression on his face just the opposite to Lang Lang who came to Hong Kong a month ago), **looking like a vampire.**]
- (6-4) 梵志登沒跟此 dresscode，**以他的拿破崙身型**，穿牛仔褲也不會好看。(CJ23)
[Jaap van Zweden did not follow this dresscode. He won't look good in jeans with **his Napoleon-alike bodyshape.**]
- (6-5) 還有那位久聞其名卻從未聽過的娜塔莉亞·古特曼，**怎麼老得有點癡肥？**(CM01)
(And that Natalia Gutman who I have heard so much about but never listened to – **why is she so old that looking a bit obese?**)

The above criticisms about the performer's appearance only exist in a few Chinese reviews. This implies that only Hong Kong critics regard the performer's look as part of the performance to be commented on. There is no instance of British critics making critical comments about the performers appearance in this corpus. While Hong Kong critics might not consider commenting negatively on a musician's appearance as being impolite, British critics

might be more aware of the possible offence such comments can cause. In 2014, for example, the British opera world reacted strongly against a few critics' negative remarks about a female opera singer's appearance (Ellis-Petersen 2014). However, interview results show that some British and Hong Kong critics regard the performer's appearance as part of the performance, especially if it is an opera.

There is no significant statistical difference between the mean percentages of *Comparison* and *Interrogative Syntax* in both languages.

Figure 6-9: The percentages of emphasised critical strategies

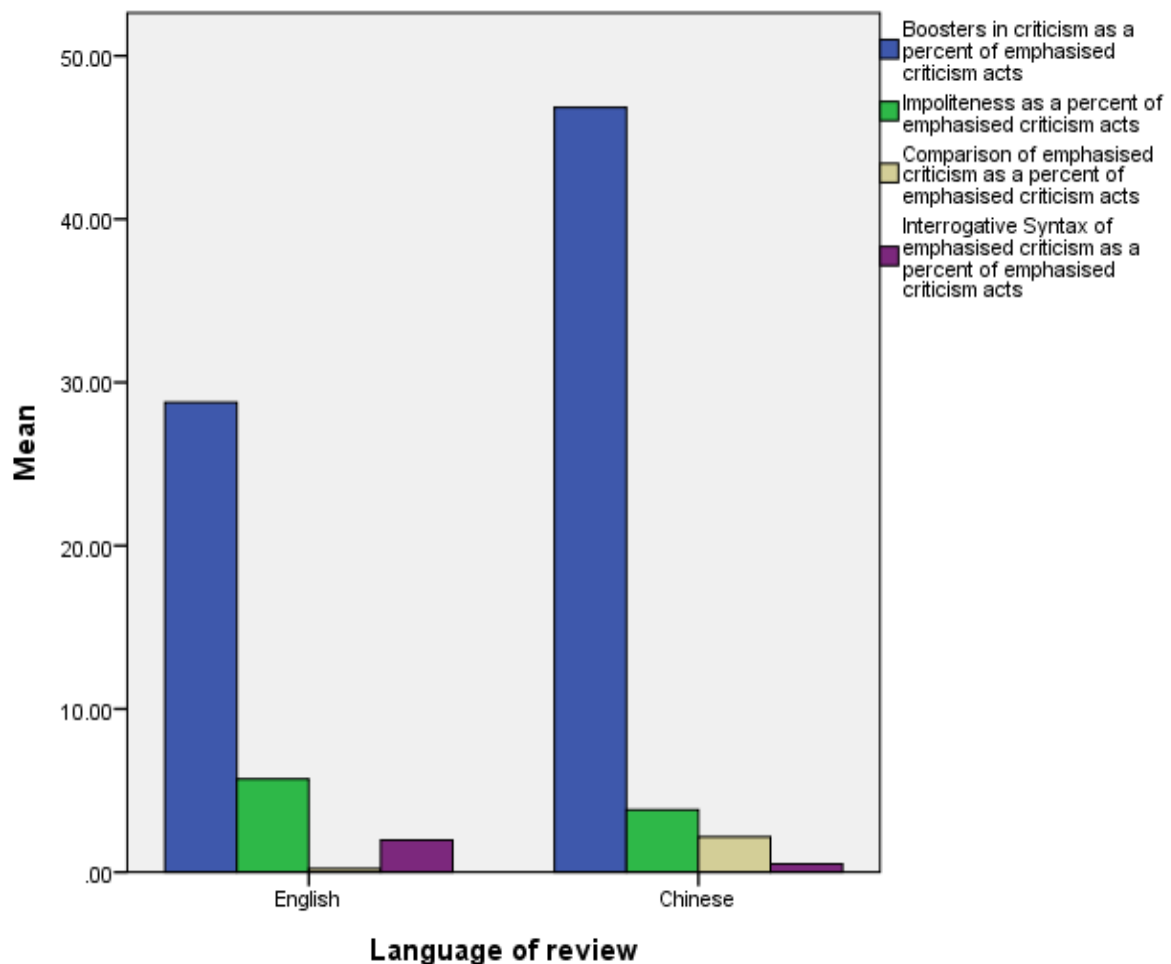


Table 6-8: Frequencies and percentages of types of emphasised criticism

Types of emphasised criticism	English concert reviews (n = 150)		Chinese concert reviews (n = 150)	
	No. of acts	% of emphasised criticism	No. of acts	% of emphasised criticism
<i>Booster</i>	0.53	28.78%	0.99	46.84%
<i>Comparison</i>	0.01	0.22%	0.03	2.17%
<i>Impoliteness</i>	0.13	5.70%	0.07	3.82%
<i>Interrogative Syntax</i>	0.05	1.97%	0.01	0.50%

6.6.2 Mitigated evaluations

This section compares the uses of various strategies to mitigate praise and criticism in both languages. Mitigation is applied more to soften criticism than praise in both groups. As shown in Figure 6-6, only about a fifth (19.72%) of concert praises in English reviews and a quarter (24.31%) in Chinese are mitigated. In contrast, more than half of the critical acts in English (53.82%) and Chinese reviews (55.86%) are mitigated (Figure 6-7). This implies that both British and Hong Kong critics tend to be more reserved with their criticism than praise.

It is also worth noting that compared with emphasised evaluations, both British and Hong Kong critics applied a greater variety of strategies to mitigate their praise and criticism. There are altogether ten strategies to mitigate praise (Figure 6-10) and twelve strategies to mitigate criticism (Figure 6-11). A cross-cultural comparison of mitigation strategies in praise is provided in *Section 6.6.2.1*, in criticism is provided in *Section 6.6.2.2*.

6.6.2.1 Mitigation strategies in praise

There are nine types of strategies in English and ten types of strategies to mitigate praise in Chinese reviews. *Personal attribution* as a mitigation praise strategy only appears in Chinese

reviews. As shown in Figure 6-10 and Table 6-9, in both groups, *Hedge* is a predominant mitigation strategy which greatly exceeds other strategies in praise. Besides *Hedge*, *Comparison*, *Criticism-Praise Pair*, *Metaphor* and *Negated Clause* are also popular mitigation praise strategies in both corpora. The mitigation strategy being used least is *Interrogative syntax* in English reviews, and *Implication* in Chinese reviews.

Figure 6-10: The percentages of types of mitigated praise

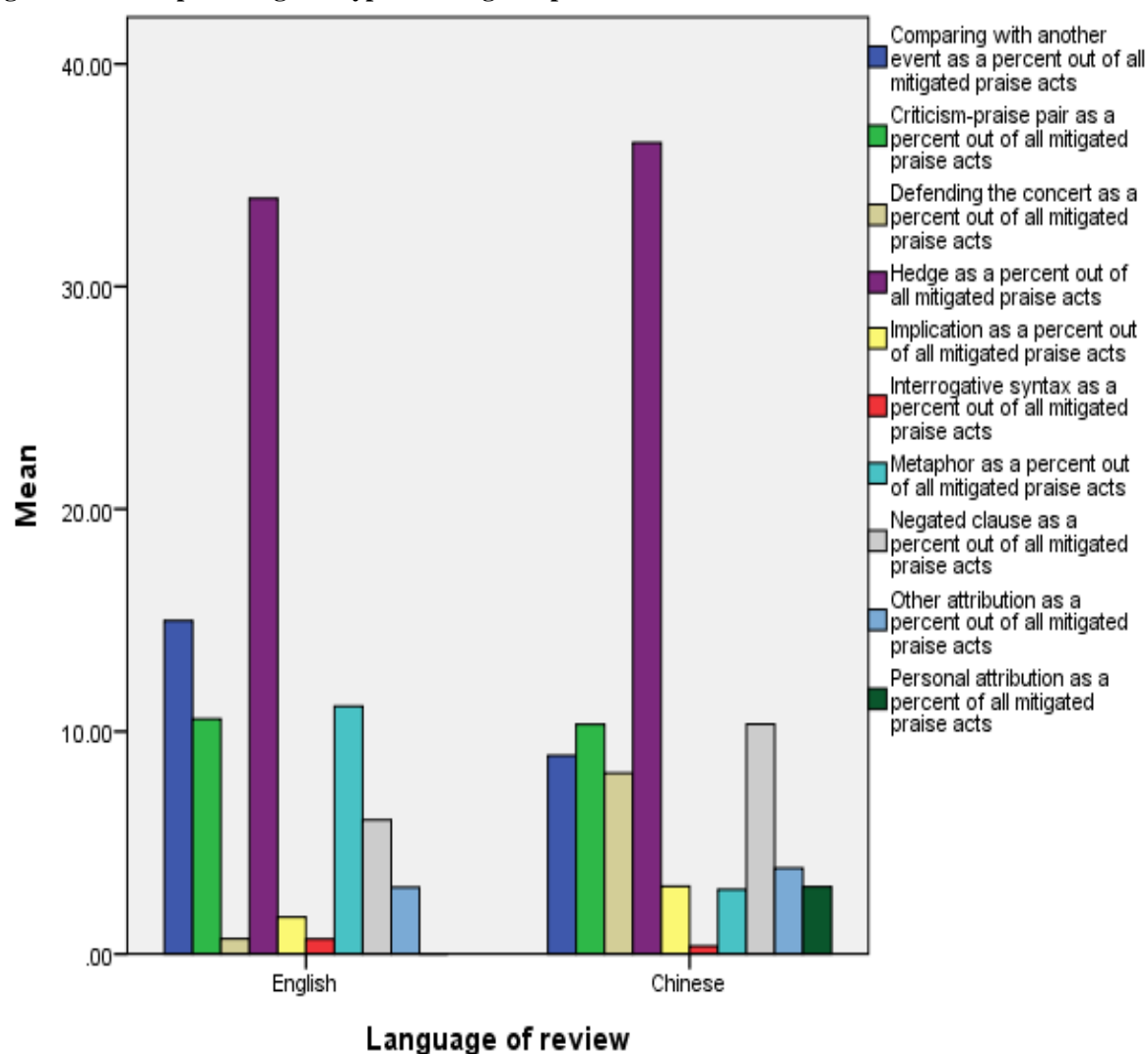


Table 6-9: Frequencies and percentages of types of mitigated praise

Types of mitigated praise	English concert reviews (n = 150)		Chinese concert reviews (n = 150)	
	No. of acts	% of mitigated praise	No. of acts	% of mitigated praise
<i>Comparison</i>	0.34	14.98%	0.31	8.92%
<i>Criticism-praise pair</i>	0.33	10.57%	0.41	10.32%
<i>Defend the concert</i>	0.04	0.68%	0.25	8.13%
<i>Hedge</i>	0.93	33.95%	1.21	36.47%
<i>Implication</i>	0.06	1.66%	0.08	3.04%
<i>Interrogative syntax</i>	0.01	0.67%	0.02	0.35%
<i>Metaphor</i>	0.35	11.13%	0.09	2.90%
<i>Negated clause</i>	0.15	6.02%	0.36	10.34%
<i>Other attribution</i>	0.07	3.00%	0.12	3.85%
<i>Personal attribution</i>	0.00	0.00%	0.09	3.02%

Cross-cultural differences between the British and Hong Kong groups in terms of the percentage of each strategy in all mitigated praise acts were checked by a Mann-Whitney test and significant differences were found in four strategies. They are: *Defending the concert*, *Negated clause*, *Implication* and *Metaphor* (Table 6-10) Personal attribution does not appear in the English group so it shows a significant difference as well ($p < 0.001$).

Table 6-10: Results of a Mann-Whitney test

	Comparison	Criticism-praise pair	Defending the concert	Hedge	Implication
<i>U</i>	10674.000	11012.000	9118.500	10745.500	11018.500
<i>Sig.</i>	.326	.683	$p < .001$.486	.486
	Interrogative syntax	Metaphor	Negated clause	Other attribution	Personal attribution
<i>U</i>	11101.500	9508.000	9657.000	10890.000	10350.000
<i>Sig.</i>	.320	$p < .001$.003	.317	$p < .001$

The results indicated that *Personal attribution* is only used to mitigate praise by Hong Kong critics, as some Hong Kong critics would explicitly address their praise as a personal opinion, thereby weaken the force of praise. For example,

- (6-6) *也許這都是我個人的主觀印象*, 或可說是一個聽者和演奏者的心靈對話, 而不是客觀的樂評分析。然而這種主觀印象, 猶如某些珍貴的回憶, 持久而難忘。
(CJ47)
(*This might all be my personal and subjective impression*, or a spiritual conversation between a hearer and a performer, but not an objective analysis of the music. However, this subjective impressioin is like some precious memories, which are long-lasting and unforgettable.)

The praise in the above example is weakened as the critic stresses that it is only a personal and subjective opinion, not an objective analysis. Interview results reveal that compared with British critics, most Hong Kong music critics do not publish reviews on a regular basis. Some consider themselves as amateurs. The modesty can be reflected in their tone of writing, such as admitting their opinion is not an objective analysis of the music.

Furthermore, the Chinese group has significantly higher mean percentages than the English group in the following mitigation strategies:

- *Defending the concert*
- *Negated clause*

The English group shows significantly higher mean percentages than the Chinese group in the following mitigation strategies:

- *Implication*
- *Metaphor*

It is interesting to note that the British and Hong Kong critics are indirect in different ways. Hong Kong critics favour offering their praise in a seemingly negative manner: *Defending the concert* presents the critic's counter argument on a pseudo-criticism of the

concert. In the example below (6-7), the critic first states that the conductor was too slow, then immediately defends the conductor by commenting positively on the chosen tempo:

- (6-7) 指揮在三重奏部分拖得太慢，黑暗的感覺過強，不過這樂章正有憤怒逐漸吞噬優雅的意思。(CJ11)
[The conductor dragged too much at the trio part, which made the dark feelings too strong. However, this movement does intend to express fury gradually engulfing sophistication.]

Negated clause presents positive evaluation through the notion of double negatives. For example,

- (6-8) 不過 Vivier 的《獵戶座》亦非劣作 (CJ28)
However, Viver's Orion is *not a bad work* either.

British critics, on the other hand, prefer to convey their praise implicitly. *Implication* contains no explicit positive lexical items and requires the reader to relate to context of the review. For instance, in Example 3-37, the critic describes the singer's body posture to hint that his voice has improved (*Section 3.3.4.3.2*). Similarly, a *Metaphor* contains no explicit praise words and one needs to take the surrounding text into consideration in order to understand the positive meaning of it. For example:

- (6-9) For once, you could smell *the cheap perfume and sweaty desire of the Buenos Aires dance halls*. (ET19)

Instead of praising the performance directly, the critic describes the sensations the music has brought about, implying the performance of Astor Piazzolla's tangos conjured a vivid image.

Considering the findings, there are five strategies which both groups show similar percentages of mean frequencies. Each group also shows their preferences for a couple of

particular strategies. However, greater percentages of few individual strategies do not necessarily suggest one group is more mitigated in their praise acts on the whole. Therefore, another Mann-Whitney test was conducted comparing the strengths of praises (emphasised, unmarked and mitigated) between the two groups. The result indicated that Chinese reviews contain a significantly higher percentage of mitigated praise acts than English reviews ($U = 9625.500, p = .030$). The findings again do not necessarily imply that Hong Kong critics are more reserved in their praise than British critics, as the Chinese corpus also has a significantly higher percentage of emphasised praises ($U = 8611.500, p < .001$). English reviews, on the other hand, have a significantly higher percentage of unmarked praise than Chinese ($U = 7142.000, p < .001$). In order to find out which group is more reserved in their praise acts, a Mann-Whitney test was conducted to compare cross-culturally unreserved praises (emphasised or unmarked praise acts) and mitigated praises. The results show that the difference in percentage is neither significant in unreserved praises ($U = 9900.000, p = 0.072$) nor mitigated praises in both languages ($U = 9901.500, p = 0.072$). Thus, textual analyses reflect a similar trend in the strengths of praises cross-culturally.

6.6.2.2 *Mitigation strategies in criticism*

Compared with mitigated praise, more strategies are applied by British and Hong Kong critics to mitigate their critical acts. There are twelve types of strategies to mitigate criticisms. Similar to that of praise, *Hedge* is a dominating mitigation critical strategy in both English and Chinese, followed by *Praise-Criticism Pair*. *Interrogative Syntax* is the least applied act in both groups (Figure 6-11 and Table 6-11). There is a mitigation strategy of criticism which only exists in the English group – the star rating. It is not included in the twelve mitigation strategies, because it is an editorial mandate and British critics have a passive role in applying it. However, according to critics (Sections 7.5.2 and 8.4), the star rating is sometimes regarded as a

replacement of global criticism. Thus, regardless of the purposes of newspaper editors on star rating, the system may function as a mitigation strategy which conveys the critic's overall negative opinion implicitly to the readers.

Figure 6-11: The percentages of mitigated critical acts

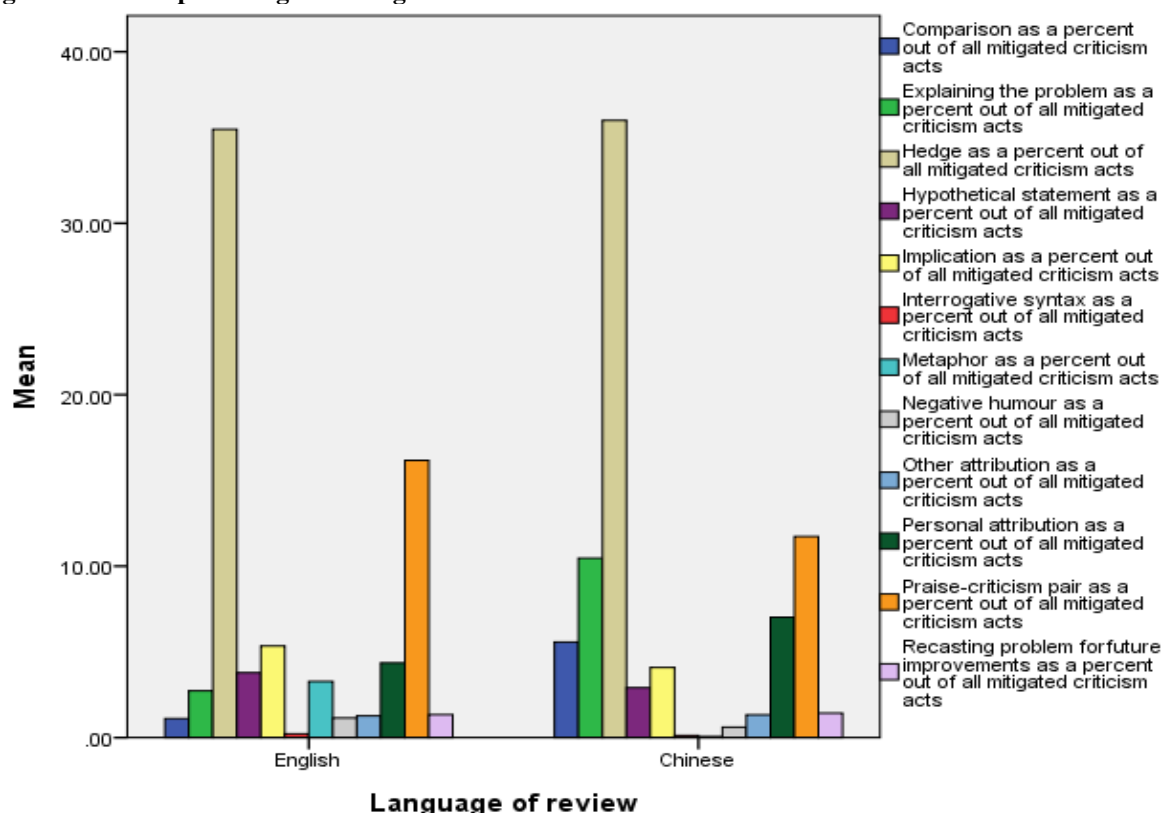


Table 6-11: Frequencies and percentages of types of mitigated criticism

Types of mitigated criticism	English concert reviews (n = 150)		Chinese concert reviews (n = 150)	
	No. of acts	% of mitigated criticism	No. of acts	% of mitigated criticism
<i>Comparison</i>	0.05	1.11%	0.31	5.58%
<i>Explaining the problem</i>	0.11	2.73%	0.58	10.46%
<i>Hedge</i>	1.27	35.48%	1.87	36.00%
<i>Hypothetical statement</i>	0.13	3.78%	0.21	2.90%
<i>Implication</i>	0.20	5.34%	0.22	4.09%
<i>Interrogative syntax</i>	0.01	0.22%	0.01	0.13%
<i>Metaphor</i>	0.09	3.27%	0.01	0.06%
<i>Negative humour</i>	0.03	1.15%	0.03	0.61%
<i>Other attribution</i>	0.05	1.27%	0.09	1.33%
<i>Personal attribution</i>	0.19	4.35%	0.41	7.02%
<i>Praise-criticism pair</i>	0.64	16.17%	0.77	11.73%
<i>Recasting problem for future improvements</i>	0.07	1.34%	0.09	1.43%

A Mann-Whitney test was conducted to find out the differences cross-culturally in individual critical strategies. Significant differences were found in four out of eleven strategies. They are: *Comparison*, *Explaining the problem*, *Metaphor* and *Personal attribution* (Table 6-12).

Table 6-12: Results of a Mann-Whitney test

	Comparison	Explaining the problem	Hedge	Hypothetical statement
<i>U</i>	8816.000	7808.000	10931.500	10598.500
<i>Sig.</i>	$p < .001$	$p < .001$.666	.151
	Implication	Interrogative syntax	Metaphor	Negative humour
<i>U</i>	11043.000	11176.000	10343.500	11246.500
<i>Sig.</i>	.671	.568	.001	.987
	Other attribution	Personal attribution	Praise-criticism pair	Recasting problem for future improvements
<i>U</i>	10886.000	9698.000	10543.500	11041.500
<i>Sig.</i>	.227	.005	.298	.547

The results above reveal that Chinese reviews have significantly higher mean percentages than English reviews in the following mitigation critical strategies:

- *Comparison*
- *Explaining the problem*
- *Personal attribution*

English reviews have a significantly higher mean percentage than Chinese reviews in the following strategy:

- *Metaphor*

As can be seen, apart from having no significant differences in the majority of their mitigation critical strategies (eight out of twelve), each group also has their preferred individual mitigation strategies. Compared with their British counterparts, Hong Kong critics show a stronger preference in using *Personal attribution* to mitigate both praise (Example 6-6) and critical acts. An example of using *Personal attribution* to mitigate criticism is as follows:

- (6-10) 「憤怒的」諧謔曲於是搬到第三樂章，**個人認為這樣的效果較差** (CJ04)
The “angry” Scherzo was then moved to the third movement. ***Personally I think the effect was rather bad.***

On the other hand, British critics use *Metaphor* more than Hong Kong critics to weaken the force of praise (Example 6-9) and criticism (Example 6-11):

- (6-11) If only Suzuki could more often allow himself and his musicians to see ***Bach's great forest for its over- cultivated trees.*** (ET50)

The metaphors hint that Suzuki and his team of performers were too focused on beautifying details (“over-cultivated trees”) and overlooked the overall flow of music (“Bach’s great forest”).

British critics seem to like expressing their ideas more implicitly by referring to another symbol or concept. The results are in line with Kong’s (2006) findings, that Chinese writers are generally in favour of a more personal style of evaluation. This is because the personal style of writing in traditional Chinese scholarship might still have some impact on Chinese writing in the present day. English academic writing, as stated by Kong, has evolved to become more implicit and impersonal. Although concert reviews belong to the popular media genre, all British critics in the corpus are academically trained and such background has been reflected in their style of writing.

As percentages of individual strategies alone might not accurately reflect which group is more reserved in their critical comments, a Mann-Whitney test was conducted to compare cross-culturally the proportions of unreserved (emphasised or unmarked) and mitigated criticisms. Results indicated no significant differences in neither unreserved ($U = 10412.000$, $p = .253$) nor mitigated criticisms ($U = 11172.500$, $p = .917$) between English and Chinese reviews. Neither did emphasised nor unmarked criticisms show significant differences between the two groups. Thus, British and Hong Kong critics seem to be similar in their uses of different strengths of critical strategies to express their criticisms.

6.7 Summary

This chapter presents the similarities and differences between English and Chinese reviews. Comparisons were made in terms of their general rhetorical and structural features, as well as the proportions and uses of positive and negative evaluations. The main findings regarding cross-cultural similarities and differences between English and Chinese reviews are illustrated in Table 6-1.

Regarding similarities, evaluation and non-evaluative information are both core components for both groups, although the occurrences of evaluative acts significantly outnumber non-evaluative acts. Within evaluation, the majority of the comments are on the concert itself, which significantly exceed background comments (aspects other than the concert itself). A greater number of reviews in both languages open and close with positive remarks than negative remarks. Most of the concert evaluations in English and Chinese reviews are on specific aspects of the concert, rather than global comments. Of specific evaluations, both groups predominantly focus on aspect of performance, followed by composition.

Furthermore, both groups contain significantly more positive evaluations than negative evaluations, on the background and the concert itself. Positive comments exist in all English

and Chinese reviews. On the other hand, a number of English and Chinese reviews do not contain negative comments at all. It is also observed that in each group, unreserved (emphasised or unmarked) praise acts significantly exceed mitigated ones. Conversely, mitigated acts significantly outnumbered unreserved acts in criticism across languages. Regarding emphasis evaluative strategies, both British and Hong Kong critics predominantly applied *Booster* to strengthen their praise and critical acts. Other emphasis strategies seem to be far less popular among the critics. *Hedge* is the most commonly applied mitigation strategy of both praise and criticism in English and Chinese reviews. A larger range of praise strategies than critical strategies are found to emphasise the evaluative force in both groups. In contrast, a larger range of critical strategies than praise strategies are found to mitigate the evaluative force in both groups.

Although the comparisons mostly show similarities on the higher level, cross-cultural differences can also be seen, primarily upon more detailed examination:

On average Chinese reviews contain more rhetorical acts than English reviews, both evaluative and non-evaluative. However, more English reviews open or close positively than Chinese reviews, while more Chinese reviews open or close with non-evaluative information. English reviews contain a significantly higher percentage of positive evaluation than Chinese reviews. While Chinese reviews have a significantly higher percentage of positive and negative background comments than English reviews, English reviews have a significantly higher percentage of praises on aspects of the concert. Nevertheless, only Chinese reviews contain evaluation on *Concert Management*. *Personal attribution* as a mitigation strategy of praise only appears in Chinese reviews as well.

The above textual features will be further interpreted with critics' perspectives on writing concert reviews in *Chapter 9 General Discussion*.

Chapter 7 British and Hong Kong critics' perspectives on writing music criticism

7.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses research question 3: “What are the Hong Kong Chinese / British music critics’ perspectives on the writing of concert reviews, and in particular their use of positive and negative evaluation?” In order to find out British and Hong Kong critics’ views on their writing of concert reviews, the following aspects are analysed and compared: their roles as a music critic (*Section 7.2*), what the criteria for a good review are (*Section 7.3*), and qualities a music critic should have (*Section 7.4*). Critics also reflected on their own evaluative styles (*Section 7.5*).

7.2 Roles of music critic

Both British and Hong Kong critics considered the following five aspects as roles of a music critic (Tables 7-1 and 7-2): 1. Promote music (*Section 7.2.1*); 2. Provide the public with informed opinions about music (*Section 7.2.2*); 3. Attract readers (*Section 7.2.3*); 4. Keep a record of music events (a. For future research; b. Document cultural consumption) (*Section 7.2.4*); and 5. Educate readers (a. Help readers to think independently about music and beyond music; b. Advise musicians; c. Improve readers’ musical knowledge) (*Section 7.2.5*). An overview of critics’ opinions on their roles is provided in the following tables: Table 7-1 shows each critic’s view on their roles as a music critic; Table 7-2 shows the statistics of British and Hong Kong critics’ views on their roles.

Table 7-1: British and Hong Kong critics' views on the roles of a music critic

Music critic		Roles of a music critic							
UK		1. Promote music	2. Provide the public with informed opinions about music	3. Attract readers	4. Keep a record of music events		5. Educate readers		
					a. For future research	b. Document cultural consumption	a. Help readers to think independently about music and beyond music	b. Advise musicians	c. Improve readers' musical knowledge
	Jenny						•		
	Harry		•						
	Simon	•							
	Emily		•						
	Amanda	•							
	Jonathan			•					
	Nelson	•	•		•		•		
	David		•						
	Jason	•				•			
	Robert	•	•	•			•		
	Tony		•						
	Peter	•					•		
	Samuel	•	•						
	Adam		•						
Hong Kong	Chi Man	•	•					•	
	Tak Lam	•						•	•
	Tin Hei	•							•
	Ka Ming		•						
	Ching Fung			•	•			•	
	Yu On	•		•		•			
	Wai Fung	•			•			•	•
	Chung Yuen	•	•						
	Kin Yu	•							
	Sai Him				•				
	Wing Yee	•							
	Shing Yat		•						

Table 7-2: Frequencies and percentages of British and Hong Kong critics' views on the roles of a music critic

	1. Promote music	2. Provide the public with informed opinions about music	3. Attract readers	4. Keep a record of music events		5. Educate readers		
				a. For future research	b. Document cultural consumption	a. Help readers to think independently about music and beyond music	b. Advise musicians	c. Improve readers' musical knowledge
UK (n = 14)	7 (50%)	8 (57.14%)	2 (14.29%)	1 (7.14%)	1 (7.14%)	4 (28.57%)	0	0
Hong Kong (n = 12)	8 (66.67%)	4 (33.33%)	2 (16.67%)	3 (25%)	1 (8.33%)	0	4 (33.33%)	3 (25%)
Total (n = 26)	15 (57.69%)	12 (46.15%)	4 (15.38%)	4 (15.38%)	2 (7.69%)	4 (15.38%)	4 (15.38%)	3 (11.54%)
				6 (23.08%)		11 (42.31%)		

7.2.1 Promote music

The most frequently mentioned role amongst all critics is promoting music. Half of the British critics (seven out of fourteen) and two thirds of the Hong Kong critics (eight out of twelve) considered a major role of music critic is to promote classical music to the general public. Critics believed that “art makes people’s lives better and richer” (Simon), and it is the critic’s responsibility to promote what is interesting or good about the art form. By having a space in the newspaper, music reviews can be read by the public and people will pay attention to classical music events happening in the city. This is also the role that most Hong Kong critics stressed. Kin Yu felt very strongly about his mission in promoting classical music,

推廣音樂。最緊要係 *classical*，一定推廣。*Pop* 唔使推廣既。。。係。任務就係推廣古典音樂。。。無（其它）功能。(Kin Yu)

[To promote music. Most importantly classical music, definitely to promote. There is no need to promote pop music...Yes, our duty is to promote classical music...No other functions.]

7.2.2 Provide the public with informed opinions about music

The most frequently mentioned role amongst British critics is providing the public with informed opinions about the concert. Eight British critics mentioned this function. Fewer Hong Kong critics (four critics) considered this function essential. According to the critics, this includes two elements: information and evaluation.

It was interesting to note that British critics mostly considered themselves as journalists or “art journalist” (Amanda). Thus, part of their job is to report to readers of the latest news about music (Section 7.2.2). For example, Amanda mentioned,

...if you are writing for a newspaper, that it's a “news” paper, the fact that you covering a performance means that in some ways you consider it to be news worthy and so you should try and find whatever is the news about this concert. (Amanda)

Samuel also highlighted the importance of the informative element in music criticism: because critics are writing news for newspapers,

So you want to inform people about the latest things happening in the arts, news performers, who's best now and so on. (Samuel)

Besides presenting facts, British critics also aimed to tell their readers “*what it was like*” (Amanda) at the concert. Tony, for instance, asserted that it is essential for a critic to evaluate and tell the readers what they think and feel about the concert,

whether I think it was any good or not, and really to indicate whether I think it's worth to go. I think that's the basic function, I really do – to report, but it's also recommendation, or anti-recommendation. (Tony)

Ka Ming, a Hong Kong critic responded with a number of examples to support his claim, that “critics, in music or other fields, are to give informed opinions”. One of the examples is as follows:

When I'm reviewing a Hong Kong Phil[harmonic] concert, I'm writing as someone who regularly attends their concerts and knows what their usual level is. That makes my opinion more informed than those who only drop in occasionally. (Ka Ming)

Thus, British and Hong Kong critics considered it necessary to include both information and evaluation in their reviews, in order to provide their readers with a comprehensive view of the concert.

7.2.3 Attract readers

Two British and two Hong Kong critics stressed that they write concert reviews to be read. Ching Fung asserted, “What are we writing for? We are writing for readers. We want them to read! That’s the prime purpose.” Robert differentiated music reviews from strict news in newspapers, pointed out that reviews aimed to “entertain, divert and amuse”. He also compared music critics to television critics or theatre critics, commenting that classical critics needed to be more amusing in their writing, “if you can make a reader smile or just kind of divert them, make them change any into less boring, that’s good.” The two Hong Kong critics also emphasised readability as an essential criterion in writing reviews.

7.2.4 Keep a record of music events

This role seemed to matter more to Hong Kong critics than British critics. A third of the Hong Kong critics (four out of twelve) perceived keeping a record of music events as the main role for a music critic. Only two British critics thought their role was to document concerts. There are two aspects to this role: to document a concert for research purposes, and to document cultural consumption. More critics mentioned the first aspect. It is worth noting that all of these critics (one British and three Hong Kong) have an academic background in music to either PhD or Masters levels. In other words, their academic training in music has been reflected in their purpose of writing music criticism. As Sai Him stated,

或者可能好耐以後既人如果要研究番某個演奏家或者直情某個新既作品，甘佢可能睇番當時既人點樣評論，講過 D 乜甘樣。甘呢 D 我覺得係只要係保存到、留存到，有機會可以係成爲日後做研究，做音樂史研究既材料。(Sai Him)

[...if people of the far future wanted to study some performer or a new work, they probably would look at how people of the current time comment on that. I think if (the reviews) can be kept, they can be used for future research, as materials for the study of music history.]

One British and one Hong Kong critic aimed at keeping a cultural or historical record of what has happened. Of which Yu On, the Hong Kong critic considered his role from consumer's perspective. Yu On had a very interesting observation about the classical concert culture of Hong Kong:

之前就做好多既推廣宣傳，之後就提都無提下既，有邊 D 人來香港大會堂拉奏過 D 咩甚至無人會 mention。(Yu On)

[There is a lot of marketing and promotion before the concert, and nothing at all afterwards. No one would bother to mention who performed what at Hong Kong City Hall.]

Therefore, he would like to fill the gap by writing reviews for these concerts. He refused to be called a critic because he did not consider the payment for writing reviews a source of income at all. He regarded himself as an “intellectual consumer” or “a pair of eyes and ears” amongst the audience in the concert, and his role was purely to keep a record of a cultural event for Hong Kong.

Perhaps because concert reviews in Hong Kong are usually not published immediately after the event, the reportage nature of Chinese reviews is not as prominent as English reviews. It is more likely for Hong Kong critics to treat concert reviews as a record of a past event, which serves research purposes rather than news purposes.

7.2.5 Educational purposes

British and Hong Kong critics also stated that one of their roles is to educate their readers, however with different foci. Hong Kong critics focused on passing musical knowledge to their readers and helping them to cultivate musical taste, whereas British critics were more interested in helping their readers to think independently about music and beyond music.

Only Hong Kong critics (three out of twelve) mentioned about enhancing general readers' musical knowledge and taste. For instance, Wai Fung shared his own experience of learning a lot about music through reading reviews when he was a teenager, and he hoped his reviews could have the same positive impact on his readers.

Apart from their consideration for general readers, four Hong Kong critics also aimed to offer advice to musicians. Being a professional musician himself, Wai Fung felt it might be beneficial for the performers if he pointed out in his reviews what they have done well and what they might need to improve. Ching Fung explained that owing to the acoustic difference on and down stage, performers might not know how their music sounds like to the audience. He believed that with his professional musical background, he could act as the musicians' ears down stage and help them improve. Chi Man and Tak Lam also thought one of their roles was to provide useful advice for musicians to improve their musical skills.

On the other hand, only British critics had a purpose unrelated to music in their writing of music reviews. Four critics in the British group shared their views about the manipulation of PR and propagandas, and they believed that music critics have the responsibility to help their readers to think independently. Peter asserted that,

(People) being bombarded with advertisements that tell them that something's great, and critics are there to make sure that there is healthy suspicion of this sort of things... it's irony I suppose that you need someone in newspaper to tell people they shouldn't believe everything they read in newspaper. (Peter)

Jenny was even more serious about this issue,

We are almost fighting a losing battle, but at least we are fighting a battle, to put out a view and an assessment to something which is not simply selling it, and therefore manipulating public taste and public expectation. We are trying to make people think independently and respond for themselves... If you could be manipulated over a film or book, you could be politically manipulated. (Jenny)

It seems that some British critics wanted to influence their readers at an intellectual level by helping them think independently about music but also beyond music alone. This implies a style of putting weight on discussion and reasoning, rather than limiting their reviews to providing informative knowledge of music only.

7.2.6 Ignite debate

Apart from the roles suggested by critics themselves, critics were also invited to express their views on prompt question 1:

The function of music critic is to ignite debate.

There have been very different results from the British and Hong Kong groups. More than half of the British critics agreed that one of the roles of a critic is “getting people to think for themselves and to challenge their views” (Jenny). This resonates with British critics’ views on the educational purpose of their writing, which is to help readers to think with a critical mind (Section 7.2.5). Three quarters of the Hong Kong critics, on the other hand, disagreed with the statement. They pointed out that debate could be a side product that reviews might lead to but not the aim of it, as Ching Fung remarked, “You can’t make it a debate for debate’s sake.” Kin Yu thought that everyone’s feelings about music could be different, and therefore there is no point to argue.

7.3 What makes a good review

To elaborate on their roles of being a music critic, three British and eight Hong Kong critics explained what they think makes a good review. Critics expressed their opinions from the reader's perspective, which can be boiled down to three aspects: providing a clear account of the concert (*Section 7.3.1*), writing in "good language" (*Section 7.3.2*), and enlightening their readers (*Section 7.3.3*).

7.3.1 Providing a clear account of the concert

Seven Hong Kong and two British critics pointed out that a good review should give a clear and accurate description of the event, as Robert remarked,

I think it (a good review) gives a strong sense of simply what it was like to be there, witness it...So it's partly a description of an event, like an eye-witness report. (Robert)

David also emphasised the importance of accuracy,

Accuracy in terms of "you must know what you are talking about"; you must be familiar enough with the material to comment in an intelligent way on what the experience is, and how the quality of that experience. I think authority is very important. (David)

Critics further stressed that in order to write a good review, they should be aware of their role in music criticism. They pointed out that it was important to evaluate the concert and explain to the reader what was good and what was not being done properly, which should be presented with valid proof. However, critics had varied ideas on how to evaluate effectively. Shing Yat believed that the reader needed to be given relevant background information to be able to understand the writer's evaluation,

...要寫既時候令讀者有清楚背景知道作者結論既理据同原因. (Shing Yat)

[...should let readers have clear background knowledge, so that they understand the rationale behind the writer's conclusion.]

Interestingly this attitude is reflected in his reviews. Of the four reviews he authored, which are included in the corpus of this study, in each one he spent considerable space on background information of the composers, the performers or the instruments of the concert.

While the British critics showed a journalistic mind and emphasised “accuracy” in writing, some Hong Kong critics held a very different point of view to this. Both Kin Yu and Yu On claimed that a good review does not necessarily need to be objective. Just the opposite, it is rather difficult to be objective as music appreciation is a very subjective experience which varies from one individual to the other. Yu On believed that one’s understanding about music could be subjected to various personal factors, such as the individual’s life experience, instrumental training and age.

樂評一定唔可能中肯。尤其係音樂既野係非常主觀同埋受制於聽果個人，即係樂迷本身果個限制，或者本身個 *experience*，同埋無器樂訓練就差得遠。但係唔敢講邊個好呀，完全唔敢講一定話受過訓練就好。年紀係一個問題。所以好多野都好主觀，無可能中肯。(Yu On)

[It is absolutely impossible for music reviews to be objective, especially music itself is very subjective. It is also subject to the listener’s own limitations or personal experiences. Whether or not the person has received instrumental training can make a big difference too. But I can’t say which is better, and I definitely don’t mean it is better to have a background in instrumental training. Age is also a factor. Therefore, many things are very subjective and it is impossible to be objective.]

Yu On and Sai Him, on the other hand, believed that a good review should have focus, meaning that the critic needs to be able to grasp the most attention seeking aspect of the concert and deliver the message to the reader,

...係每一個樂評有個 *message* 去提點出來既。(Sai Him)

[...every review should have a message to be brought forward.]

Yu On appreciated that there are highlights in British reviews,

好既樂評呢，我有時睇 *Guardian*，或者睇 *Times* 呢類樂評呢有個重點。我而家嘗試向呢個方向走。睇得太仔細反而寫得。。。有 D 讀者反而會覺得太累贅。反而有 D 亮點：當晚有 D 乜野係最拿捏到個注意既就將個重點講出來。(Yu On)

[For good reviews, sometimes I read those in the Guardian or the Times, and I realized that these reviews have a focus. I'm trying to go in this direction. If one is too detailed it becomes...some readers would think it's superfluous. It's better to have highlights – write down what caught the most attention at the night.]

Perhaps the opinions from Tin Hei, a critic of the Hong Kong group, revealed the difference between British and Hong Kong critics:

即係一種既夾雜一 D 好鑑賞式既、一 D 好似批評既睇法，同埋一 D 人文式既、一 D 比較感情 D 既睇法。兩樣野加埋一齊能夠表達到一個人既好精細既感受呢，甘我覺得係一篇好既樂評啦。(Tin Hei)

[That is, a mixture of some very appreciative and evaluative opinions, together with emotions and a human touch. If a combination of these two can express a person's delicate feelings. I would regard it as a good music review.]

While British critics valued a precise description of the concert with logical arguments supported by evidence, Hong Kong critics touched on the emotional side and expected a good review to also contain the writer's delicate feelings about the concert.

7.3.2 Writing in “good language”

A number of critics stated that a good review should be written in “good language”. Two British and three Hong Kong critics listed a number of criteria on language for a good concert review, which included readability, having “a touch of levity” yet “keeping the tone right” (David). Robert believed that a good review should be ‘*gracefully written, so it's nice to read. It is sort of like driving over a bumpy road.*’ Yu On, apart from sharing a similar view as his British counterparts, emphasized that a good review should be refined in its language and not be written in westernized Chinese. Besides, as he claimed, the newspaper he writes for

would edit out westernized Chinese language from the reviews. With his background in music, Sai Him tried to make a connection between language and music and aimed to make his writing beautifully sounding,

另外我自己讀音樂出身，我就覺得文字節奏感，文字音韻，選擇用果 D 字其實都有一種美感，甘我自己就會希望可以做得好，係音樂上，果 D 文章讀出來都係比較好聽 D，自己覺得。我會覺得因為我地有音樂訓練，所以我認為我可以做埋呢樣野。(Sai Him)

[I studied music and I feel that words have rhythm and rhymes, selecting certain words to use can present a sense of beauty. I hope I could achieve this: the text I write can sound appealing musically when reading it. I think with my musical training, I should be able to do this.]

To further look into critics' opinions on writing styles, they were invited to comment on another prompt card statement:

A music critic said: 'When I'm writing a review, no matter whether I praise or criticise, I try to write it in an entertaining way to attract my readers.'

All British critics and Hong Kong critics agreed that critics should write in an attractive and readable way. They nevertheless clarified that one should not be writing for the sake of being entertaining and make silly jokes, but to write well and readably to attract their newspaper readers. Tak Lam asserted that music is very serious thing and it is acceptable to be entertaining occasionally, but not all the time. Emily also remarked:

It's no good being terribly boring. The problem is, I think, sometimes people try too hard to make jokes or waste time showing off a bit, but has got absolutely nothing to do with the performance. That's the temptation you have to resist. (Emily)

Compared with their British counterparts, Hong Kong critics tended to place more emphasis on the refinement and sophistication of their language use. Nevertheless, both British and Hong Kong critics agreed that concert reviews should be attractive to read but not sensational. Critics showed an awareness of writing for the popular media yet the newspapers they write for are

broadsheets. In fact, with the shrinking of reviews space in newspapers in recent years, particularly in the UK, it seems unlikely for critics to use highly elaborate and sensational language, or make unnecessary jokes with the limited word count that they are given (see *Section 8.2.1*).

7.3.3 Enlightening the reader

Two British and three Hong Kong critics believed that a good review should be able to impact positively on its reader, which is in line with their opinions about the educational role music critics play (see *Section 7.2.5*).

I think if it stimulates interests, if it stimulates discussion, if it stimulates opinion, if it makes people think. I think all those are actually very important.' (Jason)

Robert suggested that a good review should have “some degree of educative function” because of the lacking of knowledge in classical music in its reader on the whole. Chung Yuen used the word “enlighten” to describe what a good review should bring to its readers,

一定要引起到讀者既共鳴。如果讀者唔認識，連共鳴都達唔到既，你一定帶到 D 光—enlightenment 俾讀者。。。呢 D 最緊要既。(Chung Yuen)

[...must be able to resonate with the readers. Readers won't be able to resonate with it if they don't know it (the music). You must bring the light – enlightenment to readers. This is the most important matter.]

7.4 Qualities of a music critic

Most British and Hong Kong critics believed that a critic should have both musical knowledge and good writing skills (*Section 7.4.1*). Some British and Hong Kong critics also mentioned a similar set of personal qualities to be a critic (*Section 7.4.2*), such as being truthful and unbiased, enthusiasm, empathy, confidence and continuous learning. In addition to the

common values both groups shared, two Hong Kong critics believed that a music critic should have good knowledge of the culture and other art forms such as literature.

7.4.1 Core qualities: Musical knowledge and writing skills

The British and Hong Kong critics expressed similar views on what qualities a music critic should have. Most British and Hong Kong critics (eleven out of fourteen British and seven out of twelve Hong Kong) thought that good musical knowledge and writing skills are essential prerequisites in reviewing music. Although not every British and Hong Kong critic thought a music qualification is necessary, they all agreed that a very good knowledge of music is important for someone to write about music. Ching Fung quoted from George Bernard Shaw of the qualities he believed a good critic should have, “*1. One should have a cultivated taste for music; 2. One should be a skilled writer; 3. One should be a practised critic.*”

In addition to knowledge about music, two Hong Kong critics showed a wider perspective on the knowledge a critic should have: in order to be a good music critic, one should not only be well-learned in music, but also encompass a good understanding in culture and other art forms, such as history, cultural policies, religion, philosophy, literature, and so on. A British critic, Simon, further specified “good writing skills” as being able to communicate to the general public in a journalist sense,

I’m aware of music critics don’t write in that much journalistic sense or journalistic instinct, but you think you can develop that – that’s what makes a difference between a good critic or not a very good critic. Somebody can be very knowledgeable about music, but not necessarily able to write for newspaper which after all is aimed at the general public, not a specialist publication, you need to communicate something. I think you develop this sense. (Simon)

According to Simon, critics need to observe the distinction between writing for a specialised journal and a newspaper. The core factor that differentiates the two is readership. A detailed discussion regarding critics' considerations for their readers is in the next chapter, *Section 8.3*.

To further explore the critics' views on what makes a good music critic, they were asked to comment on a statement (Prompt card 3) about the need for knowledge about music:

Many critics do not really know the music they criticise about.

Most British (eleven) and Hong Kong (eleven) critics were not opposed to this idea. They explained that it is impossible for a critic to know in depth every particular repertoire of classical music, especially new music. To tackle this problem, critics would often review the repertoires they are familiar with, or do a lot of preparation work before they attend a concert of new music or of an unfamiliar programme, as Adam explained,

When I review new music, it's more difficult than I review Tchaikovsky or Mozart, but I still do as much homework as I can. (Adam)

Some also claimed that writing reviews for the popular media does not require one to be an academic expert in music. Jonathan emphasised the differences between academic writing and writing for journalism. He also gave an account of various criteria essential in journalistic writing, which are be truthful, be entertaining, be economical in the use of words, and be efficient with time:

It's not peer group review, it's not medical science where you have to be reviewed by your peers. It's journalism, and journalism is about trying to write as truthfully and entertainingly as possible about something in a confined space, with a limited space to write it, and under pressure of time. And you are doing your best! (Jonathan)

In short, British and Hong Kong critics believed that as long as a critic is an expert in classical music generally and can draw on a wide background of experience in music, one is legitimate to review music in the newspaper.

7.4.2 Personal qualities

Five British critics and eight Hong Kong critics believed that a good music critic should have certain personal qualities. Of the many qualities mentioned, being truthful and unbiased were the most frequent, mentioned by three British and six Hong Kong critics.

Jonathan stated that, “you have to use the right words, you know, be as honest as you can”.

Critics seemed to be taking their role very seriously, as Ching Fung remarked,

It's very important for music critic to maintain his/her independence and impartiality. Because we put our views on record and that is accountable to history, accountable to art, and also accountable to the musicians. (Ching Fung)

According to critics, it is very important to be resistant to various factors that might affect their integrity, including receiving treats from stakeholders of the concert, giving face to friends who play on stage, phishing to be quoted by giving comments better than the concert deserves, as well as being threatened in extreme cases. Chi Man shared his experience of receiving threatening phone calls and letters for reviewing music, and he asserted that a critic should stay unchanged no matter how they were treated for telling the truth,

有一句說話樂評人應該擺來作案頭所謂座右銘既，就係寵辱不驚。。。樂評人要有甘既心理狀態，如果唔係你唔好再寫野啦。就甘簡單。(Chi Man)

[There is a phrase that music critics should use as their motto, which is “unmoved by neither flatters nor insults”. ... A music critic should have such mentality. Otherwise you should not be writing reviews anymore. It's just as simple as this.]

Tak Lam spoke against “PěngChǎng” (捧場), meaning to boost or give unjustified flattering comments to the musician that the critic knows, either through personal or social relationships and connections⁹.

我覺得捧場有影響我既人格，你好我讚你，你唔好我就彈你。(Tak Lam)
[I feel that “PěngChǎng” demeans me. If you are good, I praise you. If you are not good, I criticise you.]

Apart from being truthful and unbiased, critics also mentioned enthusiasm, empathy, confidence and continuous learning as necessary personal qualities for reviewing music. Two British critics and two Hong Kong critics believed that it was important to be enthusiastic about music:

I think you need to be passionate about the art form, I think you need to have something to say... (Harry)

One British critic and two Hong Kong critics stated that critics should be empathetic to musicians. Tak Lam also pointed out that,

你要比較對於作曲家或者演奏家有一種同情心，無甘刻薄。你要點樣做到能夠指出問題而令到人無甘難過，就需要你有好好修養同埋human touch。(Tak Lam)
[You should be rather empathetic to the composer or performer, and should not be too mean. To point out the problems without upsetting people too much, you need to have very good self-cultivation and human touch.]

The empathy critics showed to the musicians might be a reason for them to mitigate their criticisms. For example, David illustrated how he would mitigate his criticism to avoid hurting the musician’s feelings,

⁹ The original meaning of 捧場 is “to pay tribute to actor or public person, usu. with idea of building up popularity” (Lin, Y. (1972). Lin Yutang's Chinese-English dictionary of modern usage, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

I would say my aim is not to be offensive or unkind. I've seen instances commenting on people's appearances or their age. I probably don't. I may have said so and so is rather mature for an opera. If they are playing a young character and they are themselves quite old, you might say that they are too mature. If I think that's something that should be considered when you cast a singer...I try not to be offensive, but I try to be honest. That's the balance I'm trying to strike. (David)

According to the general example David gave, by replacing a negatively connoted word “old” with a positively connoted word “mature”, the force of criticism was reduced. The negative meaning of this evaluation was implied by the adverb “too” before “mature”.

In short, the personal attributes the critics value can shape their styles of evaluation.

7.5 Critics' reflections on their evaluative styles

In this section, critics shared diverse views about giving evaluation in music criticism and described their own styles of praise (*Section 7.5.1*) and criticism (*Section 7.5.2*) in concert reviews. Critics also gave an account of the evolution of their writing styles over the years (*Section 7.5.3*).

7.5.1 Praise

Critics expressed divided opinions on how they should praise in reviews. Half of the British critics (seven out of fourteen), though claiming to be neither too expressive nor too reserved, stated that they tended to express praise depending on the circumstances of the concert and to strike a balance in their comments. Four critics described their styles as more reserved when giving their praise. Only three British critics claimed that they were more expressive than reserved when commenting positively on a performance. Hong Kong critics seemed to be slightly more in favour of being generous in giving praise than their British counterparts: five said they were more expressive and three said they were more reserved. The

other four critics appeared to be less concerned about the way they convey their praise, they just wanted to express what they felt.

7.5.1.1 *Emphasised praise*

The critics who claimed to be expressive with their praise asserted that they should not be holding back when a performance deserves real praise, with two British critics hoping to engage their readers through strong positive comments. Interestingly, their claim seems to correspond to their view about being enthusiastic as a quality of a good critic (see *Section 7.4.2*):

You want people to say: “why should I read this review in this newspaper, because this writer is exciting and he is enthusiastic, he’s passionate about his art form, and whether he likes something or doesn’t like it. When you write about it you should be as engaging as possible. So when you have the choice of being enthusiastic or reserved, I don’t have any hesitation saying “expressive”. (Harry)

British critics emphasised their praise depending on features of the concert such as composer or performer. According to critics, they reinforced their praises for various reasons, such as promoting the musician, wanting to be interesting to read, engaging the readers, or simply because they wanted to describe how amazing the music was. For example, Emily tried to introduce Biber, a not particularly well known composer to the public by emphasising her praises about him. Boosters such as “deeply felt”, “so spontaneous”, “so fascinating” and “highly descriptive effect” were applied:

Five sonatas from Biber's Fidicinium Sacro-Profanum formed the backbone of this concert: their succession of contrasting emotions was deeply felt, yet so spontaneous as to seem improvised. But it is the gift for representing sounds in music - whether those of bells, as in the Sonata Campanorum, or of nature, as in the Sonata Representativa - that makes Biber so fascinating, a programmatic composer before his time. He used techniques of pizzicato and bowing to achieve highly descriptive effects centuries ahead of the likes of Bartok.

Samuel reinforced his praise on the conductor (Gardner) and orchestra with humour, and ended the review on a high note:

...Gardner and the orchestra just kept up with her and in the Symphony No.4, the "Italian", countered with some sprightly Mendelssohn of their own. Their final "Saltarello" left the City of London speed limit standing.

He explained that he wanted “a nice punchy ending...and something a little bit more imaginative than saying ‘they played it very fast’”.

Jason strengthened his praise about intensity of a composition, in order to engage his readers:

Drake, who has similarly done nothing finer, matched Maltman’s every emotional shift with playing of disturbing intensity.

He explained why he expressed his praise in such a reinforced way: “What I would like the readers to do with that one is, ‘I wish I had been there’”.

Sometimes, critics emphasised their praise just because the music was very good and deserved a huge compliment. In another review of Jason’s, he gave particularly strong praise to the performance, such as

...a ferocious account of the central Elegy with great playfulness elsewhere.

He stated that the performer “really delivered something amazing at that point”, therefore the praise needed to reflect such fact.

One Hong Kong critic was trying to recommend good musicians to his readers through expressive praises.

我會好 expressive, 唔收架, 讚美呢 D, 當然係要強調啦。某程度上鼓勵或者佢已經係個大師, 唔稀罕我既鼓勵, 我都希望更加多觀眾可以認識到佢。(Wai Fung)

[I'd be very expressive. I wouldn't hold back. Praise, of course one should emphasise it. To a certain extent to encourage...or if they were already a master and didn't care about my encouragement, I still hope more audience would get to know them.]

Sai Him tried to explain why he was more generous with his praise than criticism in his reviews:

讚係一種係令到人愉快。。。睇既人都愉快，無去到現場既人睇都。。。係好正能量既。”

[Praise can make people happy...Readers can be happy too, even those who were not at the concert...It's very positive energy.]

He further clarified that he did not strengthen his praises to please his general readers or musicians. He did so merely because he thought it was good to be very positive about genuinely good performances, and at the same time it happened to engage his readers as well.

The above discussion reveals that British and Hong Kong critics believed that emphasising praise is an effective way to engage their readers.

7.5.1.2 Mitigated praise

Despite being generous with their positive comments, critics sometimes mitigate their praises as well. One of the British critics, Jenny, wanted to balance out the marketing force from music advertisers and agents,

I also think there is a whole industry that's doing that anyway called PR. Critics in a way, I think should try and undercut hype. We have hype all around. So if there is something that is really excellent, that is perhaps a 5-star review, I do try and convey my enthusiasm but in a sort of reasoned and not exactly reserved, but I do find that I'm having to choose my words more carefully if it's an outstanding concert in a way. (Jenny)

However, the major reason for British critics to hold back their praise is that gushing enthusiasm might devalue praise. Five critics expressed this concern. For example,

My instinct is not to go over the top as it were, because that very quickly can devalue

praise if everyone is just raving about something.’ (Jenny)

Peter’s view was in a similar vein as Jenny’s. He hoped to “retain a certain critical distance”

by mitigating his praise,

You don’t want the readers to think that you are kind of sitting there, being unmoved and you never enjoy anything in your life. But by the same thing you don’t want them to think that you are kind of a fan boy. So I always try and maintain a slight distance but still communicative. So you want to make it clear something has been fantastic, but you want to also make it clear that you’ve made that judgement without being totally caught up. You manage to make that judgement while retaining a certain critical distance. (Peter)

Similarly, two Hong Kong critics are reserved with their praise in order to protect

themselves. They believed that no performance is perfect, and therefore it would be safer to

show certain reservation with their praise:

音樂係無完全 perfect 既，就算 Pavarotti 都有缺點啦，係嗎？’ (Kin Yu)
[No music is completely perfect. Even Pavarotti had flaws, right?]

Kin Yu also expressed similar concerns as Peter about losing credibility to readers if he was overly positive:

唔好全部講好既，人家唔信你既。。。音樂無好圓滿既野，你點都聽出來。除非你唔識音樂，聽唔出來，無辦法。專家，係我既角度，可以聽出來邊度得邊度唔得。(Kin Yu)
[Do not only praise, no one would believe you...no music is perfect and you should be able to hear it, unless you don’t know music. An expert, from my point of view, should be able to tell what is good and what isn’t.]

Chi Man was concerned that it would turn out to be sarcastic if one praised wrongly.

讚人要好小心架！讚得唔啱變左諷刺架。明明佢果晚彈得最差係果首樂曲，你攞 果首野來讚佢既時候，甘當事人會覺得你挖苦佢咯。所以要好小心既。當然其實我都成日講，任何一個演出，特別演出哈，點樣好都好，一定有一D（瑕疵），因為現場好難十全十美既。都一樣會有一D問題、一D瑕疵既。(Chi Man)

[One should be careful to praise! If praised wrongly it would become sarcasm. If you praised the piece that was the worst in the evening, the performer might think you were digging at them. So you must be very careful. Actually as I always have said, any performance no matter how good it was, there must be some flaws. Because it is very hard to be perfect when performing live. There are bound to be some problems, some flaws.]

In short, British and Hong Kong critics seemed to have similar concerns over being too generous with their praise, which corresponds to Hyland's (2000) claim that mitigation can make a praise sound more objective.

7.5.1.3 Objectivity in giving praise

Amidst views of being enthusiastic or reserved with praises, some British and Hong Kong critics stated the importance of objectivity in evaluation. Jonathan believed that it was hard to remain objective in writing music criticism because music critics are music lovers at the same time, and they already want the concert to succeed before it started. As he writes political reviews as well, he compared his experience in writing political reviews and asserted the importance of being objective in writing.

I think in reviewing, it's important to try to keep some objectivity, and that's slightly at odds with the desire of media organisations to be excited, to say dramatic things, but you just have to deal with that. (Jonathan)

Similarly, Wing Yee, a Hong Kong journalist, tried to maintain objectivity in her reviews as well. As a journalist, she received training in journalism and was taught to be objective, impartial and unemotional when reviewing music.

這可能和我新聞評論的訓練有關係。因為我是新聞專業的，會比較客觀中立。因為我們新聞評論訓練的方法就是客觀、中立、不帶太多感情色彩的去說一件事情。(Wing Yee)

This might be related to my training in news commentary. I'm a journalist, I am quite objective and impartial. This is because the training in news commentary is to be

objective, impartial, to describe an incident without having too much emotions involved.]

In contrast, Jason, a British critic, who was among the group who were careful about their praise, admitted that he tried to look for the positives in a concert, and this was due to his work experience in an opera house.

A lot of people don't realise just quite how much work can go into a preparation for an opera or a concert. It's a lot of work by a lot of people, and that's something that is fairly important. Obviously if there are flaws I would say so, obviously if something is bad I would say so. But I go in hoping it would be a positive experience and looking for a positive experience with that. (Jason)

Similarly, a Hong Kong critic also mentioned that critics might try to be positive with local orchestra productions and promote local music to the audience of Hong Kong. Very interestingly, a British critic, David, related his styles of praise to the types of media he wrote for.

I think it varies. It probably varies according to the publication. The Guardian is a serious newspaper, so on the whole the language I use is relatively reserved in that publication. The Stage, which is for people working in the theatre, I see that as a different readership and I generally make more sweeping comments. It is a little bit closer to a more popular newspaper like the Daily Mail should I say, not in political terms, I mean in terms of immediacy. Whereas the Guardian you think of these people who are degree educated, and therefore you can use some subtler style to them. (David)

Despite the differences in their opinions about praise, four British critics thought that they should explain the reasons for the praise in their reviews:

I don't know. I don't think about it (praise being more expressive or reserved) that much. The only thing I think is important is if you are praising people, you should show your reader why you are doing that. (Nelson)

I don't think it means much just said it was outstanding, but the readers want to know why did you consider that so good, compared with perhaps to the concert you went to

the day before. So I try to be specific and the words that quite colourfully and immediately to the reader, convey a degree of excellence. (Jenny)

To sum up, both British and Hong Kong critics showed awareness over the importance of being objective when praising a performance. In other words, they were conscious of their decisions of giving expressive or reserved praise acts to the aspects they evaluate.

7.5.2 Criticism

Critics expressed more complex views on criticism than on praise. Some critics stated they express their criticism differently in different circumstances. Half of the British critics (seven) perceived themselves to be unreserved with their criticism and half of them preferred to be more reserved when expressing negative evaluation of a performance. On the other hand, half of the Hong Kong critics (six out of twelve) claimed to be unreserved with their criticism, and four believed that they were more reserved when commenting negatively. On the whole, both British and Hong Kong critics believed that they were less reserved in their criticism than in their praise.

7.5.2.1 Unreserved criticism

Opposed to reserved or mitigated criticism, unreserved criticism is either emphasised or unmarked with no mitigation.

British critics provided a variety of individual reasons for their preference for giving their criticism expressively. David, Samuel and Robert showed their consideration for the readers. For these critics, the main reason for being critical expressively stemmed from their consideration of readers' need to be informed clearly. David, for example, regarded his comments as a guideline for the readers to spend money on the musician's concerts and CDs.

Therefore, he would like to be clear with the consumers about whether he recommend the musician or not. Interestingly, while he stated that his style of praise might vary according to the styles of publications, he claimed to be consistent with his criticism across publications. It seemed that to him criticism carried more weight in reflecting the quality of a concert.

Because one of the reasons that you are doing this is to recommend things. It's a bit like your readers are also consumers, they have money to spend, they can go to a concert, or they can go to another concert. (David)

Samuel, on the other hand, was unreserved because he did not want his messages to be misunderstood by readers.

...but it's easier for whoever reading it if you are straight forward. If you try to be indirect, often people can take it worse than if you are direct, because they think you are not telling the truth and they imagine you mean something worse. (Samuel)

Robert claimed that despite criticising being more difficult than praising to handle, he enjoyed voicing out his anger when a performance was truly awful. He also pointed out the difficulty in criticising a classical performance expressively,

It's a hard job to make a performance of a Beethoven middle period sonata amusing or sarcastic or angry, but it can happen, it is possible, you just have to work harder I think, than those other guys do. To be angry at Jeremy Clarks is really easy because he's such a jerk, you know. For us it's harder. (Robert)

He quoted from John Dryden, a famous 17th century poet, to justify his claim, “a righteous anger invigorates a man”. By comparing classical music reviews with other reviews such as film, theatre and pop, he stressed that classical reviews suffered from being somewhat dull, and that righteous anger and even sarcasm can help reviews sound more lively to the readers.

Some critics were straightforward with their criticism for reasons other than audience consideration. Harry attributed his frankness to the length restrictions, i.e. he had to be to the

point since the word limit for the entire music review was just 350 words. Adam believed that he had accumulated a very broad perspective over five decades of experience in reviewing music. Therefore, he thought he might be tougher with his comments because of his higher standards in music:

I think I'm probably tougher than some of my colleagues. My standards maybe higher. That's part of my nature as a nasty human being, and also part of the fact that I have been doing it for so long, so if I review a performance like Aida today, I can go back 50 years of performances of Aida's, that's I have a very broad perspective of the what can and cannot be done. (Adam)

It is however interesting to note that some critics, despite claiming to be unreserved with their criticism, showed their reservations when asked about the mitigated criticisms they used in their reviews. David, for example, did not want to be offensive when giving negative comments, “these people are human beings above anything else. I don't want to destroy their careers”. David also pointed out that a critic needs to be very careful to not cause offence when writing reviews for newspapers in the present day. Being rude as famous music critics in the past such as George Bernard Shaw seems to be out of fashion nowadays. He recalled someone being sued for causing offence in their review.

Hong Kong critics gave different reasons for being unreserved in their criticism. Both Tak Lam and Chung Yuen claimed that they had no conflict of interests. They both had careers outside the music circle. Therefore, they had no concerns putting forward unmarked criticism about the concert. Tak Lam stressed that he would rather not write if he could not say as it is,

我覺得假如你唔照實講，寫來做乜嘢？我又唔係搵食既。我又唔想出名，想出名不如講香港政制仲好啦。小圈子之嘛，我點解要做呢D野嘢？ (Tak Lam)

[I think if you did not write as it is, then what's the point writing it? I'm not making a living out of it and I don't want to be famous. If I wanted to be famous I'd rather criticise Hong Kong politics. This (music criticism) is just a small circle thing, why do I have to do that?]

He also showed no concerns for the musician because he believed that if the musician was mature enough, they should not be upset if occasionally they did not perform well and got criticised by the critic. Chung Yuen shared the same view with Tak Lam though he also believed that one should be to the point in his criticism without being too harsh or sarcastic.

There might be a cultural factor underlying these Hong Kong critics' claim of "no conflict of interests". Tak Lam made a very intriguing comment comparing Chinese and British cultures in the aspect of interpersonal relations.

我係甘既，我係太過直接。中國文化就係當面唔講壞話，要講背後講。... 你會發現同英國佬開會爭到面紅面綠啦，開完會佢唔會記仇既。但係中國人會記仇架。中國文化就係甘。所以我唔係好適合中國文化。(Tak Lam)

[I am like this, I am too straightforward. Chinese culture is that one doesn't bad mouth to people's face but at their backs... You would notice if you had a vigorous argument with a British man at a meeting, he would forget it after the meeting. But Chinese would hold grudges. Chinese culture is like this. Therefore, I don't really fit in Chinese culture.]

As much as Tak Lam had faced pressure from the so-called grudge-holding feature in Chinese culture, a few other Chinese critics such as Chi Man (in *Section 7.4.2*) also had similar experience of being disliked for criticising Chinese musicians. However, this did not seem to have a strong impact on Hong Kong critics' critical style, as revealed in the interviews. One possible reason is that more than half of the Hong Kong critics interviewed had full-time careers not relating to music, and therefore they were less worried about upsetting the musicians. The Hong Kong critics who were active in the music circle, such as Chi Man, Kin Yu and Sai Him, did not seem to show much concern about hurting musicians' face either.

7.5.2.2 Mitigated criticism

While half of the British and Hong Kong critics believed they were more straightforward in their criticism, the other half of the British critics and a third of the Hong Kong critics (four out of twelve) claimed to be more reserved when commenting negatively. Critics were aware of the effect a negative comment can cause to musicians, as Amanda stated, “in something like a newspaper review, a negative word seems to carry more weight than a positive one, perhaps.” Therefore, critics did not want to hurt people in their reviews. Jenny, for example, stated that she would not “shoot someone down in flames” unless the poor performance was due to lack of practice or negligence. Besides, both British and Hong Kong critics showed sympathy and respect to musicians for their hard work and preferred not to be too harsh with their criticism:

I'm very aware of the amount of work and thought that goes into something and if it goes wrong on the night. So as often as not, I won't mention it in negative terms.' (Nelson)

因為要尊重舞臺演員演奏既。我好中意睇指揮。有 D 指揮小動作好多，我講我唔係幾中意，但係我又補充一句；佢既優點就係能夠將佢既感受全部表現出來，無論用咩手法。中和左咯。(Kin Yu)

[Because one should respect the musician on stage. I like to watch conducting very much. Some conductor has many small movements and I said I didn't like it. But I would add one more sentence: his strength is that he could fully express his feelings, no matter what strategies he uses. (The criticism) is thus neutralized.]

While Nelson described his strategy to imply criticism, what Kin Yu described here was an example of the praise-criticism strategy in mitigating a critical act.

Besides general sympathy towards musicians, some critics seemed to be selective in terms of who they should or should not criticise, or criticise less. Two British and five Hong Kong critics claimed that they were more lenient with respect to young musicians or amateurs.

Two of these critics believed that they were more critical towards established musicians. Ching Fung stated,

Because putting together music by a hundred musicians is something very difficult, so you have to give credit, and you have to give space, give allowance. But if the performers came as a top professional group, then you of course you have high expectation of them. It varies from concert to concert. If I go to a student recital, of course I cannot be too critical, I cannot be too harsh. So it really depends. (Ching Fung)

Simon pointed out that negative comments could do more damage to a new musician than the famous ones, and therefore he would be more reserved with the mistakes made by a young artist. Chi Man would be more constructive with his criticism if an amateur performing group made mistakes. Wing Yee, on the other hand, was suggested by her editor to be kinder to novice artists. Jonathan chose to not review a disastrous opera performance by students because he did not want to be cruel to young musicians who had just started their career. Other than new musicians, Tak Lam once refused to review an unsatisfying work of an established composer. He anticipated only negative comments had he written a review of the work, and he did not do it out of respect for the composer. In other words, critics are aware of their influence over musicians especially the new ones, and either consciously or subconsciously try to avoid causing damage to the future of classical music.

It is notable that some British critics would use the star rating as a way to convey their criticism indirectly, such as Nelson and Amanda. Amanda criticised a performance of the Vienna Philharmonic, one of the world leading orchestras, in a subtle manner. She explained that the 3 stars she gave to this performance would be enough to reflect her discontent about it, and there was no need for a strong criticism in writing,

I suppose it looks on its own quite soft, but actually 3 stars for a visit from the Vienna Phil with Haitink was quite low. If you were a regular music review reader and would think: "woo, what did they do wrong? (Amanda)

This way of conveying criticism indirectly, however, is only applied by British critics as the star rating system is not used in Hong Kong newspapers. More discussion about the star rating is provided in *Section 8.4*.

Interestingly, out of all critics, only one Hong Kong critic, Shing Yat, even claimed that he had not thought of including criticism at all in his reviews. He only intended to share his positive feelings about a concert in his article. Defining his role as an amateur critic who wrote essays about classical concerts in his own newspaper column, Shing Yat appeared to have a different opinion about evaluating a concert,

基本上我都無諗過彈添既。點解聽音樂會呢？你係想獲取娛樂，去開心，去聽一D 你覺得美既野。我覺得你走去聽音樂會，你專係去搵一D 野挑剔，其實就係搵自己笨，同自己作對既。所以你見到唔好既野呢就忘記佢，睇應該要睇既，聽應該要聽既。(Shing Yat)

[Basically I haven't thought of criticising. Why going to concerts? You want to be entertained, to pursue happiness, to hear something you think is beautiful. I think if you go to a concert to purposefully pick on something, you are making a fool of yourself. Therefore, if you see something unpleasant, you'd better forget it. Watch what you should watch and hear what you should hear.]

He went on to clarify his role, justifying his position as being different from professional critics,

當然睇我自己既角色係點樣啦。如果我純粹係講緊一篇隨想既話，呢個態度係可以既。但係如果我係一個專業記者或者一個專業樂評人，甘我就覺得唔能夠甘樣。(Shing Yat)

[Of course this depends on how I define my role. If I'm purely writing a piece of random thoughts, such attitude is okay. But if I was a professional journalist or music critic, then I don't think I could do it like this.]

He further explained that as some major orchestras or music organisations are funded by the government, and they have a responsibility to arrange the performances in a way that fulfills the requirements set aside for the funding. Therefore, when writing a “proper review” about them, the critic needs to take a number of criteria into consideration, such as how the

programme was arranged, the level of performance, whether the performers have reached the standard of the composition, and so on. But for “a piece of random thought” (隨筆), Shing Yat claimed that he was only expressing his own feelings about the concert, as he added,

我唔會同自己作對既嘛。果D 唔好既唔理佢或者將佢擺埋一邊。(Shing Yat)

[I don't have to make my life difficult. Therefore, I ignore or put aside those which were not nice.]

As we can see, this critics' attitude to expressing criticism is closely related to his perception of his role as a music critic. Out of the four reviews of Shing Yat's in the corpus of this project, there is only one instance of criticism. The rest of his comments were all praise. However, this was just an isolated view from an individual critic.

As can be seen, the critics tend to always make a conscious decision about where and how to mitigate their criticism. The discourse-based part of the interview, however, revealed a rather different picture, as critics were asked specifically about their own reviews in the corpora. Amanda, for example, when asked why she mitigated a particular criticism in one of her reviews, said “I don't think I was trying to mitigate, but...”. Sai Him also seemed uncertain of why he mitigated criticism more than praise:

因為。。。我唔知呢。我自己認為甘樣講係好D 呢。。。我諗可能睇落舒服D。但係佢亦都知我係彈緊佢。。。我覺得甘樣已經足夠啦。(Sai Him)

[Because...I don't know. I myself think it might be better to say it that way...I think it probably looks nicer. And he (the musician) knows I'm criticising him. I think that would be enough.]

Nevertheless, some critics showed consideration for both readers (general readers and musicians) and their own image. David, for instance, admitted that criticisms in his reviews were on the whole more mitigated than unreserved. He explained that he tried to be fair and did not want to be accused as being “unduly negative”. He also believed that readers were able

to read between the lines and see what was implied, while at the same time the musicians would not be hurt as much if his criticisms were softened. Thus, mitigation serves as a strategy to redress the potential FTAs imposed on both the readers and the critic. With the illustration of an example, he demonstrated how he redressed his criticism to make it more acceptable to his readers:

*I said in Paragraph 2, “Dramatic punchiness in the arresting opening chorus was **sometimes** undermined by fuzziness in the orchestral and choral parts, and **occasional** untidiness recurred later on, **though the conductor’s sense of momentum maintained cohesion and impetus.**” (EG34)*

I mean those are quite, you know, is quite an important thing to point out, that the performances were untidy and fuzzy in some ways. But I tried to downplay it in a way. I didn’t say this was a mess. I tried to phrase it in a way that it will be acceptable to those reading it. (David)

As shown in the above example, instead of expressing his criticism unreservedly, David chose to soften it with hedges such as “sometimes” and “occasional”, and the clause “though the conductor’s sense of momentum maintained cohesion and impetus”. As David recalled, he gave this review a mediocre 3-star, which implied a certain doubt about the concert’s quality. He therefore aimed to justify his rating by reflecting both the strengths and weaknesses of this concert,

I hope my review reflects that slightly ambiguous or ambivalent feeling that I have about the performance: it was good, but it wasn’t that good, could have been better. (David)

7.5.3 Evolution of the critics’ writing style

In addition to discussing their current evaluative style, critics also commented on the changes of their writing style over time. Most critics thought that their writing style changed since they started writing reviews, and believed those to be positive changes. Only two British critics claimed that there were no changes at all. The changes were mainly reflected in four

aspects: personal growth, use of language, aspects of concert commented on and evaluative style.

Five British and four Hong Kong critics reflected that their writing had matured since they started, that they had become better, more experienced or more confident over the years. One British critic believed his writing to have become more streamlined and authoritative over time. Nevertheless, one British critic seemed to have become quicker and more fluent as time went by, “I’ve probably become lazier in a sense that, you know, when you start you are very careful, you probably spend a lot of time writing.” (Nelson)

Four British and four Hong Kong critics described changes in their use of language in review writing. All critics considered their language have become simpler over the years, such as using fewer adjectives and adverbs, writing in shorter sentences and with less complicated grammar, and becoming less abstract and less descriptive. Most critics attributed the changes to the increase in writing experience, though a British critic mentioned the influence of newspaper page design on his language use. Jason had to simplify his language owing to the constraint of space in newspaper these days,

In time there has been a push towards more reviews but shorter reviews, so your language becomes less elaborated as your space is cut. (Jason)

Regarding their evaluative style, two British and four Hong Kong critics believed that they had become softer in their criticism, either because they had matured or had become more understanding and sympathetic towards the musicians. Only one Hong Kong critic, Ching Fung claimed that he was more direct in his criticism now,

I think I’m getting more direct now. Maybe I’m getting older now, I don’t really care about the things that I felt strongly about. (Ching Fung)

On the other hand, however, two British and two Hong Kong critics claimed that their evaluative style has remained unchanged over the years.

Despite the changes in their reviews writing, there were some elements that critics have always included in their reviews. The majority of the British critics always outline the concert programme in their reviews, such as names of the musicians and works being performed. Fewer Hong Kong critics mentioned this aspect as a core element in their reviews. This is probably because all the British critics interviewed are regular contributors to newspapers. Therefore, they see themselves as journalists and write their reviews partly as a reportage of musical events to their readers. Most Hong Kong critics, on the other hand, do not write music reviews on a regular basis and view themselves less as reporters than their British counterparts.

7.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the perspectives of British and Hong Kong critics on the writing of concert reviews were investigated in terms of their roles and qualities as music critics, their expectations of good concert reviews and reflections on their own evaluative styles. Similarities and differences of their perspectives are outlined in Table 7-3.

Table 7-3: Comparing British and Hong Kong critics' perspectives on writing concert reviews

Cross-cultural similarities	Cross-cultural differences
<i>Perceptions of the music critic's roles</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader-oriented 	<i>Perceptions of the music critic's roles</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British: journalistic • Hong Kong: promoting music
	<i>Criteria for a good review</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British: makes people think • Hong Kong: Makes people feel
<i>Essential prerequisites to review music</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music knowledge • Writing skills 	<i>Essential prerequisites to review music</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British: accurate and entertaining • Hong Kong: other knowledge than music
<i>Evaluation style</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More reserved expressing praise than criticism • More positive comments or mitigated criticism to novice musicians 	
	<i>Pressure at giving evaluation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British: the star rating system • Hong Kong: Social expectations in Chinese culture to give musicians face

Both British and Hong Kong critics largely defined their roles in relation to their readers. Four of the five roles they perceived of a music critic were reader-oriented. However, the role mentioned most by British critics is of a journalistic or news nature, that is to inform their readers what happened at the concert and comment on it. The prime role of Hong Kong critics, on the other hand, seems to be promoting classical music to their readers. The difference between the two groups further lies in their perceptions about the educational purposes they should fulfill. Hong Kong critics focused on sharing musical knowledge with their readers as well as providing advice to musicians. British critics aimed at getting readers to think logically about music. The one role that does not directly aim at the readers of newspaper, keeping a record of music events for future research, seems to be valued more by Hong Kong critics than their British counterparts.

Differences between newspaper publications in the UK and Hong Kong may account for the above discrepancies. British newspapers have a more established, streamlined system of publishing music reviews. Concert reviews are published in British broadsheets on a daily basis. British critics therefore are likely to view their role as combining being a journalist and a reviewer, which is to report to the public their informed opinions about a concert. Hong Kong newspapers, on the other hand, do not publish concert reviews regularly. Thus, Hong Kong critics might want to promote the “dying art form” (Chung Yuen) to general readers when they have the chance to write about concerts in the newspaper. They also aim to keep a record of classical music events for the sake of studying and promoting this art form.

All the three criteria for a good review, i.e. giving a clear account of a concert, writing in “good language” and enlightening readers were derived from critics’ consideration for their readers. Nevertheless, there has been a slight difference between British and Hong Kong critics. While British critics were more interested in getting readers to know and to think about music (“stimulates”, “makes people think”), Hong Kong critics cared more about getting readers to feel the music (“resonates”, “enlightens”). In other words, British critics considered the criteria for a good review more from a journalistic point of view and emphasised presenting an event accurately. Hong Kong critics, on the other hand, touched more on sharing sophisticated emotions about music with their readers.

Both British and Hong Kong critics considered music knowledge and writing skills essential prerequisites to review music. While Hong Kong critics expected a wider spectrum of knowledge than only music, British critics emphasised the ability to report music in journalism, that is to write precisely and entertainingly within limited space and time. Given the very strict word length (about 300 words) and time constraint (next day publication) in British newspapers, such qualities seem to be essential for a music critic in the UK. On the

other hand, the personal qualities critics believed they should have also shaped their styles of evaluation.

Regarding their evaluation, both groups thought that they were more reserved when expressing praise than criticism. British and Hong Kong critics claimed that they praise expressively to engage their readers. They both withhold their praise worrying that lavish praise might seem “superficial” and “undiscriminating” (Hyland and Diani 2009, p.9), especially when it is given to one who does not deserve it. As for criticism, British and Hong Kong critics shared some similar views cross-culturally. Both groups showed empathy to musicians, especially the junior ones, which resulted in more positive comments or mitigated criticism when reviewing novice musicians.

Compared with their British counterparts, as much as they resisted it, Hong Kong critics seemed to have faced more pressure from so-called social expectations in Chinese culture, that one may be expected to give favourable comments to performances of their friends. British critics, on the other hand, faced their own problem that Hong Kong critics did not have – the star rating system. Detailed discussion about this system is provided in the next chapter.

Chapter 8 Factors affecting critics' writing styles

8.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses research question 4: “What are the factors that affect the writing of music criticism, particularly the use of evaluation in their writing?” Interview analysis identified numerous factors that might have an impact on the critics' writing styles, which can be classified into the following categories: instructions and guidelines from the editor or newspaper (*Section 8.2*), critic's consideration for readers, musicians and the music industry (*Section 8.3*), and the influence of the star rating system – a constraint that only applies to British critics (*Section 8.4*).

8.2 The impact of editorial policies

Editorial policies seem to have a strong impact on the writing of concert reviews. They include word length (*Section 8.2.1*), submission deadline (*Section 8.2.2*), choice of concert to review (*Section 8.2.3*), style guidelines from the editor or newspaper (*Section 8.2.4*), and editor's intervention on content of concert review (*Section 8.2.5*). Interviews showed that British critics seem to be under stricter editorial regulations than Hong Kong critics.

8.2.1 Word length

Almost all British and Hong Kong critics are restricted by the numbers of words they can publish in a review. Word length seemed to have imposed a direct impact on their writing. All British critics replied that due to the limitation of space their newspapers are very strict with word length. There has been a shrink of space for concert reviews in British newspapers over the last two decades, and the word limit now ranges from 290 to 400 words per review, varying across newspapers. If critics write above the limit, the excessive number of words will

be cut off by an editor or sub-editor. In the discourse-based section of the interview where critics were asked about their own reviews, one British critic (Samuel) pointed out that a review of his had been cut out by almost a quarter, as editors might try to fill it into “a small hole in a Saturday paper”. The cut-off part included evaluations about the concert. To avoid such problems, critics normally would not write over the word limit. They also tend to be more economical with their use of words and use less descriptive language. For instance, Jason thought his language had become less elaborate due to the shrinking of space for reviews.

Most Hong Kong critics also confirmed that there have been word restrictions on their reviews. Similar to their British counterparts, some Hong Kong critics also mentioned that they needed to be selective with content because of the word limit. Only one critic said that there was no word limit for him. Newspapers normally set the limit between 1200-1400 characters. According to Chi Man, space for music criticism in Hong Kong printed newspapers has been gradually shrinking. In the past, he was able to write about 2000-3000 characters for a review. He commented that the limited space has impacted negatively on the depth of concert reviews nowadays. Still, compared with British newspapers, there seemed to be slightly more flexibility with Hong Kong newspapers. Editors would communicate with the critic about word length before commissioning the job. If the review goes over the limit, sometimes it still gets published if the excess is within 10% of the word limit. Otherwise the editor either asked the critic to cut the article, or split the review into two parts and publish them separately.

It seems rare for a Hong Kong editor to cut down review for the critic, although it does happen occasionally. In some cases, the critic’s already-accepted reviews can be shortened if there is an emergency such as a last minute advertisement or news item that needs to be included. Ching Fung once had a whole ending paragraph cut off to make space for an advertisement. The lost paragraph contained the only compliment in the entire review about the performer, as Ching Fung intended to mitigate the criticisms he made in the rest of the

writing. He said he would not have left the compliment till so late had he known his review was getting cut. The above example, although not common, reflects the possible influence of commercial decisions on concert reviews in newspaper publication. Academic reviews, on the other hand, though needing to go through complicated revision procedures, are not affected by market forces in the same way as concert reviews.

On the whole, word length seems to have a considerably significant impact on review writing, particularly for British critics.

8.2.2 Deadline for submission

Apart from word length, submission deadline is another factor that affects critics' writing, and it is obvious that British critics work under a tighter deadline than Hong Kong critics. According to the critics, Hong Kong newspapers do not publish concert reviews on a daily basis and do not have a fixed deadline for submission. Therefore, Hong Kong critics have more time to work on their reviews and to polish their writing. British newspapers, on the other hand, publish concert reviews every day and thus require critics to submit their article by 10am the morning after the concert. Peter recalled an extreme case where he had to file in a review 40 minutes after the concert was finished. He described the experience as "pretty frantic". In fact, one of his reviews in the discourse-based session was written within 15 minutes for a very close deadline, and he applied repeatedly the same evaluation strategy, praise-criticism pair in this review. Having written this review under extreme time pressure, he considered such feature as "a bit dogged" but "quite useful" to describe what happened at the concert.

8.2.3 Choice of concert to review

Hong Kong critics have more freedom than their British counterparts in their choice of concerts to review. In Hong Kong newspapers, critics decide which concerts they want to review and discuss their choice with the editor. Upon the approval of the editor, they review the concert and file it for publication. Given the freedom to choose their favourite concerts, some Hong Kong critics only go to concerts they think would be good, or only review concerts they have enjoyed. For instance, Kin Yu claimed to review mostly world class performances; Shing Yat only wanted to write about positive aspects of a concert. Such biases might contribute to a higher percentage of praise acts in the Chinese corpus, since bad concerts with a potential for more criticism are eliminated before they get reviewed.

Most British critics do not decide what they review. It is the editor or chief music critic of the newspaper who decides in advance the list of concerts to be reviewed, and assign the tasks to every individual critic. Critics may suggest their preferred concerts, but it is up to the editor or chief critic to make the decision. As a result, while concerts reviewed in Hong Kong are more dependent on the critics' personal interests, reviews in British newspapers might have a wide and balanced coverage of concerts. British critics consider themselves as journalists who have to report both good and bad aspects of the concert. In other words, frequencies of praise and critical acts in the English corpus might be more likely to be unbiased and less manipulated.

8.2.4 Editorial guidelines and newspaper house style

The majority of British and Hong Kong critics do not receive any guidelines from their editors. In other words, they have a lot of freedom in deciding what to write in their reviews. However, in a few cases, the instructions from the editors or newspapers have impacted on the

critics' writing style to some extent. For example, a Hong Kong critic was once advised by her editor about her evaluation about a new performing group. She was not very positive in her review and her editor suggested that she should be more encouraging because that was the group's first work. She remarked,

我就開始想：可不可以對年輕人稍微寬容一點，不要那麼毒舌。後來這對我也是一個提示。(Wing Yee)

[I started to think: maybe I should be a bit more lenient to young people and not too mean. This has also become a reminder for me in later days.]

With British newspapers, instructions were given to critics about not writing anything that could be libelous as Jason mentioned. There are frames of reference where critics cannot be defamatory and the legal team of the newspaper would inspect the copy if there is suspicion of libel in it.

Four British critics occasionally receive factual queries from their editor or sub-editor. Apart from that, critics also need to observe the guidelines on language styles they should use. Each British newspaper has their own style guide, which states their requirements on language use for the newspaper. Jenny gave an example about this,

Instead of saying there were over 100 people, we had to say there were more than 100 people. Because that is strictly speaking better English, quite honestly, I think that would go by the board now. But there are still certain things which is our house style for the Times, say, the Guardian has its, the Telegraph has its. And obviously it's ideally you should have that within you and observe it. If you don't, the sub-editor would just make their mind and change. That's absolutely. (Jenny)

A Hong Kong critic also mentioned that his newspaper has similar guidelines on language style. According to Yu On, the newspaper he writes for would edit out westernized Chinese language features and replace them with proper Chinese.

In some cases, although a newspaper does not have set rules, critics would take the newspaper's style into consideration. Ching Fung, for example, would write in a style certain Hong Kong newspapers prefer,

...because for those critical people they would not buy Tai Kung, Wen Hui¹⁰ anyway, so why do I bother to write in the style that is suitable for them, that doesn't make sense [...] For those who read Tai Kung, Wen Hui they already have their expectations of what they read in the newspapers, so I might as well write more according to their taste or their style. And also Tai Kung, Wen Hui have their circulation in mainland China, so I always keep in mind what if the mainland Chinese open the newspapers and read my article, how would he or she feel about it? So always I consider that too. (Ching Fung)

In short, both British and Hong Kong newspapers do not impose many restrictions on contents and styles of concert reviews. The only guidelines are on the style of language the newspapers prefer, which do not seem to have noticeable impacts on the evaluative styles of music critics.

8.2.5 Editors' intervention on the content of reviews

All British critics claimed that their editors do not censor or alter their opinions in the review, as Harry pointed out,

In terms of judgment, it's very important that critics have autonomy to decide what they think and their verdicts are not subject to negotiation. (Harry)

However, it was not uncommon for editors to interfere with the star rating, an overall score British critics give to each review they write. Two critics from the *Times* mentioned that they would sometimes be challenged by their editors about the stars they gave. In fact, the *Times* would pressurize their critics to change the stars just to make sure there is a good variety

¹⁰ *Tai Kung Pao* (大公報) and *Wen Hui Po* (文匯報) are pro-China newspapers published in Hong Kong.

of stars on the newspaper page. Critics do not agree with such practice and believe that the stars should be related to the content of the review but not the design of the page. Such practice has stirred up disputes between editors and critics. More details about the star rating are provided in *Section 8.4*.

Apart from the star rating, editors or sub-editors of British newspapers would make minor changes to the language if they found the writing unclear or not compatible with the newspaper's house style. If time allows, critics might be contacted to make changes themselves. Otherwise, the editors would make amendments on behalf of the critics. Technical terms such as "sprechasang" would normally be edited out as they are too specialised for the general public. Though the majority of the British critics seemed not to be negative about their articles being sub-edited, some complained that their reviews had been amended wrongly. Due to time constraints, editors would often not contact the critic before making changes. For instance, Peter had a few words added by his editor to the end of his review, which in his words, "had completely ruined it". Emily had jokes cut off from her reviews and she thought this was because the editors lacked understanding about music,

I think it's interesting that they (the editors) think "why did you say that?". Usually it's because they don't understand music – that's one of the great difficulties in my experience, is that people these days, culture, and you know these are usually labelled "Culture" pages, "culture" for the younger generations spells film and pop music. (Emily)

Although most British critics did not have much negative experience in their work with their editors, there seemed to be an unequal power relationship between the editor and the critic. Jenny, for example, was sometimes told by the editor to lower the level of her discourse and make it more accessible to the general audience. She expressed her disapproval of editors having a lower opinion of readers' intellect than herself,

My audience is my readers, but my boss is my editors, so I have to listen to them. I can dispute them and argue with them, but in the end that's where the buck stops. (Jenny)

While British critics were not entirely happy about the star-rating and sub-editing, some Hong Kong critics have encountered editorial intervention for political reasons. Tak Lam has experienced pressure from a pro-China newspaper when he was trying to criticise China's policies regarding performing arts. He has also got his criticism deleted from a pro-China newspaper as he commented negatively on the Chief Executive of Hong Kong leaving a concert halfway through. He described the Chief Executive of the Special Administrative Region as someone who "obviously disrespects music", compared with the Governors in colonial Hong Kong. Such a comment was considered inappropriate by editor of the newspaper and was removed. None of the British critics mentioned about editorial intervention for political reasons. Hong Kong critics in general seemed not to be opposed to their language being sub-edited, although some would rather their editors have enough music knowledge to spot mistakes in their reviews. Chi Man compared Hong Kong editors to Arnold Schoenberg, the former chief music editor of New York Times. He doubted that Hong Kong newspaper editors of the culture page have such capability and music knowledge to point out errors regarding music in the reviews.

8.3 Critic's considerations

Apart from editorial policies, critics' own concerns for their readers, musicians and the music industry might also have an impact on their writing styles. Of these, general readers of newspapers seem to be the most important factor. Some critics also showed their consideration for the musicians they criticise. None of the critics claimed that their concerns for the development of the music industry had an impact on their praise or criticism of the concerts.

8.3.1 Consideration for readers

All British critics claimed that they write concert reviews for the general readers of newspaper, not musicians. Most Hong Kong critics were also writing for their readers. For example, Chi Man believed that a critic would be disappointed if no one read their reviews. Chung Yuen even emphasised that readers are their prime consideration when writing concert reviews:

永遠係以客為本。如果係以你為本不如你自己寫專欄或者寫雜文啦。你寫評論你都係想同讀者分享你一 D 觀賞既經驗同心得，同埋有少少推廣、普及、教化既作用。甘你唔以讀者為本既話你係自說自道既啱。(Chung Yuen)

Always put clients first. If you think of yourself first you should rather write columns or essays. The reason you write reviews is to share with your readers your listening experience and feelings, and with a bit of promotional and educational purposes. If you are not writing for your readers, you are only talking to yourself.

It is noteworthy that Chung Yuen is the only critic who recommended books or scores related to the concert in a lot of his reviews. He did so in order to promote music to his readers, as he explained in the discourse-based part of the interview, which has been reflected in his writing.

Interestingly, two Hong Kong critics, Ka Ming and Tak Lam, expressed very different views from those writing for their readers, such as Chung Yuen and all the British critics. They did not bear their target readers in mind when writing reviews. Tak Lam, for example, treated concert reviews as a personal record or diary. He did not care if anyone read his reviews.

Critics' consideration for their readers largely focused on the non-evaluative aspects. For example, both British and Hong Kong critics would restrict the use of technical terms as the majority of their readers are not music professionals. Robert would consider to not review too many contemporary concerts because readers of the newspaper he writes for are relatively old and reserved. Emily would add a sense of humour to her reviews to engage her readers.

David, on the other hand, mentioned that he would change his language style according to the readership of the publication, as mentioned in *Section 7.5.1*.

One British and one Hong Kong critic stated that they would be selective of what aspects of the concert to evaluate according to the readership of the publication,

If I was writing for Opera Magazine and I will try to talk more specifically about the voices. If it was in the Telegraph you maybe wouldn't get bogged down and trying to describe in words a voice... If it's newspaper, I guess you are far less likely to make specific points. (Peter)

I would say it's like a chef - I'm a chef, I'm cooking food for the customers out there. I know these customers can eat hot food, I put some spice in it. I know the customer has diabetes I put no sugar. You know what I mean? I'm the one who selected data. Because there is so much to talk about in a concert, I can't possibly say everything about the concert because there is no such space, and readers may not be interested in knowing everything about it, so I have to be selective. (Ching Fung)

Almost all British critics (thirteen out of fourteen) stated that readers' opinions have no impact on their opinions about the concert. The Hong Kong critics shared this view. It was rarer in the past but is more common in recent years that critics receive feedback from their readers about their reviews by letter or email, or in the comment section below their reviews in the digitalized newspaper online. Critics were aware of this feedback but emphasised that their judgment would not be influenced by their readers' points of view. Adam asserted that, "I'm always interested to know how people respond, but the responses do not impact my opinions or my style." Simon believed that a critic should bear the readers in mind, but write what needs to be written,

I, on the one hand, I think it's entirely democratic and good that everybody has a say, but the thing that the internet turns everybody into an expert, and that's not actually okay. (Simon)

Jenny described music criticism as a “specific discipline” which is equivalent to literary writing, and explained why critics should not be influenced by their readers’ comments online.

What you get when you have blogs and Twitter is a medley of loose opinions. That is perfectly fine in itself, but to me music criticism is something, and this is I dare say old-fashioned, is something very specific. It’s like essay writing or writing a poem. It’s a specific discipline in which you distil your responses to one event in time, in as well written language as you can. I’m not into joining a sort of ongoing debate round and round and round. I might be able to certain world matter, but not over a concert I’ve been to or over a CD I’m reviewing. (Jenny)

Simon also disagreed with the idea of writing a strongly opinionated piece in order to attract high hit rates online,

The problem is I think you can write a good, sensible review on a fairly important but un-newsworthy performance, of course this will score very low in a newspaper idea of what a “good” piece is, because a good piece has to have controversy. So I feel sick if I have to say something probably rude and awful about somebody that will get a huge number of hits, and therefore the newspaper thinks that’s great. I don’t know where that’s all going. (Simon)

In short, although all of the British and most of the Hong Kong critics showed awareness of their readers, they all asserted that their judgments would not be affected by the readers’ opinions.

8.3.2 Consideration for musicians

Johnson (1992) pointed out that “The interpersonal relationship between the reviewer and the reviewed strongly influences how a review is written” (p.51). A classical music circle is usually a small community, and many British and Hong Kong critics mentioned that they have certain connections with musicians or the music industry. However, all British critics

stressed that their evaluation would not be affected by consideration for musicians. Adam, for example, stated that,

I suppose musicians read with a greater interest than an average reader round. But that doesn't affect me anyway. (Adam)

British critics were certain that they write for the general audience rather than the musicians, and they would not be holding back their criticism because the musicians might read it. In fact, British critics seemed to be strongly opposed to the idea of giving advice or lecturing musicians in their reviews.

I certainly never think that the performers are going to read the reviews, because I'm not writing for them. That's something I think we have to be very clear about, that we are not using the media and the newspaper to talk to the performers. Occasionally I see people do that and I don't agree with doing that.' (Samuel)

Although critics were principled about being impartial with their judgments, it seems that they still have concerns for musicians under certain circumstances, which might impact on their evaluation. Some critics felt that they should not cause offence to the musicians. For example, David would mitigate his criticism if he had to comment on an opera singer's appearance (see *Section 7.4.2*).

Simon, on the other hand, believed that critics are in general more balanced in their comments than many laymen, and it is the critic's duty to give honest opinions about a concert,

...and to be honest, if you look at some comments at the bottom of reviews, most of the comments of the general public are far bitchier or more ecstatic than the critics. Critics are actually more balanced and less hurtful than what some people say. (Simon)

He further stated that it was natural for musicians to react negatively to reviews, and critics should also avoid deliberately being harsh,

So, yes feelings get hurt during the process, I mean that's unfortunately in the nature, but one shouldn't try to do it. (Simon)

Though most Hong Kong critics held the same view as their British counterparts, that they primarily write for their general audience, three critics also intended to write for the musicians of the concert. Chi Man, for example, was hoping to give the musicians advice and help them to improve. He was also concerned that unreserved criticism might not be easily accepted by the musicians, therefore he would prefer to mitigate his criticism.

我有一個前提：我果陣時希望寫完個評論處理，裏面提既意見，能夠被當事人接受。呢個係幾困難既。所以提完意見當然係有一 D 你認為可以改進既地方啦，甘要當事人接受既時候呢，可能就要諗諗一 D 辦法啦。譬如要轉個彎來講俾佢聽，又要使到對方聽起上來好信服你講既野。(Chi Man)

[I have a prerequisite: I hope my advice in my review be accepted by the musician. This is quite difficult. Therefore, you need to think of a way to deliver your advice to the person. For example, you might want to beat about the bush and at the same time be able to convince him.]

In other words, he was aiming to deliver his message to the musicians without hurting their face. Having been a music critic in Hong Kong for more than 50 years, Chi Man seemed to be aware that unreserved criticism might not be well-accepted by Chinese musicians, and it is better to convey his message in a mitigated way. In fact, out of the 59 instances of criticism in his reviews in the corpus, 34 instances are mitigated criticism, and 25 instances are unreserved criticism (12 unmarked and 13 emphasised). In other words, as Chi Man described, he preferred to mitigate his criticism to convey his opinions to musicians more effectively. Tak Lam's experience, on the other hand, proved Chi Man's point. Tak Lam was not invited to a good Chinese musician friend's concerts anymore after he gave some direct and candid criticism of her concert. He had a similar experience with another Taiwanese composer after he voiced out

unmitigated negative comments about this composer's works.

Though most critics claimed that their evaluation was unaffected by consideration of musicians' face, as discussed in *Section 7.5.2*, six British and three Hong Kong critics showed concern for young musicians and might be softer with their criticism when commenting on those who were new to the stage.

To further look into critics' stances in reviewing musicians, critics were invited to express their opinions regarding the following question (Prompt card number 7):

A music critic said:

"Sometimes I find it difficult to criticise some musician friends of mine who appear in the concerts I write about."

Almost all British and Hong Kong critics admitted that it would be difficult to criticise someone they know. Critics thought it would be a conflict of interests to review their friends' concert. Majority of the critics (six British and eight Hong Kong) would not review a concert performed by their friends, or they would delegate the task of reviewing the concert to their colleagues. Six British and one Hong Kong critics claimed that they do not have musician friends. Few critics (three British and two Hong Kong) would still do it, and they emphasised that they would be fair and unbiased with their comments.

A Hong Kong critic, Sai Him, nevertheless, mentioned that he did not have trouble evaluating his friends at all. He used a penname to write concert reviews and his musician friends would not know who the author was.

譬如我自己用筆名，其實好多人唔知我係邊個。所以無所謂既。。。筆名其中一個好處就係根本好多人都唔知我係邊個，甘埋照寫咯，所以我就無需要話怕遇到呢種情況。。。 (Sai Him)

[For instance, I use penname to write and many people don't know who it is. Therefore, it doesn't matter. One of the advantages of penname is that many people don't know who I am, so I can write as it is. So I don't have to worry about such problem...]

On the whole, British and Hong Kong critics did not show many discrepancies in terms of their attitudes to reviewing musicians. Musicians were not as prominent a consideration as general audience for most critics. Furthermore, critics were conscious about the conflict of interests of reviewing friends. Thus, they either would avoid the situation or claimed to be unaffected by the friendship.

8.3.3 Consideration for the music industry

In order to find out the impact that the music industry might have on critics' evaluation of concerts, they were invited to comment on a number of questions regarding this issue:

Prompt card questions 4 and 5 address critics' possible impact on classical music industry.

Prompt card Question 4:

Many concerts have been killed after bad reviews. In other words, bad reviews are a huge put-off instead of help to the music industry.

Prompt card Question 5:

Music critics should take part in some of the "cheerleading" for the future of music art, industry, and funding for music activities.

About half of the British and Hong Kong critics agreed that their reviews might have a certain degree of impact on the development of the music industry, and half of them doubted that critics have such power. Nevertheless, critics showed little discrepancy in keeping their evaluation unaffected by their concerns for the music industry. Many British and Hong Kong

critics stressed that one should not be withholding criticism of bad concerts, nor should one be praising for the sake of cheerleading:

No, no, no, no, no. we are not cheerleaders, we are reporters. It's not our job to sell tickets, it's not our job to create support to our job to report on what is happened. If it's positive it may help them, if it's negative it may hurt them. That's called life. (Adam)

Prompt card Question 6 was aiming at the potential impact stakeholders of the concert might impose on the evaluative styles of critics:

A music critic said:

"Sometimes I get offers from concert organisers, musicians' agents or advertisers. I always turn them down."

"Offers" here means free gifts or treatments given to critics in exchange for their favourable comments about the concert or musician. All British and Hong Kong critics asserted that they would not be bribed to praise more or criticise less. Many British and Hong Kong critics pointed out that it is common practice for music critics to obtain free tickets from the concert promoter. Some critics would accept trips subsidised by the organiser as long as it is allowed by the newspaper, and they all stressed that their integrity would not be corrupted under such circumstances. Some critics admitted that it is not a good practice, but newspapers today are short of funds to subsidise concert tickets. They also mentioned that they have experienced no pressure on what to write, as concert organisers would not expect the critics to be biased in exchange for free treatment.

It's not a good system, I have to admit it's not entirely comfortable. But if you do accept it, you have to work really hard. They understand, the organisations, orchestras and concert...they do understand that you have to keep your independence as a critic. If you write a negative review, they don't write you an angry letter. It's fine. They accept that's just part of the deal, and they are pleased to get the coverage, anyway... It is uncomfortable to accept a contribution go to the event and then write a bad about it. It does happen, it's happened to me certainly. (Robert)

There was one Hong Kong critic, however, who mentioned that he might be a little reserved with his criticism if the concert tickets are provided by the organiser,

送張飛算唔算呢？少少既。其實我唔鬧甘狠我覺得呢個都有關，我覺得自己受人恩惠甘，又唔想佢死。我突然之間覺得會唔會係甘樣？可能有，潛意識會有呢個。(Wai Fung)

[Does free tickets count (as a favour)? A little bit. I think this actually might be why I don't criticise so harshly. I feel that I'm receiving a favour and therefore I don't want to 'kill' it. Suddenly I'm wondering if this would be the case? Probably. Perhaps in my subconscious mind.]

Critics seemed to be confident in the incorruptness of British and Hong Kong press. Tony commented very positively about the British press, "I think the British presses are very, very uncorrupted." Two Hong Kong critics compared the Hong Kong press to the mainland Chinese press. They described that it is common for mainland Chinese critics to accept red packets with money in it, in exchange for positive comments in their reviews about the concert. They did not think Hong Kong presses have got the same problem.

On the whole, the music industry does not appear to have an impact on British and Hong Kong music critics' evaluation of the concert. Furthermore, critics feel that their integrity would be challenged by going to subsidised events. Therefore, they would turn down free gifts which might affect their judgment of the concert.

8.3.4 Critic's public image

Another factor that critics might take into consideration when reviewing is their concern for their public image. According to (Gea Valor 2000, p.21), the use of strong criticism does not harm the critic's personal relationship with the reviewed, if the critic is anonymous. Otherwise, it might be important to balance out criticisms with compliments or mitigations. Three out of twelve Hong Kong critics wrote their reviews in the corpus with pen names. Two

of them made claims in line with Gea Valor's. Sai Him, who wrote his reviews anonymously, was not worried about evaluating his musician friends as his Hong Kong and British counterparts did. He explained that he just wrote what he was thinking, which implied no extra concerns on mitigating his criticisms. In contrast, none of the British critics wrote anonymously. Their newspapers set up webpages for them with their photos attached. None of the British critics nevertheless mentioned they would be pressurised into mitigating their criticisms because of being publicly known.

8.4 Star-rating: The constraint that only applies to British critics

The star rating system is a recently developed feature of British newspaper reviews, which started about ten years ago. Not only music reviews, but also film reviews, theatre reviews and other kinds of reviews all have stars on top of the text, indicating the overall score given to the event reviewed.

Almost all British critics expressed negative opinions about the star rating system, and some of them felt very strongly against it:

They are a very, very blunt instrument indeed, and I don't like them; (Amanda)

I always feel uncomfortable thinking of stars. It's one of the hardest bits of writing review actually, it's choosing stars; (Robert)

I hate that. I despise it. I cannot tell you how much I hate that...that all of its reviews must be signed stars like a school teacher giving grade to a little boy's paper under a drill, which forces me to play their game because they insisted on that, the editors want that; (Adam)

But I do wonder how long it will be before we have a star rating on President Obama's speech yesterday? Let's say the front page, "President Obama spoke about pursuing visas to Cubans" – 3-star rating! (Samuel)

Critics dislike star ratings for the following reasons:

First of all, most critics (ten critics) think that the star ratings are over-generalising and over-simplistic, and leave no room for reservations and nuance. As Jenny pointed out,

What you say contains many reservations and ifs and buts, a star rating is not. And there is a tongue sometimes between the two. (Jenny)

According to critics, the star ratings aim to give an overall impression of the concert. However, it is common for a concert to have three to four pieces in its programme. It would be difficult and misleading to give an overall score when one piece deserved five stars and the others were only worth two or three stars. In addition, there are various aspects of a concert, such as composition, performance, acoustics and so on. It makes it very hard for the critic to give stars when some aspects were very good and the others were disappointing, as Jonathan stated, “I just think it’s a rather limiting way of encapsulating what you do”. Therefore, this star rating instrument is described as being “impractical” (Simon) which makes the critic just write an overview,

You can have wonderful new pieces next to a pretty shabby performance of a well-known work, and all of that. (Amanda)

Secondly, it is a common worry amongst critics (nine critics) that readers would just look at the stars and not read the reviews, or they only read those with 4 or 5 stars and ignore the ones with fewer stars. In other words, critics believed that the star rating system has imposed a negative impact on readers’ reading habits. In addition, Robert mentioned a concern he and his colleagues shared, that readers simply judge a concert from the stars it is given:

I think there is some evidence that people do not read reviews that have 3 stars because they think: “oh it’s just in the middle, it’s mediocre.” They look at 1-star review and think: “god, I will never go near that, I will certainly never buy that artist or go and see him”. (Robert)

He then pointed out the manipulation of the star rating system over people's purchasing decisions:

But it's 4 or more, 5 stars, I think they are persuaded, certainly with disc reviews, because there is an obviously link with purchase there. When you see a 5-star review, it is equal "buy there and then, I'm telling you of", which is clearly a link. With a concert of course there is nothing get to buy as such. But they might look out for the artist. (Robert)

Robert believed that the star rating has been used as a commercial tool to monetise music,

i.e. "...everything in our society has a cash value, and reviewing can only be shown to have a cash value."

The other four critics also expressed similar opinions as Robert, that the star rating is a handy commercial tool for merchants to sell tickets and music-related products. Jenny held a strong view about this,

It's a quick visual flash of praise or blame, but I would just to think that criticism is not about visual flashings. (Jenny)

Two critics felt that the star rating system has influenced their evaluation of the concert. Amanda thought the star rating had some impact on her in that occasionally she would try to write to suit the stars she gave to the concert. Nelson sometimes asked himself whether he should amend his comments to make them sound more like the stars he wanted to give. More often though, it is the other way round. Some critics have been pressurised by their editors to change the stars they gave to suit the evaluation in their reviews. With the over-simplifying nature of the star rating, critics only express their overall feelings about the concert through the stars, and prefer their readers to find out more details about the concert in their writing.

I think they (the stars) become too important [...] I'd rather read the words and got the nuances and got the balance better from the words than being told it's a 5-star review or 4-star review, I mean what exactly is the difference? (Jonathan).

Although critics were mostly against the star rating, a few mentioned some positive aspects of the system. Amanda thought that the star rating helps both the writer and the reader to focus. David believed that it is a good indicator which helps the reader to instantly gain an overview of the quality of the concert. Harry gave the star rating credit from the reader's perspective, as the system helps them to make purchasing decisions,

However, it's something that we have a very clear idea from our readers that they like. They find it useful as a way of working out whether they as customers [...], should they be parting with their hard earned cash? (Harry)

Two critics mentioned that the star rating could function as a mitigation strategy to convey criticism in a less face-threatening way than words, especially when it comes to criticising people,

I'm circumspect when it comes to criticising people because I know it can hurt people [...] I much prefer to write what there is to say positively about something in a measured way ... I'll let the star rating reflect that I may have some reservations ... you can be pretty nice about everything and still give a concert a 3-star rating and that indicates to people why there are some reservations. (Nelson)

Amanda shared a similar view about using the star rating as an indirect way to convey global criticism. She gave one of the top orchestras 3 stars and reflected that the 3 stars meant a stronger criticism for such a famous orchestra, and her regular music review readers should be able to receive this message.

To sum up, the star-rating has been considered “ultimately a necessary evil” (Harry) welcomed by the readers. However, British critics in general disliked the star rating for being

an over-generalising and over-simplistic tool to evaluate a concert. Critics considered it impractical to convey their complex opinions about various aspects of a concert, which could be a mixture of praises and criticisms. Furthermore, as much as it might help mitigate criticism, the system could act against critics' will by making them amend their comments to suit the stars they gave.

8.5 Conclusion

The factors that might likely affect British and Hong Kong critics' writing styles were investigated in terms of various editorial policies and critics' considerations for different types of readers. The two groups shared some cross-culturally similar features which shaped their writing. Both British and Hong Kong critics have the freedom to decide what to write and how to evaluate in their reviews, and their editors would not censor the content of their writing. Among the various constraints from editorial policies, the two groups both experience a certain degree of restriction in word length, deadline of submission, and editor's intervention on the content of review.

However, British critics are under a tighter control by their editors in every aspect of editorial restrictions. Regarding word length, though both British and Hong Kong newspapers have been undergoing a shrinking of space for concert reviews, British critics were given less flexibility than their Hong Kong counterparts in the number of words they could put in a review. As a result, some British critics had to use less elaborate language to convey their evaluation. Similarly, with submission deadlines, a tight deadline for British critics might result in a lack of planning of what they write and how they express their evaluation.

On the other hand, however, not having any restrictions in the choice of concerts for Hong Kong critics may lead to a biased selection of concerts for evaluation. This might

inevitably have an impact on the frequencies of praise and criticism in the Chinese corpus.

Another factor which might affect writing is critics' considerations for their potential readers, and the two groups on the whole revealed similar attitudes towards general audiences, musicians and stakeholders in the music industry. In general, both British and Hong Kong critics showed awareness for their general readers, which was mainly reflected in the non-evaluative aspects of a concert. For example, use of technical language choice of concerts, and so on. Few critics from both groups also claimed to take their readers into consideration when deciding what aspects of the concert to evaluate. This might be the reason why *Performer/Performance* occupied a significantly high portion of evaluation in both corpora.

Despite the fact that both groups of critics emphasised that musicians had no impact on their evaluation, they appeared to be more lenient to novice or amateur musicians. This might result in more emphasis in praise or more mitigation in criticism when evaluating these musicians. Additionally, some British and Hong Kong critics showed empathy for the musicians they evaluated, and they mentioned in interviews that they might soften their criticism to avoid hurting feelings.

The exclusive constraint in writing for British critics, the star rating system, was applied by some critics as a mitigation strategy to convey their criticism in a non-verbal, less face-threatening way. This might result in a lower amount of global criticism in the English data, due to the existence of the star rating.

To sum up, interviews with British and Hong Kong critics have reflected cross-culturally similarities and differences in factors which might affect writing. While interviews showed critics' subjective perspectives, the features revealed in this chapter will be discussed further with the support of more objective textual analysis data.

Chapter 9 General Discussion

9.1 Introduction

This chapter relates the results of textual analysis (RQs 1 and 2) to those of the interview analysis (RQ3 and 4), which together discuss the writing conventions in British English and Hong Kong Chinese concert reviews and the opinions of British and Hong Kong critics. Matches and discrepancies between evaluative acts found in the reviews and perspectives of the critics are revealed. Findings are discussed and interpreted in relation to previous researches on similar writing genres, for example, academic book reviews. Comparison was first made on the general trends in reviews writing (*Section 9.2*). How and why critics strengthen or weaken the force of their evaluation by means of emphasising or mitigating acts, is discussed in *Section 9.3*.

9.2 Overall patterns in concert reviews

This section discusses the relationship between the overall structural and evaluative patterns of English and Chinese reviews and the English and Hong Kong critics' views of the trends.

9.2.1 Evaluation and non-evaluation

Evaluation occurs in all reviews while non-evaluation occurs in most of reviews in both corpora. Although both evaluation and non-evaluation seem to be core components of concert reviews in both writing cultures, evaluation has significantly outnumbered non-evaluation in both English and Chinese reviews (*Section 6.2*).

While music criticism was largely informational in history (Hoger 1992, p.14), evaluation seems to be predominantly important in concert reviews for both British and Hong Kong newspapers in the present day, despite the longstanding discussion about whether music criticism should be essentially evaluative or not (Thompson 1979; Levy 1987; Hoyer 1992;

Schick 1996). This echoes Hyland's (2000) claim that reviews are by nature evaluative and critics convey their judgments through evaluation (p.44). The textual results in this study are in line with critics' reflections in the interviews about their roles as music critics. Both British and Hong Kong critics were aware that they were writing for laymen, therefore, they considered both providing the general public concert-related information and evaluating the concert essential functions of concert reviews (*Section 7.2.3*).

To account for the very small proportion of purely informational or non-evaluative acts, a possible explanation is that evaluation might often be embedded in information and vice versa, and it is not always easy to separate evaluation from description (Levy 1987).

9.2.2 Structural patterns of evaluation

The majority of the reviews in both corpora open or close with positive remarks, which greatly exceed those that open or close negatively (*Section 6.1*). Music critics are not the only ones who prefer to frame their reviews with positive comments. Similar trends have occurred in studies of academic book reviews. Hyland (2000) who examined 160 reviews across disciplines found that the majority of the reviews open and close positively. Mackiewicz (2007) also discovered that most of the 48 book reviews from a business communication journal begin or end with positive comments. Johnson (1992), Motta-Roth (1996) and Gea Valor (2000) had similar observations in their studies. Petric (2011) found very rare critical remarks in the beginning or ending of Serbian academic book reviews. Reviewers might want to both establish rapport with their audience and avoid causing too much damage to the face of those being reviewed (Hyland 2000, p. 53 and 55). Therefore, they tend to be positive at salient positions of their reviews. It is also suggested that reviewers would consciously or unconsciously avoid

criticism in places where they could be “particularly noticeable and memorable” (Mackiewicz 2007, p.202).

It is nevertheless interesting to know why critics would sometimes begin or end their reviews with criticisms. A critic ended one review with a slightly sarcastic remark as follows:

- (9-1) In Debussy's Prelude a l'apres midi d'un faune *the normally sensual creature cried out for a little Viagra*, and in a bombastic account of Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony *it sounded like a third division band*.

The critic (Simon) who wrote this review was hoping to be entertaining and thought that “reviews have to have some edge about them. If I didn’t say anything lively, it wouldn’t really be worth reading about a pretty boring concert”. He also claimed that it was how he felt, and he tried to write it this way to attract his readers, “you hope that if it ends on a strongish sentence that people feel, ‘I’m glad I have read that review’, not ‘never want to read it again’.” In other words, as well as praise, a criticism presented in an entertaining way might as well be a good strategy to establish rapport with the readers. Whereas there is no evidence showing academic reviewers are concerned about entertaining their readers in their reviews, it could be specific to the press medium where to entertain readers in reviews is important.

There is one difference between English and Chinese reviews in their structural patterns: as shown in chapters 4 and 5, the numbers of Chinese reviews that open and close with non-evaluation are about twice as high as those of English reviews (see figures 4-2 and 5-2). As Figures 4-2 and 5-2 indicate, 45.33% Chinese and 24.67% English reviews open with non-evaluation; 9.33% Chinese and 4% English reviews close with non-evaluation. The results indicate that apart from framing their reviews with positive comments, it is also common for Hong Kong critics to not show their polarity of opinions to their readers at the beginning or ending of reviews. Not giving comments at salient positions of the review might help the critic to leave an impression to readers as being objective. Furthermore, Hong Kong critics in general

are given more time and space than their British counterparts for their concert reviews. Therefore, Hong Kong critics might be more relaxed to start their reviews by giving factual background information about the concert. On the other hand, British critics are not only pressed for time and space. Given that every major newspaper in the UK publishes a number of concert reviews every day, critics might be more inclined to place their evaluations in salient positions of reviews, in order to attract their readers' attention.

9.2.3 Dimensions of evaluation

In both corpora, the evaluation of specific aspects of the concert greatly exceeds global evaluation in both praise and criticism. While it is natural for a review to contain only one or two instances of general comment about the whole concert, interview results show that British and Hong Kong critics felt obliged to explain to their readers what aspect of the concert was good or bad, how it was and why (*Section 7.3.1*). A Hong Kong critic (Shing Yat), for example, believed that a formal concert review should include evaluations on many aspects of the concert, such as programme arrangements, performance quality, and so on.

Compared with their Hong Kong counterparts, British critics have one more alternative to convey their global criticism implicitly – the star rating system. The star rating is a unique commentary system which is only applied in reviews in the popular media, such as record reviews, film reviews, restaurant reviews, consumer reviews in online shopping websites (e.g. *Amazon*, *eBay*), and so on. While the star rating can be a useful tool from a commercial perspective (*Section 8.4*), it is not used in reviews of academic genres. In concert review writing, most British critics consider it over-generalising to conclude various aspects of a concert with a score. Nevertheless, the system can act as a mitigation strategy of criticism to redress FTAs

(Section 8.4), and might account for the low proportions of global evaluation in English reviews as well.

In scholarly review genres, content issues of the book or article are addressed most by academic writers (Hyland 2000; Mungra and Webber 2010). Similarly, in concert reviews, the focus of evaluation is on the music content itself, i.e. qualities of performance and composition. *Performer/Performance* is the most evaluated aspect in both English and Chinese reviews, followed by *Composer/Composition*. These two aspects also attracted most evaluation in positive and negative background comments. The findings are in line with Ha's (2011) study, in which performance and composition were the main concerns of most critics of record reviews over time. Interview results also confirmed that both British and Hong Kong critics' priorities are on matters regarding the music. According to critics, there is not enough space in newspapers, and therefore they have to choose the most important aspects to discuss.

Regarding the cross-cultural difference between the two corpora, evaluations on *Concert Management* only exist in the Chinese group. The majority of the comments on this aspect are criticisms (11 out of 15 instances). A Hong Kong critic explained why he would criticise the management of the concert in his reviews:

大家知道香港係處於一個又中又西，好多野係度發展緊，係未完全成熟。所以你睇到好多時搞音樂會既人，第一個，好唔專業性。呢樣野我地要提出來討論既理由就係希望後來者唔好重複一 D 甘既錯誤。係好多地方已經好成熟就一般無需用去批評。就係甘簡單啦。(Chi Man)

[Everyone know that Hong Kong is a place where Chinese and western cultures mingle. A lot of things are under development, yet not completely mature. Therefore, you often would see concert organisers are very unprofessional in the first place. By discussing these issues, we hope that their successors do not repeat the same mistakes. Many other places are already very mature (with concert management) and thus need not to criticise. It's as simple as that.]

In other words, some critics of Chinese reviews feel that the management of concerts in Hong Kong need advice. They expect organisers of the concert to read the review and make

improvements accordingly. British critics nevertheless do not seem to be concerned about concert organisers.

9.3 Positive and negative evaluations in English and Chinese concert reviews

This section compares the frequencies and uses of positive and negative evaluation in English and Chinese concert reviews.

9.3.1 Overall frequencies of positive and negative evaluations

9.3.1.1 *The similarities cross-culturally*

Hyland (2000) claims that academic book reviews are “often critical” (p.41). However, findings in this research suggest a different trend in classical concert reviews in both cultures. All English and Chinese reviews contain positive evaluation. On the whole, there are more positive than negative evaluations in both corpora, both in background comments and concert evaluation (see *Section 6.4*), which indicates both British and Hong Kong critics are more positive than negative in their reviews. Such results are in line with a number of studies on various types of reviews (e.g. Mackiewicz 2007; Moreno and Suárez 2008b; Ha 2011; Lorés-Sanz 2012), in which the proportion of praise acts in the corpus exceeds criticism. It is also observed that 19.33% (29 out of 150) of the English reviews and 15.33% (23 out of 150) of the Chinese reviews contain no criticism on the concert at all, whereas all reviews in both corpora contain praise (*Section 6.4*). This result echoes previous studies in which some academic book reviews contain only praise (Moreno and Suárez 2008b; Petric 2011). According to Moreno and Suárez, some book critics do not review very bad books. A few music critics in this study also show the tendency of avoiding to review very bad concerts. Furthermore, some Hong Kong critics only review very good concerts. British critics, on the other hand, have a large

amount of concerts to choose from, which might result in an inclination of reviewing concerts of high quality. Therefore, some concert reviews from both groups contain no negative evaluation.

In interviews, however, British and Hong Kong critics did not claim that they tend to praise more than they criticise. Critics stated that they were honest with their opinions and tried to make fair judgements of the concerts they evaluate. There are three possible explanations for such discrepancy: concerts critics evaluated deserved more praise than criticism; critics might consciously or unconsciously avoid reviewing bad concerts or giving negative comments; in some occasions reviews are edited by the newspaper for commercial reasons.

Regarding the first possibility, concerts chosen to be reviewed in British and Hong Kong newspapers might be of acceptable qualities in general. A Hong Kong critic explained why his reviews are overall more positive than negative:

一般既人開音樂會呢，多數有D料啦。你無料點開音樂會呢？。。。你首先多數都係肯定既啦，如果我寫我多數肯定。(Kin Yu)
[Normally when people (musicians) have concerts, they are mostly capable. How can you handle a concert if you are not capable? You usually acknowledge their capability. If I write a review, I usually give them credits.]

Concert musicians need to undergo years of hard training to be able to perform on stage. It is not surprising that their concerts are of certain standard, and it would be very difficult for bad musicians to survive in the highly competitive classical music industry nowadays.

On the other hand, bad concerts might not be chosen for reviewing sometimes. In Moreno and Suárez's (2008b) study of academic book reviews, the Spanish reviewers considered it unnecessary to review very bad books. As a result, the Spanish book reviews contain more positive comments than the English book reviews authored by Anglo-American scholars who believe bad books should also be reviewed. In the present study, bad concerts

sometimes do not get reviewed by British and Hong Kong critics. This might be a factor that contributes to the higher rate of positive comments in the corpora.

Britain is one of the cultural centres in the world. The British press has the liberty to choose from a large amount of classical concerts every day for reviewing. Therefore, it is possible that concerts of low quality do not get a space in the newspaper. Thus, the worst criticism for a concert could be “silence”, i.e. not getting reviewed; however, this would not be reflected in the data. In the Hong Kong press, space for concert reviews is precious, given that concert reviews do not get published regularly. It is thus not surprising to see some Hong Kong critics showing preference for reviewing good concerts, as reflected in interviews. Ching Fung claimed it was a “waste of space” to evaluate a very bad performance, unless it was sponsored by tax payer’s money. Kin Yu was only interested in reviewing world class performances and he saw no value in evaluating a bad concert, as he aimed to promote well-performed classical music to the general public. Shing Yat published concert reviews, along with his articles of other themes. He would only mention positive aspects of a concert, because he wanted to share pleasant musical experiences with his readers.

Furthermore, although most critics in both cultures stressed that they would not criticise less out of concern for the feelings of musicians, many of them did show respect to the hard work of musicians, and a certain degree of sympathy to musicians, especially the younger ones (*Section 7.5.2*). This might impact on two aspects of evaluation: mitigated criticism or less criticism. Jonathan once refused to review a disastrous opera performance since he did not want to be cruel to the student performers. Other critics from both groups also mentioned that they would be more lenient or encouraging to new or amateur musicians, which implied a possibility of stressing the positives more and avoiding the negatives. A Hong Kong critic said he would be more encouraging with local orchestras. Sometimes, critics might try not to criticise reputed musicians openly to avoid hurting their feelings. Tak Lam, for example, once declined the

invitation to write a review about a failed work of a composer he respected. Some British critics mentioned that the star rating system allows them to express global criticism without using words. This might contribute to the lower criticism rate in English reviews. In short, the lack of criticism in the above cases indicate an attempt to avoid damaging the musicians' negative face (Brown and Levinson 1987).

Other than protecting musicians' face, critics might also want to protect their own faces. As criticism can be a "direct source of friction" (Hyland 2000, p.41), book reviewers may censor themselves and omit certain negative comments to avoid "appearing critical" (Mackiewicz 2007, p.190). Some music critics also reflected in interviews that they do not want to be mean. Thus, it is possible that some critics hold back their criticism for the sake of their own face.

Apart from critics' own decision on evaluation, they sometimes have their reviews altered by editors. In the discourse-based question section, two of the British critics stated that some of their evaluations in the original texts got cut out as the editors wanted to fit in a last-minute advertisement. A Hong Kong critic had a similar experience. He ended a very negative review with a praise about the violinist. Unfortunately, his editor removed the entire last paragraph to make space for an advertisement. Although this only happens occasionally, critics from both cultures have had their reviews changed without their consent. This shows certain unanimity in newspaper publication across cultures, that commercial decision overpowers writers' authority, as Jenny from the British group pointed out that editors "are the boss". Whereas in academia, though scholarly reviews need to go through peer review procedures before they get published, they do not get cut down to make space for advertisements.

To sum up, similarities observed regarding praise and criticism in English and Chinese concert reviews resonate with previous studies in academic writing, that reviews are in general

more positive than negative.

9.3.1.2 *The differences cross-culturally*

Although both corpora contain significantly more positive than negative evaluations, a cross-cultural difference was however observed. The percentage of positive evaluations in English reviews significantly exceeds that of Chinese reviews (*Section 6.4*). When taking a closer look at components of evaluation, it is noticed that while Chinese critics praised and criticised significantly more than English critics on backgrounds of the concert, British critics praised significantly more than Chinese critics on the concert itself. Chinese reviews contain more concert criticism than English reviews, however, the difference is not significant ($p = 0.115$).

A possible explanation for such differences is that there have been more high quality international performances in the UK (mainly London) than Hong Kong. In the interviews Hong Kong critics in general did not speak of local musicians and performing groups as highly as internationally renowned musicians from Europe or the US. In Chinese reviews a considerable number of criticisms were given to local concert amenities and/or organisation of a concert such as management or programme notes. However, it is also possible that British critics are more positive than Hong Kong critics. On the other hand, it is argued that frequency of evaluation alone is not a determining factor on whether or not the critics are more positive or more critical (Gea Valor 2000). It is thus necessary to look into the strengths of evaluations and critics' views about evaluation to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the evaluative styles of music critics.

9.3.2 Strengths of concert evaluation

This section relates findings of part of RQ2, which compares cross-culturally concert praise and criticism of various layers (emphasised, unmarked and mitigated), to those of RQ3 and RQ4. Critics' own perspectives on evaluation (RQ3) and various factors which might affect their evaluation (RQ4) were compared with textual analysis findings. The purpose is to examine if the interview and textual results match or mismatch in terms of how and why critics express their praise and criticism.

9.3.2.1 *Similarities between English and Chinese reviews*

As analysed in *Section 6.6*, both English and Chinese groups showed similar trends in proportions of the levels of strength of their praise and criticism. Praise acts are mostly emphasised or unmarked in both groups whereas criticisms are mostly mitigated. Mitigation is less common in praise but more common in criticism in both groups. In other words, both British and Hong Kong critics seem to be less reserved with their praise but more reserved with their criticism. Similar trends are observed in studies of academic reviews (e.g. Hyland 2000; Mackiewicz 2007; Ha 2011).

In the interview, a British critic revealed that “you get less challenged for your enthusiasm than you do for your criticism” (Jonathan). This fits into Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, that criticism is a more face-threatening act than praise for both the reviewer and the reviewed. Hyland and Diani (2009) pointed out that “vicious criticism can seriously undermine an author's credibility” (p.9), and therefore needs to be carefully managed. A Hong Kong critic (WaiFung) also stated that one needed to put in more effort explaining why he criticised, because general readers and musicians would otherwise ask why. Whereas he believed that one did not need to explain why he praised, because readers would not challenge positive comments. This implies that critics felt it is more necessary to redress FTAs

when criticising than when praising. This also explains why criticism is mostly mitigated in both groups.

Both British and Hong Kong critics applied more or less the same set of strategies to emphasise or mitigate their praise or critical acts. Comparatively, Itakura and Tsui's (2011) research shows a more distinctive difference in English and Japanese book reviews of their uses of mitigation strategies, in which a number of mitigation strategies of criticism were identified to only appear in Japanese reviews. In the present study, there is only one sub-type of criticism (i.e. *Self-denigration in Personal attribution*) (Section 9.3.2.2.2) and a type of mitigated praise (i.e. *Personal attribution*) that are unique to Chinese reviews, and they occupy only very small proportions of all the mitigation strategies. Other cross-cultural similarities between English and Chinese reviews include the following: for both praise and criticism, *Booster* is the most applied emphasis strategy and *Hedge* is the most applied mitigation.

One possible explanation for the similarity in the choices of evaluative strategies is that Hong Kong as an ex-colony adopts both Chinese and English as common languages of instruction. The bilingual features of Hong Kong critics can be found in their writing, such as code-switching, i.e. incorporating English words in reviews written in Chinese. For example,

- (9-1) 個人覺得結尾的高潮是 *fulfillment*，而不是 *excitement*，不應像演奏《幻想交響曲》結尾般那麼刺激。(CJ14)

Personally I think the climax at the end is *fulfilment*, not *excitement*, so its interpretation should be as stimulating as the ending of *Symphonie Fantastique*.

The majority of Hong Kong critics received their higher education in English-medium, and some of them are even experts in English literature or linguistics. It should therefore not be a surprise to see similar writing features between Hong Kong and British critics at a deeper level, such as their uses of evaluative strategies. Further, as classical concert reviews originated

in the West and have had a much longer history of development than the genre in Hong Kong, it is possible that Hong Kong has been influenced by the West in terms of classical music criticism writing. A number of Hong Kong critics mentioned in interviews that they were familiar with English concert reviews published in the UK or the US (e.g. Chi Man, Yu On, Tin Hei, and etc.). Tin Hei explicitly stated that he had acquired the mitigation strategy of praise-criticism pair from reading record reviews in *Gramophone*, a classical music magazine published in the UK. Therefore, the blending of Chinese and English cultures in the writing of Hong Kong critics might be a possible explanation for the similar patterns in uses of evaluative strategies in English and Hong Kong reviews.

9.3.2.2 *Differences between English and Chinese reviews*

Despite the similarities in expressing their evaluation, however, a number of differences are also observed between the British and Hong Kong groups in their presentation of praise (Section 9.3.2.2.1) and criticism (Section 9.3.2.2.2).

9.3.2.2.1 Praise acts

A cross-cultural difference was observed regarding praise. Most praise acts in English reviews are expressed as unmarked, without emphasis or mitigation. Most praises in Chinese reviews are emphasised. In interviews, most British critics claimed that they neither intended to be expressive nor reserved with their praise. In contrast, most Hong Kong critics explained they were more expressive when giving positive comments in order to encourage the performer, to recommend good musicians to the reader, or simply because the performance deserved a strong praise. Thus, the interview results seem to be consistent with textual analysis results.

Despite the cultural stereotype that Chinese writers are more reserved and implicit than

English writers (Oliver 1971; Taylor and Chen 1991), Hong Kong critics seem to be more enthusiastic with their praise than their British colleagues. Kong's (2006) study on academic writing echoes the findings in the present study that Chinese writers can be more explicit in expressing their evaluation. English writers, on the other hand, might have been influenced by the impersonal and implicit style from academia (Kong 2006), thus appearing to be less expressive in their praise. Hyland (2000), who studied evaluation in English academic book reviews, also stated that lavish praise can be seen as superficial and undermine one's positive face. Therefore, praise acts are emphasised less in English reviews than in Chinese reviews.

9.3.2.2.2 Critical acts

There is more complexity regarding criticism, compared with praise. About half of the British and Hong Kong critics believed that they were more straightforward with their criticism than with praise. This contradicts the textual analysis results that criticism is more reserved than praise, and mitigated criticism significantly exceeds emphasised and unmarked criticism in both corpora. In fact, critics showed even more reservation when discussing specific critical acts in their own reviews in discourse-based parts of the interview.

First, critics probably show more consideration for musicians' face than they think they do. All British and most Hong Kong critics claimed that they were not concerned about musicians (*Section 8.3.2*). However, when asked about specific mitigated critical acts in their own reviews, one of the common answers was "I don't want to be offensive", or "I don't want to hurt people". Critics from both groups acknowledged the integrity of concert musicians in general, and they did not want to be "unduly negative" unless the performance was "truly awful" (*Section 7.5.2.2*). This is in line with Salager-Meyer, Alcaraz Ariza et al.'s (2007a) observation about reviewers of medical book reviews, who are aware that the book author is often the primary reader of the review. Therefore, book reviewers are more likely to mitigate their

criticism to maintain a harmonious relationship within the small discourse community. However, interview results indicated that Hong Kong critics largely review concerts of international musicians, who do not read and write Chinese. Therefore, Hong Kong critics might have no concerns about face when reviewing these musicians. Some Hong Kong critics, nevertheless, would be more lenient with local orchestras or musicians, as they wanted to encourage the growth of local musicians. It is also common for British and Hong Kong critics to mitigate their criticism of young musicians, in order to not damage their careers in the early days.

Critics were also asked if they would be more lenient with their comments for the sake of concert organisers (*Section 8.3.3*). Almost all critics claimed to be uncorrupted in this aspect, although one Hong Kong critic did reveal the possibility of subconsciously softening critical comments as he received free tickets from the organisers.

Apart from consideration for musicians and concert organisers, critics might want to redress highly face-threatening critical acts for the sake of their own face or self-image, as addressed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Many critics did not seem to want to risk being accused of being unfair or mean. David commented on George Bernard Shaw's sarcastic style as "rude", and doubted it would still be acceptable by readers these days. Three Hong Kong critics stated that they wanted to "leave some space" (留有餘地) when they criticise. One of them, Wai Fung specified that he did so for "self-protection" (自我保護): to avoid establishing a public image as being mean, and to avoid attacks from the musicians who he criticised. Those who were at the concert but liked the performance might not feel offended if he expressed his criticisms softly. Therefore, he would mitigate his criticisms by using hedges such as perhaps (或者), maybe (可能), a little bit (稍微).

Mitigated criticism is prominent in both corpora, and there are a lot more varieties of

strategies to mitigate than emphasise criticism (twelve types of mitigated criticism, four types of emphasised criticism). Therefore, it seems obvious that critics could be actively trying to redress FTAs brought by their criticism. Numerous studies on reviews writing also suggest that mitigation strategies are related to politeness, or saving one's face (e.g. Gea Valor 2000; Hyland 2000; Itakura and Tsui 2011). Critics' reflections mentioned above also seem to be in line with these studies. However, face is not the only reason for critics to mitigate their critical acts, as interview results reveal. When commenting on their own writings, occasionally critics would deny they were trying to mitigate, or simply did not know why they wrote it in such a way. It is not impossible that critics might not aim to soften their criticism although the effect is mitigating.

Sometimes critics mitigate their criticism because they want to be accurate with their comments, as Hyland (1996) pointed out in his study of academic research articles. For example, David was asked why in the example below, he mitigated "problem" with an indefinite quantifier "part of".

(9-2) ***Part of*** the problem lay in the altogether too-laidback account of the solo part from the Italian pianist Benedetto Lupo.

David explained, "It's not an attempt to soften it, it's an attempt to find what was not there... I think the effect may be mitigating, but that's not my goal. My goal is as clearly as I can, bottom floor."

A Hong Kong critic, Chung Yuen, made a similar comment about a seemingly mitigated criticism of his:

呢個唔係讚同彈既問題，係講實相，個真相，而家真實既情形。(Chung Yuen)
[This is not a matter of praise or criticism. It's about the fact, the truth, how it actually was.]

Interestingly, a British critic (Peter) blamed a tight deadline for repeatedly occurring praise-criticism pairs in one of his reviews. He explained that he had only 15 minutes to file in the review after a concert, and he did not have time to organize his piece properly. Under such extreme circumstances, it is unlikely for a critic to think of mitigating his criticisms for the sake of face.

A few other British and Hong Kong critics also revealed that they did not consciously try to mitigate their criticism all the time. Some critics attributed the mild critical style to their personality: “I’m a nice person” (Samuel), “Actually I haven’t criticised much in many of my concert reviews. Perhaps it’s because I’m quite easy going.” (其實我托賴寫甘多音樂會評論都無乜值得我鬧，可能係我個人比較隨和啦) (Wai Fung). Therefore, some mitigated criticisms could just be a coincidence rather than engineered strategies.

Nevertheless, there were still critics who would acquire the skill of mitigation and apply it in their writing. For example, as mentioned in *Section 9.3.2.1*, Tin Hei learned to use praise-criticism pair from a classical record magazine *Gramophone*. He noticed that reviews in *Gramophone* would usually give criticism followed by positive comments, no matter how bad the record is:

我諗好多情況之下可能我真係決定個演出唔係幾好，不過我諗緊有 D 咩可能 *mitigate* 到佢。可能個重點都係彈果邊。我相信好多情況我甘做，通常彈果堆係我比較深刻 D 既，讚果堆係搵出來既。(Tin Hei)

[I think in many occasions I really think the performance wasn’t good, but I was thinking of how to mitigate it. Perhaps the focus is on criticism. I believe I do so often. Usually I would felt more deeply about the criticisms, whereas the praises were just for the sake of praise].

Thus, with the various explanations critics gave on their evaluation, it seems too simplistic to attribute all mitigations in criticism to critics’ attempt to avoid FTAs.

Regarding individual mitigation strategies, it is found that British critics used significantly more *Metaphor* strategy to soften their criticism. Hong Kong critics, on the other hand, used a significantly higher percentage of *Comparison*, *Explaining the problem* and *Personal attribution* (Section 6.6.2.2). As reflected in their interviews, Hong Kong critics were quite keen to compare the local productions to world-class performers or orchestras. It is less face-threatening if the local musicians are regarded as not as good as some top musicians in the world. Hong Kong critics also seemed to think it is important to give reasons when they criticise (e.g. Wai Fung, Chung Yuen). They believed it would be easier for readers and musicians to accept their criticism if they explain the reasons for it. As for *Personal Attribution*, Hong Kong critics are more keen to express their personal feelings about a concert (Section 7.3.1). This finding echoes Kong's (2006) claim that Chinese writers engage their readers through a more personal style of writing, whereas British writers prefer to be more implicit and impersonal.

Despite the findings in Section 9.3.2.1 that British and Hong Kong critics are similar in their choices of evaluative strategies, cultural differences are reflected in reviews writing. A Hong Kong critic used a few instances of self-denigration to weaken his critical acts, which did not appear in the English corpus at all. For example,

- (9-3) 我雖是外行，卻覺得哥列利區沒有真正把握住貝多芬的速度，甚至任意曲解，為了把聽眾帶進一個更高超神秘的境界，這種境界是否屬於貝多芬，仍很難說，因為我不是專家。(CJ43)

[Although I'm a layman, I think Pogorelich did not actually grasp Beethoven's tempo. He even twisted it, in order to lead his audience to a higher state. Whether this state belongs to Beethoven is hard to tell, as I'm not an expert.]

In the above example, the critic takes the responsibility for harming the musician's face by damaging his own positive face. Such overtly modest action is in line with Japanese critics'

self-denigration strategy in their academic book reviews (Itakura and Tsui 2011), however, is not applied by English speaking critics. Unfortunately, the critic who used this strategy declined my interview invitation. Therefore, I was not able to find out his rationale behind this. Other Chinese critics did not use self-denigration in their reviews.

In short, similar to a number of previous studies on evaluation (e.g. Hyland 2000; Mackiewicz 2007; Ha 2011; Lorés-Sanz 2013), criticism appears to be more mitigated in both English and Chinese reviews. Interview results, nevertheless, reveal that not all critical acts were made strategically. Cultural differences between English and Chinese might account for the divided preferences of individual mitigation strategies between British and Hong Kong critics.

9.4 Summary

This chapter indicated matches and mismatches between the conventions in the actual reviews and British and Hong Kong critics' views in terms of their uses of evaluations. Cross-cultural similarities and differences were compared and discussed. Findings in this study of concert reviews in newspapers show similar trends with previous research into rhetorical features of academic reviews. For instance, it is more common for both concert reviews and scholarly reviews to open and close with positive comments; in both genres their evaluation focuses on the book (i.e. content issues) or music (i.e. performance and composition) itself; in general praise outnumbers criticism; praise is more straightforward and criticism is more mitigated in both concert reviews and scholarly reviews. The above results suggest that the review genres as a whole share a considerable amount of similar features across disciplines.

British and Hong Kong critics showed more similarities than differences in their perspective on how evaluative acts should be presented, as music criticism in the popular media

can be a genre that serves similar purposes across cultures. Concert reviews, focusing on classical music which originated and evolved in the West, is more deeply rooted in western culture rather than Chinese culture. In addition, the possible influence of English writing culture on Hong Kong critics might also contribute to more similarities than differences in terms of critics' evaluative styles. Nevertheless, the cross-cultural differences in styles of evaluation can be attributed to the differences in professional culture of newspaper publication between the UK and Hong Kong, and the differences in national cultures between the English and Chinese as well.

Furthermore, discrepancies were observed between textual results on mitigated criticism and critics' interpretations of these acts. As critics' intentions did not always match the effect of their evaluative acts, it is possible to assume that there might be fewer attempts to mitigate criticism in both corpora than there appear to be.

Chapter 10 Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

This study has investigated a neglected type of reviews, by exploring the uses of positive and negative evaluations in English and Chinese classical concert reviews published in British and Hong Kong broadsheets respectively. It has reported on intra-cultural and cross-cultural similarities and differences in terms of overall patterns of positive and negative evaluations, evaluations on specific targets of a concert, categories of strengths of evaluative acts and strategies to emphasise or mitigate the evaluative acts, as well as music critics' perspectives about evaluating a concert and their views on factors which might affect their evaluations.

This chapter reports the main findings of the research, and considers a number of methodological and pedagogical implications based on the findings. Limitations of the study are also discussed, followed by suggestions for future research.

10.2 Main findings of the study

On the macro level both English and Chinese reviews contain significantly more instances of evaluation than non-evaluation, although the informative non-evaluation element also appears in most of the reviews in both corpora. The findings and interview results suggest that concert reviews are predominantly evaluative, though British and Hong Kong critics also showed their awareness of the need to provide concert-related background description for the general public who they write for.

Both British and Hong Kong critics on the whole favour praise more than criticism in their reviews. The majority of English and Chinese reviews are framed with positive comments, rather than negative ones. Furthermore, positive evaluation in both English and Hong Kong

reviews greatly exceeds negative evaluation in terms of background comments and concert evaluation. Interview results did not indicate directly that critics prefer to praise more than criticise, although in the discourse-based section most critics did acknowledge that they tended to soften criticisms in their own reviews. A cross-cultural difference was that English reviews contain a significantly higher percentage of praise on the concerts than Chinese reviews. Chinese reviews, on the other hand, have a higher percentage of concert criticism than English reviews, although the difference is not significant.

Regarding dimensions of evaluation of the concert, both British and Hong Kong critics largely favoured commenting on specific aspects of the concert, rather than giving overall comments. Praise significantly exceeds criticism both globally and specifically about the concert. Global criticism, being a very strong face-threatening act, is particularly rare in both groups. Interview results reveal that British and Hong Kong critics preferred not to condemn a concert as a whole. Critics preferred to discuss the quality of an individual aspect of the concert and explain why it was good or bad. Some critics would avoid reviewing bad concerts or mentioning the weaknesses of a concert. Some British critics would use the star-rating as a non-verbal means to mitigate the effect of global criticism. A cross-cultural similarity regarding targets of evaluation is that both groups praise and criticise extensively on the aspect of performance. Both British and Hong Kong critics tended to pay more attention to reporting the quality of performance to their readers.

At the level of strengths of evaluation, textual analysis suggested that British and Hong Kong critics are more unreserved with their praise and more reserved with their criticism. Most praise acts in both groups were emphasised or unmarked, although Hong Kong critics tended to emphasise their praises more and British critics mostly expressed their compliments without emphasis or mitigation. Most critical acts are mitigated. Music critics in both groups used the

most varieties of strategies to mitigate their critical acts. The results suggested that both British and Hong Kong critics were actively trying to mitigate their criticisms in concert reviews.

Cross-cultural similarities and differences are also observed regarding individual strategies to emphasise or mitigate praise and critical acts. *Booster* is the most frequently used strategy to emphasise praise and criticism in both groups. While each group has their own favoured individual mitigation strategies, they both predominantly used *Hedge* to mitigate their praise and criticism.

The textual results highlighted more similarities than differences in styles of evaluation between British English and Hong Kong Chinese concert reviews. The in-depth semi-structured interviews with British and Hong Kong critics, on the other hand, revealed deeper and more complex insights of how and why critics expressed their praise or criticism with emphasis, mitigation or simply unmarked, as well as factors which might affect their evaluation. On the whole, cultural differences between British and Hong Kong did not seem to have a significant impact on music critics' evaluative styles. British and Hong Kong music critics seemed to share more common than different views towards how they should evaluate classical music. The uniqueness of Hong Kong culture as a mixture of British and Chinese cultures may contribute to the similarities of rhetorical features in the findings. It is also possible that the concert review is a genre which serves similar purposes in newspaper publications in the UK and Hong Kong. On the other hand, critics from the two groups showed discrepancies on the following aspects: their understanding of their roles; their considerations for general readers, musicians, concert organisers and themselves; constraints from British and Hong Kong newspaper industries; differences in qualities of classical concerts in the UK and Hong Kong in general. These discrepancies might account for the differences in evaluative styles between British and Hong Kong critics.

10.3 Implications of the study

The present study has a number of methodological and pedagogical implications.

10.3.1 Methodological implications

The comprehensive framework of evaluation in concert reviews targets both aspects of the concert (e.g. performance, composition, acoustics, etc.) and types of praise and criticism with various levels of strengths (i.e. emphasised, unmarked, mitigated). The framework is useful for further studies of evaluation in academic and non-academic genres.

Compared with previous studies of non-academic review genres (e.g. Taboada 2011; Taboada and Carretero 2012; Kamoen, Mos et al. 2015), this study moves beyond textual analysis to use semi-structural interviews with music critics. Interviewing enables immediate contact with review writers and allows interpretation of research data from the writers' perspectives, in addition to textual analysis. In particular, given this cross-cultural comparison study is set in a wider social and cultural context, i.e. popular media discourse in the UK and Hong Kong, interviews with discourse-based questions facilitate more in-depth analyses. Writers of the reviews provide first-hand explanation of their uses of evaluation strategies, and justify their writing decisions with regards to relevant circumstances such as editorial policies and influences from their readers, musicians and concert organisers. In other words, the interview data not only further validate the present study, but also provide a deeper insight into the similarities and differences between evaluative features of English and Hong Kong concert reviews. Such an approach can be beneficial to cross-cultural studies of different languages and be applied in a wide spectrum of academic or non-academic settings.

10.3.2 Pedagogical implications

The findings obtained in this study have a number of implications in commentary writing in both English and Chinese. Writers of music criticism may benefit from the finding concerning various evaluation strategies to strengthen or weaken their praise or criticism. With the analyses of the distinctive rhetorical features in both English and Chinese concert reviews, the present study also provides a better understanding for critics writing in English and Chinese about the effects the rhetorical strategies in their languages might achieve. L2 English writers, on the other hand, can express their evaluations in a more effective way. Furthermore, the rhetorical strategies found in the present study are not only applicable to music criticism, they can also be applied in other evaluative genres in both academic and non-academic settings, such as academic book reviews, film reviews, restaurant reviews, and so on. Language teachers can use the evaluation strategies discussed in this study to emphasise or mitigate their comments on students' essays as appropriate.

University ESP or CSP (Chinese for specific purposes) programmes and training courses in industry may also benefit pedagogically from this study. Its findings can be useful for ESP or CSP teachers in designing their curriculum to teach both L1 and L2 students to strengthen or soften their opinions in written communications. Newspaper editors may draw on this study to provide in-house writing training for their junior critics as well.

10.4 Limitations and future research

There are limitations regarding the methodological approach in this study. First, the concert reviews collected from each Hong Kong newspaper are not in equal numbers. Unlike the British newspapers, Hong Kong newspapers publish much fewer concert reviews and the publication is not on a regular basis. For the English corpus, I chose concert reviews randomly

as there were too many. For the Chinese corpus, every suitable review had to be included, otherwise I would not be able to obtain 150 reviews. Moreover, only one critic from Ming Pao Daily News participated in the interview. The unequal distributions in the Chinese group thus limits the scope of this study, in that I was not able to compare intra-culturally among newspapers of each group their evaluative features and critics' perspectives on evaluation.

Second, about half of the critics in both corpora took part in the interviews, which was indeed a good sample size. However, among those who turned down the interview invitation or did not reply after several approaches, some were prolific writers of reviews, and some were editors/chief critics in addition to their role as music critics. These critics' views could have given a great deal of insights to the study. This study did not elicit the views of editors and readers. All of these possibilities were limited by time and availability of potential informants. Considering editors and readers would be a fruitful way to give a more comprehensive view to analyse evaluation from more perspectives.

Third, the interviews could have placed more emphasis on the discourse-based section which proved to be the most insightful part in the interview. In retrospect, it would have been more useful to expand on questions about more ambiguous or distinctive acts they wrote, rather than less significant general (non-discourse based) questions. Indeed, the interview process would have been more effective if it was designed upon results of textual analysis, mainly focusing on specific evaluative features rather than asking critics general views about review writing. In fact, there have been instances of mismatches between critics' general views and their own evaluative features which would have been interesting to explore in more depth.

Scheduling interviews based on textual analysis can be part of the solutions for the fourth limitation of this study: individual evaluative strategies were not analysed in great depth. A number of unique evaluative features emerged from the textual analysis. For instance, several

evaluative strategies (i.e. *Comparison, Interrogative Syntax, Metaphor, Negated Clause, Other Attribution, Personal Attribution*) can either strengthen or weaken an evaluation depending on the context. A detailed discourse-based discussion with each critic regarding these dual-functional strategies could draw out deeper and more valid insights into the evaluative features of this genre. While this was not practically feasible in the present study due to time constraints, this is a very good idea to be applied to studies of a smaller scale.

Regarding future research, there is a lot to explore in the writing of music criticism, a novel area in written discourse genres. To name but a few: rhetorical features of classical music reviews in other types of media, such as magazines, online forums, twitter, and so on; gender and evaluative behaviour (male critics significantly outnumbered female critics in both corpora in this study); reviews on other types of music, namely pop, folk, opera, jazz, and so on; cross-cultural comparison among L1 Chinese music reviews in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China, L1 English in the UK and the US. It is worth comparing rhetorical features across regions of the same L1, as it helps to reveal whether the differences in the findings are language-based or culture-based.

Apart from music criticism, the research methods developed in this study can be applied to shed light on studies of other review genres, especially the relatively understudied areas of humanities (e.g. film, theatre and dance), or commercial reviews (e.g. restaurant reviews, consumer reviews on online shopping websites).

Last but not least, in recent years, the impact of globalisation on politeness and impoliteness has gained growing attention in sociolinguistics (Cameron 2000; Blommaert 2003; Heller 2003), media discourse (Blitvich 2009), as well as cross-cultural/inter-cultural comparison (Cameron 2003; Garrett 2010; Canagarajah 2012; Sifianou 2013). Globalisation, a term with its meaning not clearly defined (Strange 1996), vaguely and elusively refers to the

spreading of Western or American ideology or values in terms of economy, politics and media culture to the rest of the world (Garrett 2010). Yet whether globalisation has an impact on politeness or impoliteness strategies across cultures is still an issue of debate (Sifianou 2013). As the discussion is beyond the scope of the present study, further investigation into the relationship between globalisation and evaluation can be undertaken in future studies.

10.5 Conclusion

To conclude, the present study has contributed to the exploration of a new area in discourse analysis. The findings and implications drawn from this study can be a useful stepping stone to expand knowledge in the realm of evaluation studies and cross-cultural comparison.

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Appendices

Appendix A: List of English concert reviews in the corpus

Concert reviews from the *Times*:

Number	Date	Author	Title
ET01	22/07/2013	Neil Fisher	Prom 13: National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America/Gergiev, at the Albert Hall
ET02	03/02/2012	Neil Fisher	LPO/Nézet-Séguin
ET03	02/01/2004	Hilary Finch	Allen/Martineau
ET04	04/11/2009	Sarah Urwin Jones	SCO/Knussen; arts first night Concert
ET05	02/04/2013	Hilary Finch	Concert LSO/Gergiev Barbican
ET06	03/03/2011	Hilary Finch	Concert
ET07	05/05/2009	Hilary Finch	Concert With One Voice Festival Hall; first night
ET08	02/10/2006	Hilary Finch	Halle/Elder
ET09	01/10/2003	John Allison	Irish CO/McGegan
ET10	01/02/2011	Neil Fisher	LPO/Jurowski; Concert
ET11	04/11/2008	Hilary Finch	LPO/Jarvi
ET12	01/02/2006	Geoff Brown	LPO/Alsop
ET13	02/10/2008	Geoff Brown	London Sinfonietta/Brabbins
ET14	01/09/2008	Neil Fisher	'Little Mozart' gives us first signs of a bucketful of talent
ET15	02/05/2007	Geoff Brown	RPO/Temirkanov
ET16	01/11/2007	Neil Fisher	Kate Royal/Roger Vignoles
ET17	01/06/2009	Hilary Finch	RLPO/Petrenko; first night Concert
ET18	05/10/2010	Richard Morrison	Hallé/Elder; Concert
ET19	04/07/2006	Richard Morrison	Halle/Brabbins
ET20	02/02/2004	Matthew Connolly	A masterclass in Rachmaninov and Respighi
ET21	01/03/2013	Hilary Finch	Emerson Quartet; Concert
ET22	05/03/2007	Neil Fisher	David Daniels
ET23	03/09/2012	Richard Morrison	Concert
ET24	02/03/2009	Hilary Finch	Concert
ET25	01/03/2012	Geoff Brown	Concert
ET26	02/06/2011	Hilary Finch	Concert
ET27	01/03/2005	Hilary Finch	Alban Berg Quartet
ET28	01/02/2005	Hilary Finch	Bonney/ Kirchschrager
ET29	07/10/2005	Richard Morrison	Bournemouth SO/ Alsop
ET30	01/04/2004	Hilary Finch	Britten Sinfonia/Layton
ET31	07/06/2005	Neil Fisher	Budapest FO/Fischer
ET32	02/09/2005	Richard Morrison	Cleveland Orch/Welser-Most

ET33	02/05/2005	Geoff Brown	Halle/Malkki
ET34	01/11/2004	Neil Fisher	London Musici/Stephenson
ET35	01/11/2005	Neil Fisher	Oxford Lieder Festival
ET36	01/07/2009	Hilary Finch	Philharmonia/Schiff; first night Concert
ET37	03/08/2009	Geoff Brown	Prom 20
ET38	01/02/2013	Richard Morrison	Concert
ET39	01/04/2010	Geoff Brown	Concert
ET40	01/02/2010	Richard Morrison	Concert Daniel Barenboim Festival Hall; arts first night
ET41	08/05/2013	Geoff Brown	Concert Britten Sinfonia/Bostridge Barbican
ET42	01/10/2009	Neil Fisher	Concert; arts first night
ET43	01/06/2010	Neil Fisher	COE/Fischer; Concert
ET44	01/07/2013	Richard Morrison	CBSO/Nelsons; Concert
ET45	02/02/2007	Richard Morrison	Britten Sinfonia
ET46	01/04/2011	Hilary Finch	Boesch/Martineau; Concert
ET47	01/11/2012	Hilary Finch	Alison Balsom; Concert
ET48	02/07/2010	Geoff Brown	Philharmonia/Temirkanov; Concert
ET49	02/08/2010	Geoff Brown	Australian YO/Elder; Prom 18
ET50	02/06/2006	Hilary Finch	Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki

Concert reviews from the *Guardian*:

Number	Date	Author	Title
EG01	13/07/2013	Martin Kettle	First night Proms set sail on sea theme: Prom 1 Royal Albert Hall, London 4/5
EG02	01/11/2013	Andrew Clements	Reviews: Classical: Masterprize final: Barbican, London 1/5
EG03	01/09/2010	Rian Evans	Review: Classical: ACO/Tognetti Snape Maltings, Aldeburgh 4/5
EG04	01/05/2009	Andrew Clements	Review: Classical: Angela Hewitt Royal Festival Hall, London 4/5
EG05	02/11/2012	Andrew Clements	Review: Classical: Arditti Quartet Wigmore Hall, London 4/5
EG06	01/05/2007	Rian Evans	Review: Classical: BBCNOW/Van Steen St David's Hall, Cardiff 4/5
EG07	02/02/2005	Tim Ashley	Review: Classical: BBCPO finds beauty in Jekyll and Hyde: BBCPO/ Sinaisky: Bridgewater Hall, Manchester 4/5
EG08	02/10/2007	Tim Ashley	Review: Classical: BBCPO/Nosedá: Bridgewater Hall, Manchester 4/5
EG09	01/11/2011	Andrew Clements	Review: Classical: BBCSO/Oramo Barbican, London 4/5
EG10	02/07/2010	Rowena Smith	Review: Classical: Belcea Quartet/London Winds Crail Church, Fife 5/5

EG11	01/02/2010	Andrew Clements	Review: Classical: Berlin Staatskapelle/Barenboim Royal Festival Hall, London 5/5
EG12	03/05/2010	Andrew Clements	Review: Classical: Berliner Philharmoniker/Barenboim Sheldonian, Oxford 5/5
EG13	01/03/2011	Guy Dammann	Review: Classical: Brian Ferneyhough: Total Immersion Barbican, London 5/5
EG14	01/03/2012	Guy Dammann	Review: Classical: Britten Sinfonia/Ades Queen Elizabeth Hall, London 5/5
EG15	01/09/2008	Rian Evans	Review: Classical: Britten-Pears Orch/Ticciati Snape Maltings, Aldeburgh 5/5
EG16	04/07/2005	Andrew Clements	Review: Classical: CBSO/Brabbins: Town Hall, Cheltenham 3/5
EG17	01/07/2013	Andrew Clements	Review: Classical: CBSO/Nelsons Symphony Hall, Birmingham 4/5
EG18	01/07/2008	Rian Evans	Review: Classical: CBSO/Zhang Symphony Hall, Birmingham 3/5
EG19	02/10/2006	Andrew Clements	Review: Classical: COE/Aimard Queen Elizabeth Hall, London 4/5
EG20	02/11/2009	Alfred Hickling	Review: Classical: Czech PO/Hrusa Bridgewater Hall, Manchester 3/5
EG21	01/04/2004	Erica Jeal	Review: Classical: Daniele Gatti shows no mercy: RPO/Gatti: Royal Festival Hall, London 4/5
EG22	01/03/2007	Andrew Clements	Review: Classical: Daniels/Le Point du Jour Barbican, London: 5/5
EG23	02/02/2009	Rowena Smith	Review: Classical: Elijah: City Halls, Glasgow: 5/5
EG24	01/03/2013	Erica Jeal	Review: Classical: Emerson Quartet Queen Elizabeth Hall, London 4/5
EG25	01/10/2004	Rian Evans	Review: Classical: English Concert: St George's, Bristol 4/5
EG26	01/09/2007	Tim Ashley	Review: Prom 62: Bavarian RSO/Jansons Royal Albert Hall, London 4/5
EG27	01/09/2011	Andrew Clements	Review: Prom 60: Netherlands RPO/Van Zweden Royal Albert Hall, London 4/5
EG28	05/07/2011	Andrew Clements	Review: Classical: Glennie/Festival Academy/Thomson Town Hall, Cheltenham 3/5
EG29	03/07/2006	Tom Service	Review: Classical: Halle/Brabbins Town Hall, Cheltenham 4/5
EG30	01/05/2012	Tim Ashley	Review: Classical: Halle/Stenz/Gerhardt Bridgewater Hall, Manchester 4/5
EG31	02/02/2012	Kate Molleson	Review: Classical: Hebrides Ensemble Perth Concert Hall 4/5
EG32	01/10/2009	Erica Jeal	Review: Classical: Imogen Cooper at 60 Wigmore Hall, London 3/5

EG33	02/04/2009	Rowena Smith	Review: Classical: RSNO/Deneve Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow, 3/5
EG34	01/04/2013	George Hall	Review: Classical: St John Passion Barbican, London 3/5
EG35	01/02/2006	George Hall	Review: Classical: RGO/Jansons Barbican, London 4/5
EG36	01/02/2011	Alfred Hickling	Review: Classical: Northern Sinfonia/Zehetmair Sage, Gateshead 4/5
EG37	02/10/2012	Andrew Clements	Review: Classical: Northern Sinfonia/Zehetmair Sage, Gateshead 4/5
EG38	01/03/2004	Tom Service	Review: Classical: Maxim Vengerov/ Fazil Say: Barbican, London 3/5
EG39	01/04/2010	Martin Kettle	Review: Classical: LSO/Bychkov Barbican, London 4/5
EG40	01/11/2010	Tim Ashley	Review: Classical: LSO/Jarvi Barbican, London 4/5
EG41	06/08/2009	Rian Evans	Review: Classical: Marc-Andre Hamelin Snape Maltings, Aldeburgh 5/5
EG42	02/05/2011	Erica Jeal	Review: Classical: Mark Padmore and Friends Queen Elizabeth Hall, London 4/5
EG43	01/09/2012	Erica Jeal	Saturday: Review: Prom 63: Berliner Philharmoniker/Rattle Royal Albert Hall, London 4/5
EG44	01/06/2009	Erica Jeal	Review: Classical: Robert Levin Queen Elizabeth Hall, London 4/5
EG45	01/05/2004	Erica Jeal	Review: Haitnik gets schmaltzy: Classical: Vienna Philharmonic/Haitink Barbican, London 3/5
EG46	01/10/2005	Rian Evans	Review: Classical: Paul Lewis: Forum, Malvern 3/5
EG47	14/05/2013	Guy Dammann	Review: Classical: Nico Muhly: A Scream and an Outrage LSO St Luke's/Barbican, London 2/5
EG48	02/04/2007	Martin Kettle	Review: Classical: Paul Lewis Wigmore Hall, London 3/5
EG49	02/10/2010	Rian Evans	Review: Classical: Mark Padmore/Prussia Cove St George's, Bristol 4/5
EG50	04/04/2011	Erica Jeal	Review: Classical: Murray Perahia Barbican Hall, London 4/5

Concert reviews from the *Daily Telegraph*:

Number	Date	Author	Title
ED01	06/04/2012	Ivan Hewett	Fascinating Baroque landscape - without its peaks
ED02	06/07/2005	Geoffrey Norris	A heavy-footed Alpine trudge
ED03	07/09/2012	Hugo Shirley	A lyrical and moving journey to Bruckner heaven; BBC Proms 2012

ED04	24/11/2011	David Fanning	A masterful vision of Bruckner
ED05	01/06/2012	Ivan Hewett	A miracle of time and place
ED06	05/05/2006	Geoffrey Norris	Earthy power of a Mozart we seldom hear
ED07	08/03/2007	Matthew Rye	A pianistic talent best suited to the miniature
ED08	02/11/2012	Ivan Hewett	An astonishing gift, but it's almost too easy
ED09	01/11/2005	Geoffrey Norris	An unerring understanding of Mozart's sublime thrills
ED10	07/05/2007	Geoffrey Norris	At last, real Kazakh culture without Borat
ED11	01/02/2006	Geoffrey Norris	Bang goes another cherished prejudice
ED12	03/08/2009	Ivan Hewett	Little ones whisper along
ED13	14/02/2011	Ivan Hewett	Beautiful resignation on the brink of eternity
ED14	01/06/2009	David Fanning	Bewitching blend to tickle the ear
ED15	01/09/2011	Hugo Shirley	Bounding along with Bruckner; REVIEW Proms 2011
ED16	02/04/2004	Geoffrey Norris	Breathing new life into Tchaikovsky's old warhorse
ED17	01/02/2013	Ivan Hewett	Celebration of a giant of 20th-century music opens in blazing, spellbinding form
ED18	01/06/2006	Geoffrey Norris	Perfection without passion
ED19	09/03/2009	David Fanning	Another recruit to the Nielsen crusade
ED20	06/10/2011	Hugo Shirley	Crackling electricity leads to a show of exquisite lightness
ED21	23/06/2011	Ivan Hewett	Daring Rattle teases with conducting that teeters on incoherence
ED22	08/07/2006	Ivan Hewett	Energies harnessed to the point of ecstasy
ED23	03/10/2007	Ivan Hewett	Echoes of tenderness from a strange world
ED24	31/05/2010	Michael Henderson	Elder scales Mahler's Matterhorn and makes it look easy;
ED25	23/03/2012	Hugo Shirley	Lang Lang should learn to grow up
ED26	01/03/2012	Ivan Hewett	Little and large act are twice as good
ED27	01/02/2007	Ivan Hewett	London pays tribute to America's chief
ED28	02/11/2006	Rupert Christiansen	Music's new 'golden couple' have yet to prove their mettle
ED29	11/11/2010	Ivan Hewett	One range of feeling fits all
ED30	03/11/2003	Ivan Hewett	As hopeless as the others
ED31	09/07/2009	Ivan Hewett	Misty visions of the north
ED32	01/03/2004	Ivan Hewett	Dramatic but unmoving ascent of Beethoven
ED33	03/06/2005	Geoffrey Norris	Riveted by a bravura dynamic
ED34	01/09/2006	Geoffrey Norris	Classical vision provides backbone
ED35	12/04/2005	Ivan Hewett	Mackerras triumphs in tragedy
ED36	01/08/2007	Geoffrey Norris	Stark, savage primeval music
ED37	17/05/2012	Ivan Hewett	Stravinsky given a human touch

ED38	03/05/2011	Rupert Christiansen	Talent aplenty, but who was the best?
ED39	02/08/2011	Geoffrey Norris	'The Bells' fails to true
ED40	07/06/2004	Matthew Rye	The power of Mahler
ED41	01/05/2008	Ivan Hewett	The Swan swims on with dignity
ED42	16/03/2006	Geoffrey Norris	Thoroughly three-dimensional trio
ED43	01/10/2012	Ivan Hewett	Thrilling crescendo fails to flourish
ED44	09/07/2013	Ivan Hewett	Tiny ideas and big surprises
ED45	22/07/2010	Ivan Hewett	To the top of Strauss's mountain-eventually
ED46	08/05/2004	David Fanning	Triumph of texture and sound
ED47	09/04/2012	Hugo Shirley	Vengerov back with a point to prove
ED48	01/02/2005	Geoffrey Norris	Vintage Muti fusion of energy and poise
ED49	03/02/2012	Ivan Hewett	When Beethoven's in the blood
ED50	13/10/2010	Ivan Hewett	Youthful excellence

Appendix B: List of Chinese Concert Reviews in the Corpus

Concert reviews from the *Hong Kong Economic Journal* (信報)

Number	Date	Author	Title
CJ01	12/07/2005	劉偉霖	鬥大不如覓小
CJ02	20/12/2005	劉偉霖	嫌港崇洋不知價
CJ03	13/06/2006	劉偉霖	在孤高與狂野之間
CJ04	07/11/2006	劉偉霖	阿巴度的超級樂團
CJ05	14/11/2006	劉偉霖	波里尼冷漠之謎
CJ06	06/02/2007	劉偉霖	貝多芬輕裝上陣
CJ07	01/05/2007	劉偉霖	士別三年 洗耳恭聽
CJ08	26/06/2007	劉偉霖	小別與熱身
CJ09	23/10/2007	劉偉霖	轉運的新鋼琴女皇
CJ10	06/11/2007	劉偉霖	序曲作為閉幕
CJ11	18/12/2007	劉偉霖	二三排序三心兩意
CJ12	03/06/2008	劉偉霖	馬勒的魚與熊掌
CJ13	22/09/2009	劉偉霖	小交新派演奏《英雄》
CJ14	02/03/2010	劉偉霖	沒靈魂的靚聲——迪華特的布魯克納第八
CJ15	03/05/2010	劉偉霖	初聽蘇柏軒
CJ16	28/02/2011	劉偉霖	少做勝過不做：迪華特的進步？
CJ17	23/04/2012	劉偉霖	騎士不狂 光輝巨響
CJ18	28/05/2012	劉偉霖	阿巴度的柏林約會
CJ19	03/12/2012	劉偉霖	你竟然去聽郎朗？
CJ20	24/12/2012	劉偉霖	楊遜斯壓軸《合唱》
CJ21	26/12/2012	劉偉霖	波蘭帥哥愛慢歌
CJ22	31/12/2012	劉偉霖	請得起名指揮嗎？
CJ23	13/05/2013	劉偉霖	去柏林前 由你話事
CJ24	20/05/2013	劉偉霖	他最棒，肯定！
CJ25	03/06/2013	劉偉霖	變奏交響鋼琴
CJ26	10/06/2013	劉偉霖	這是港樂？這是文化中心？
CJ27	17/06/2013	劉偉霖	名家後人《春之祭》
CJ28	15/07/2013	劉偉霖	既聽且看《行星組曲》
CJ29	24/11/2009	劉靖之	馬友友的人文精神——2009 亞洲之旅香港演出聽後
CJ30	09/02/2010	劉靖之	香港小交的貝多芬第九
CJ31	07/03/2011	劉靖之	芭托莉的浪漫歌曲獨唱會
CJ32	14/05/2010	周光蓁	記小交首進國家大劇院
CJ33	27/10/200	周凡夫	《遠遊》的淨化、昇華和永恆
CJ34	02/11/2005	周凡夫	紅裙藏騷動 台下有學問
CJ35	04/07/2006	周凡夫	中國愛樂意外一幕
CJ36	07/04/2009	周凡夫	朝聖光環波里尼 豈真是「冷漠無情」
CJ37	18/10/2010	周凡夫	李雲迪未入蕭邦世界

CJ38	01/12/2010	周凡夫	展示大氣和音樂實力 — 亞洲音樂節的「台」前與「台」後
CJ39	05/08/2003	曾葉發	演奏李斯特的矛盾
CJ40	01/09/2003	曾葉發	郎朗的「真善美」
CJ41	18/03/2008	朱振威	業餘班底職業水平
CJ42	16/06/2009	朱振威	港產聲樂家的思翹印象
CJ43	09/10/2003	李歐梵	和阿當諾唱反調
CJ44	13/07/2005	李歐梵	馬勒壓軸試港樂
CJ45	28/11/2006	李歐梵	聽馬勒第三交響曲
CJ46	08/05/2007	李歐梵	歌后憶苦 樂秀思甜
CJ47	27/02/2010	李歐梵	空留琴上聲 傳聰的化境
CJ48	21/11/2005	林外山	不理性的理性音樂會
CJ49	05/09/2011	洪思行	指揮的魔法
CJ50	28/02/2011	白明	隱沒自我的樂師：創造在何方？ —— 鈴木雅明古鍵琴獨奏會
CJ51	07/06/2005	程逸	聽莫扎特
CJ52	25/01/2006	程逸	馬勒第四
CJ53	13/04/2012	萱子	醉倒在音樂盛宴
CJ54	12/11/2010	陳家駒	三百聽眾開場的室樂節
CJ55	15/12/2010	陳家駒	音樂顯才華 — 港台四重奏大會堂首演
CJ56	31/12/2010	陳家駒	哈利路亞在世遺
CJ57	28/11/2011	陳家駒	精采盡在加奏中——帕爾曼的六首返場小品
CJ58	12/12/2011	陳家駒	室樂盛宴：茱莉亞弦樂四重奏
CJ59	06/02/2012	陳家駒	冬日的音樂節
CJ60	24/02/2011	陳永華	《聖馬太受難曲》水準中上
CJ61	28/03/2011	陳永華	聖多馬少年合唱團 歎為觀止的演出
CJ62	29/05/2007	陳耀紅	東洋風 北歐韻
CJ63	29/03/2006	麥華嵩	這樣的一個莫扎特紀念
CJ64	08/01/2008	麥華嵩	民辦音樂會高水準示範
CJ65	01/07/2008	麥華嵩	音樂會夜譚

Concert reviews from *Ming Pao* (明報)

Number	Date	Author	Title
CM01	30/10/2003	李歐梵	聽俄國樂團
CM02	27/12/2003	李歐梵	在台北聽羅斯托波維奇
CM03	25/09/2004	李歐梵	你喜歡布拉姆斯嗎？
CM04	06/11/2004	李歐梵	聽港樂奏馬勒
CM05	04/12/2004	李歐梵	霍洛多斯和郎朗
CM06	12/03/2005	李歐梵	聽布魯根的「貝九」
CM07	26/03/2005	李歐梵	聽明茲的貝多芬
CM08	28/01/2006	李歐梵	聽馬勒的第四交響曲

CM09	20/02/2006	李歐梵	聽三藩市交響樂團
CM10	21/02/2006	李歐梵	不同凡響的馬勒第十
CM11	19/03/2006	李歐梵	雅倫爵士了不起
CM12	20/03/2006	李歐梵	室樂團也需要好指揮
CM13	04/06/2006	李歐梵	聽三重奏音樂會
CM14	21/08/2006	李歐梵	聽「小交」講故事
CM15	18/10/2006	李歐梵	貝多芬的小提琴協奏曲
CM16	15/11/2006	李歐梵	聽陳其鋼的《蝶戀花》
CM17	21/02/2007	李歐梵	聽東京四重奏團
CM18	27/06/2007	李歐梵	在馬來西亞聽交響樂
CM19	05/03/2008	李歐梵	「上帝在演奏」——席夫的琴藝
CM20	19/03/2008	李歐梵	「倫敦愛樂」精彩絕倫
CM21	02/04/2008	李歐梵	「小交」的最新獻禮
CM22	10/12/2008	李歐梵	壓抑的馬勒
CM23	21/03/2011	李歐梵	Anton Bruckner 聽布魯克納
CM24	24/02/2013	李歐梵	梵志登的馬勒
CM25	07/07/2013	李歐梵	港大第一流的演奏廳：艾默森四重奏團獻藝
CM26	03/04/2006	文潔華	音樂家的臉
CM27	11/10/2007	陳耀華	弦樂四重奏
CM28	18/10/2007	陳耀華	口琴與貝多芬交響曲
CM29	13/12/2007	陳耀華	西貝遼士
CM30	22/03/2012	陳耀華	大會堂高座口琴多重奏

Concert reviews from *Tai Kung Pao* (大公報)

Number	Date	Author	Title
CK01	15/11/2003	劉靖之	阿巴度指揮馬勒《復活》顯大師風範 瑞士盧塞因音樂節觀後感
CK02	16/08/2003	周凡夫	啼聲初響顯露潛力——珠海欣賞拱北合唱團演出
CK03	11/09/2003	周凡夫	中秋佳節「太空漫遊」愛樂管樂團港澳演出
CK04	04/03/2004	周凡夫	小提琴怪傑克蕾瑪 率樂團澳門演出
CK05	26/07/2004	周凡夫	「演藝」首度踏足深圳 張緯晴賽後演奏更見深度
CK06	18/04/2012	周凡夫	《神鵬》帶動「深交」展翅
CK07	07/08/2003	麥華嵩	澳門的音樂新希望——談澳門樂團季末演出
CK08	06/09/2003	麥華嵩	丁允晞琴藝高超真摯
CK09	18/09/2003	麥華嵩	港樂開幕音樂會中規中矩
CK10	20/09/2003	麥華嵩	漫談吳美樂鋼琴演奏會
CK11	10/11/2003	麥華嵩	蒼勁清冷的北德樂風——談漢堡 NDR 交響樂團之演出
CK12	20/11/2003	麥華嵩	鋼琴神童 張緯晴潛質優厚 演奏天份有待發展

CK13	12/12/2003	麥華嵩	先精緻後平庸的演出 ——談港樂「馬勒六與莫扎特廿四」音樂會
CK14	21/01/2004	麥華嵩	官美如揮出佳篇——談中大校慶音樂會
CK15	28/01/2004	麥華嵩	還未是大師的高手——談柏尼夫鋼琴演奏會
CK16	25/05/2004	麥華嵩	余嘉露的清雅琴風
CK17	31/03/2005	麥華嵩	伊薩依四重奏演出優雅細膩
CK18	05/06/2006	麥華嵩	港樂的「英雄式」演出——談「迪華特的貝多芬」音樂會
CK19	06/12/2006	麥華嵩	港樂演出「馬勒三」細緻生動
CK20	19/04/2007	麥華嵩	莫斯科愛樂發揮俄式管弦音響
CK21	07/05/2007	麥華嵩	樂團一流演繹一般談倫敦交響樂團演奏貝爾格及馬勒
CK22	22/10/2008	麥華嵩	芬卓琴風優雅活潑技藝高 聽「金豎琴」與城市室樂團
CK23	28/11/2008	史君良	曹秀美花腔音質好狀態佳
CK24	10/03/2009	史君良	博愛之聲 歡樂之情 聽英國北部交響樂團及合唱團
CK25	30/03/2011	史君良	幸田浩子 日本愛樂表現佳
CK26	11/06/2011	史君良	馬勒室樂團 名不虛傳
CK27	19/04/2012	史君良	中村惠美 獨唱會字正腔圓
CK28	01/04/2013	史君良	「非凡威爾第」重溫樂曲盛宴
CK29	11/08/2003	嘉嫻	鄭慧從經驗中得益 ——談「港樂」夏日鋼琴 Fiesta(下)
CK30	06/02/2006	嘉嫻	「港樂」再展馬勒樂韻
CK31	27/10/2008	嘉嫻	彈奏梅湘名作麥克瑞格
CK32	23/02/2010	嘉嫻	「小交」連續兩月奏名曲
CK33	16/04/2012	嘉嫻	城室奏詹金斯《安魂曲》表現佳 本月下旬演繹法國「香頌」
CK34	03/05/2012	嘉嫻	馬捷爾率「愛樂」表現精彩
CK35	25/07/2012	嘉嫻	黃蔚然藝業益見精進
CK36	06/12/2012	嘉嫻	「城室」新樂季整體編排稍遜
CK37	31/12/2003	藍金鐘	為青年鋼琴家安寧喝彩
CK38	16/06/2006	西南風	先要「得心」方能「應手」 ——三重奏音樂會聽後感
CK39	25/07/2006	西南風	齊默曼 技巧高超演繹細膩
CK40	08/03/2011	西南風	芭托莉從容挑戰高難度
CK41	27/10/2011	西南風	維也納愛樂 令人激賞
CK42	16/03/2013	西南風	復興古樂富挑戰性 聽羅浮宮音樂家古樂團演出
CK43	10/03/2012	詹木	稱得上一個「好」字 小評阿姆斯特丹音樂廳樂團來港演出
CK44	10/09/2012	詹木	李雲迪奏「柴一」偏快
CK45	25/10/2012	詹木	甘祁頓音樂會 叫好不叫座
CK46	28/11/2012	詹木	齊默曼獨奏會彈出「鮮」味

CK47	29/11/2012	詹木	郎朗技巧純熟 演獨角戲
CK48	06/12/2012	詹木	安德塞斯基彈出另類巴赫
CK49	13/07/2013	鄭政恆	小交奏法國樂曲 豐厚平實
CK50	13/04/2005	陳安	郎朗彈《黃河》
CK51	28/11/2005	無名氏	把握宏大結構與精微細節柏林愛樂確實非同凡響
CK52	09/01/2007	無名氏	運斤如風的琴藝 —— 談嘉斯坦與港樂音樂會
CK53	04/04/2007	無名氏	港樂奏馬勒第七交響曲 釋放蘊藏樂譜內的詩意
CK54	20/02/2013	無名氏	馬捷爾執棒瑕不掩瑜
CK55	21/05/2013	無名氏	以色列合奏團 演繹當代妙韻

Appendix C: The Interview Schedule

Part 1: Main questions:

1. How did you start your career in music criticism? / How did you enter the critic industry, i.e. being invited to write, or sending your reviews to the newspaper?
 - When did you start?
 - How did you learn to write concert reviews? / Any training received in writing music criticism, e.g. advice from senior critics, learning by reading other reviews, training at institution/university, etc.?

2. Is writing music criticism your full-time job?
 - How many reviews do you write in a week/month?
 - What preparation work would you do before writing concert reviews?
 - Is there a particular genre of music that you particularly focus on?
 - Do you write for different journals / newspapers?
 - If yes, how does your writing style vary?
 - Do you have to avoid jargons when writing concert reviews for newspapers?
 - Is there a favourite newspaper? Why?

3. How do you praise, on the whole more expressive or more reserved?
 - How do you criticise, more straight-forward or more indirect?
 - Has your writing style changed since you started? In what sense? (Do you tend to praise the positives more than before or are you becoming more critical?)
 - What element(s) do you always include in your reviews?
 - Has there been any specific experience that has led you to change your review writing?
 - Is there a review that you are particularly proud of?
 - Is there a review that you would like to change if you could write again?

4. When you are writing concert reviews, do you have the target readers in mind?
 - Who do you think your readers are?
 - Why do you think the readers read your reviews? / What do you think the readers expect to see in the reviews?
 - Do your target readers vary from one newspaper/journal to another?
 - If yes, would you express yourself differently to approach the readers in different newspapers/journals? And specifically, does audience affect your style, amount of criticism and praise and how you express it?
 - In this multi-media age, many newspapers are digitalised and readers can give instant feedback online about a review they read. Does this have any impact on your style of writing, particularly in terms of praise and criticism?
 - Do you think that your reviews might affect the readers' purchasing decisions, such as purchasing CDs or going to concerts in the future?

5. When you are writing concert reviews, do you expect the musicians you comment on to read them?
 - If yes, would that have an impact on your evaluation of the performance of the musicians?
 - Have your reviews ever been quoted?
 - Do you think that your reviews might affect the musicians' career prospects? If so, do you take this into account when writing critical reviews?
 - Have you ever got any feedback from the musicians you commented on?
 - Have you ever got any feedback from your general readers?
6. Do editors give you any guidance in writing concert reviews?
 - And do the newspapers you write for have any guidelines for review writing?
 - What about the expected length?
 - Have your editors ever changed anything or asked you to change anything in your reviews?
 - A Hong Kong critic mentioned that he chose the type of music a newspaper might prefer to review. Do you choose concerts to review according to the preferences of a newspaper or its editor?
 - What's your opinion on the star rating system?
 - Are there any other factors that affect your evaluation style, e.g. culture?
7. In your opinion, what are the music critics for? / What are the functions of music critics?
8. Is there anything you would like to add about this topic?

Part 2: Prompt card questions (asking for the critic's opinions on others' views on music criticism)

What is your opinion on this?

8. The function of music critic is to ignite debate.
9. A music critic said:
 "When I'm writing a review, no matter whether I praise or criticise, I try to write it in an entertaining way to attract my readers."
10. Many critics do not really know the music they criticise about.
11. Many concerts have been killed after bad reviews. In other words, bad reviews are a huge put-off instead of help to the music industry.
12. Music critics should take part in some of the 'cheerleading' for the future of music art, industry, and funding for music activities.

13. A music critic said:

‘Sometimes I get offers from concert organisers, musicians’ agents or advertisers. I always turn them down.’

14. A music critic said:

‘Sometimes I find it difficult to criticise some musician friends of mine who appear in the concerts I write about.’

Part 3: Discourse-based questions on each critic’s own reviews. Parts of the critic’s reviews are bolded and he/she will be asked to comment on the evaluation strategy used, why and how did the critic use the strategy and how did the critic expect the readers to understand that.

Appendix D: A Sample of Discourse-based Questions in the Interview

Review title: *An astonishing gift, but it's almost too easy* (ED08)

Review content	Corresponding questions
<p>Tennis has Andy Murray, the piano has Benjamin Grosvenor. He's our pianistic Team GB, the first pianist from these shores to be signed up by the venerable Decca label in 60 years.</p> <p>If the 20-year-old Grosvenor finds it burdensome to carry the hopes of a nation on his shoulders, he certainly didn't show it at this QEH recital. He walked on with that guileless straightforwardness that comes from complete confidence, frowned at the keyboard for two seconds as if to take its measure, and plunged into the grand, high-stepping flourishes that begin Bach's D major Partita.</p> <p>That gesture gave us something essential about Grosvenor. He's always calmly on top of the situation. Even at the moments of hectic virtuosity - and there were plenty of them in this taxing concert - every move seems prepared and measured, and exquisitely placed. The result is a playing style that seems almost too cool.</p> <p>Part of the thrill of virtuoso pianism is feeling the player teetering at the edge of the possible. Last night that edge <i>never came close</i>, so the excitement that usually attends a piece such as Chopin's Grand Polonaise Brillante or Schulz-Evler's madly virtuoso Concert Arabesques on themes by Johann Strauss <i>was curiously absent</i>.</p> <p>That cool control and perfectly balanced touch certainly produced some wondrous things. The Bach Partita was marvellously light, Grosvenor's super-dry bass notes acting like the tiny push that keeps the balloon aloft. That dry, plucked bass, placed with perfect precision, came back in Chopin's F sharp minor Polonaise, giving it a superb poise. And the tumultuous octaves that begin the piece had a tremendous, thrilling bite.</p> <p><i>Fire and air are Grosvenor's elements, and under his hands music seems to be made entirely from them. Which is exciting, in its way, <u>but there's something else in Chopin's Polonaise, a tragic weight, which didn't register.</u></i></p>	<p>Here, I can see you made compared Benjamin Grosvenor (pianist of this concert) to Andy Murray. You described Grosvenor as "our pianist Team GB". Why did you write in such a way? How did you want your readers to take this?</p> <p>You used seemingly negative phrases, such as "never came close" and "curiously absent, to praise Grosvenor's virtuosic skills. Could you please comment on this?</p> <p>Here, you used a string of boosters for the praises you made, for example "cool", "perfectly", "certainly", "marvellous", "perfect" and "superb". Were you trying to emphasise your positive comments?</p> <p>There are a few praise-criticism pairs in the last two paragraphs of this review. (Praise of the pair is in italic and criticism is underlined). And your criticism of the choice of programme is embedded in praise of the performer ("The uncanny quality...all over again). Why did</p>

Much of the second half was given over to a string of miniatures, most of them haunted by waltz rhythms. The uncanny quality of Scriabin's early Mazurkas was exactly right for Grosvenor's gifts, and he made the slender charm of Granados's 8 Valses Poéticos come alive. Even so, it felt like a too-easy parade of encores - though the first of the real encores, Godowsky's arrangement of Albeniz's Tango, was played so beautifully that I was captivated all over again. *Grosvenor has a truly astonishing gift, but it hasn't yet found its anchor.*

T RATING ****

you mix your criticism with praise?
How did you want your readers to take this?

Appendix E: Interview Invitation email to music critics

Dear _____ (name of participant),

I am writing in connection to the concert reviews you published in _____ (name of the newspaper). I'm conducting a PhD study which investigates how music critics in Hong Kong and the UK express their praise and criticism in classical concert reviews.

As your reviews are part of the corpus I am analysing, I would like to interview you to gain an insight into your perspectives on writing concert reviews. I would be grateful if you could participate in an interview with me. The interview would last for about an hour.

Please be assured that the interview will only be used for research purposes. Your real identity will not be revealed in any research outputs resulting from this research. Any potentially identifying information provided by you will not be linked to a particular review that you have written. This project adheres to the University of Essex research ethics guidelines and has been approved by my department's research ethics coordinator. You can find more information about the university's ethics guidelines here: http://www.essex.ac.uk/langling/documents/current_students/ethical_guidelines_human_participants.pdf. If you have any questions, please let me know or contact my supervisor Dr. Bojana Petrić at bpetric@essex.ac.uk.

I would really appreciate if I had the opportunity to meet you and talk about your concert reviews. Please let me know whether you are interested in participating in this project and when you would be available for an interview.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Best regards,
Fongwa Ha

PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics
Language and Linguistics Department
University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park
Colchester
CO4 3SQ

Appendix F: Participant's Consent Form for Interviews

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form
Project: A cross-cultural evaluation in classical concert reviews

What is the project about?

The project is about the writing of Chinese and English classical concert reviews in Hong Kong and British newspapers. I would like to know how you praise and criticise in the reviews you write, your views and opinions about the factors that might affect the language you use to evaluate the concerts, such as editorial policies, critic-musician relations, culture, and etc.

What does participating involve?

It involves an interview. The interview will be audio-recorded. In total, participation will take about 45 minutes to an hour.

Please tick the appropriate boxes

Yes No

I have read and understood the project information given above. ☐ ☐

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. ☐ ☐

I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being interviewed and audio-recorded. ☐ ☐

I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part. ☐ ☐

Use of the information I provide for this project only
 I understand my personal details such as name, email address and phone number will not be revealed to people outside the project. ☐ ☐

I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. ☐ ☐

 Name of participant [printed]

 Signature

 Date

 Researcher [printed]

 Signature

 Date

Project contact details for further information:

[Researcher's name]

Email: [Researcher's email]

Telephone: [Researcher's number]

Fong Wa HA

fwha@essex.ac.uk

07933187075

Appendix G: A British Critic's Interview Transcription

Interview date: 13th February 2015

H: Interviewer

A: Interviewee

H: How did you start your career in music criticism?

A: I'm not a professional music critic. I am a professional journalist. I have worked for a number of publications in my life. I started to write music criticism for the XXX (newspaper), I can't remember exactly, but certainly 20 years ago. To do that as an addition to the other things I do, I mean I'm employed at the XXX (newspaper) on completely different...my job...I mean I'm assistant editor of the guardian, I'm the chief leader writer of the XXX (newspaper), I'm a political columnist. So you know, that's my full-time job. So I started writing, when I was asked.

H: Who asked you to do it?

A: I can't remember which of our arts editors it was, but I think we had a change of regime amongst our music writers. They knew I was interested. I've done some interviews...

H: Have you been trained to do music criticism?

A: No, never.

H: Just because you are interested? Alright. Do you have any music background by the way?

A: Not a very developed one. I mean I'm not a music graduate, for instance. I play the piano a little bit, not as much as my editor. And I played the violin at school. But, no.

H: I see. How many reviews do you write in a week or in a month?

A: Well, I try to keep it down. I am a slightly special case, I think, in this respect. Because most people who write music criticism try to write as much as they can, I try to write as little because otherwise I would have too much to do. And it's complicated by the fact that I'm on a salary here at the XXX (newspaper), therefore I don't get paid for writing the music criticism. And I don't want to be...this is boring, has nothing to do with music criticism...but it just means that if I'm doing a review, it means somebody, a freelancer who might be paid is not writing it. So I try not to do too many, so that I'm not exploited and they are not exploited. So the answer to your question is I probably do about three a month, something like that. It varies, sometimes it's five, sometimes it's two.

H: Is there a particular genre of music that you focus on?

A: Not really. I'm very happy to do whatever I'm asked to do because it's always interesting to have the opportunity to write about something new. And if you don't know the piece or the genre, that's quite a good discipline, because otherwise you would always in your comfort zone. I suppose I don't do...I was going to say I don't do much opera, but I mean I have done quite a lot of opera...it's just that other people have been

more committed to writing about opera. You know, as I said before, I don't want to get in people's way of their earning a living from it, since I am not.

H: Who decides what concerts you go to?

A: Every month the XXX's (newspaper) chief music critic, it's a man called XXX, he asks us when we are available and if there is anything we are particularly keen on reviewing. And he makes all the dispositions, so he makes all the arrangements. So every month there is a new list issued by him normally about...where are we in the month now? It's the 13th of February today. He has asked us what our availability is in March, and he has to get told us what he wants us to do. So that's how it works. That will come within the next few days.

H: So you only write for the XXX (newspaper)?

A: Yes. I have written for a magazine called "XXX" in the past. I did a monthly classical column for them for about 4 years.

H: Do you write differently, XXX (the newspaper) and XXX (the magazine)?

A: Yes, I think so. The one I used to write in XXX (the magazine), it was a column not a review, so it was on a theme, you know, whether it's a composer or a phenomenon of some sort of performer. So it was a different kind of thing. And also you have a bit more space because one of the things about reviews is that when they go in the paper, in particular, printed edition, they are very tight in terms of the number of words you've got.

H: So which media do you prefer more, the XXX (newspaper), or the XXX as a magazine?

A: It's just that they are different...difficult to compare. I like reviewing because you go to an event, and you write about it – that's dealt with, and then it's on to the next thing. Whereas (with columns) they give you a long deadline, I can't stand long deadline! So you know, if I think I have to do something by 28th of the month, I'll put it off and put it off! But if I have to do it tonight, I'll do it tonight. So I'm a daily newspaper person, it's just in my blood now, because I've been doing it for so long.

H: And I'm interested in the way you praise and criticise in your reviews. So how do you praise, on the whole is it more expressive or more reserved when you are evaluating a concert?

A: I think it differs probably. I think you have to be very careful with praise because it can be...it depends on what words you use, depends so much on the particular words you choose. If you said 'this was marvellous', 'this was marvellous', 'this was marvellous'...what does that say, you know? But if you said 'very clear' or 'very passionate', you know, you can use words like that to be, maybe, perhaps more easily. But I think it's always quite to be...it's always good to stay in a reasonable place, and to try to explain, and assess, rather than to cheer.

H: Why?

A: Because I don't think it's a critic's job, really, to say how wonderful everything is all the time. I think many people who write in any form of arts criticism are writing because they love the subject, and they probably going to a theatre because they love going to a theatre, or going to a concert because they love going to a concert. And so they are in a sense already not objective. They are already wanting it to succeed.

Whereas when I write about politics, for example, I try very hard to not to express personal view but just trying to say what's happening and 'here is how the machine is working', you know, 'this is why they've gotten themselves into such difficulty' or 'this is why this has been a success' and 'this is X with the consequence of Y', or the other way round. And that's more analytical...nothing is dispassionate obviously, but I think in reviewing, it's important to try to keep some objectivity, and that's slightly at odds with the desire of media organisations to be excited, to say dramatic things, but you just have to deal with that.

H: How about when you criticise, would it be the same or would you rather be more straight-forward, or more indirect?

A: I would stay more in the...I'm not going to say in the centre because that would be misleading, but not at the extreme. There is a lot of territory between the extremes. I think it is probably just as dangerous to exaggerate negatively as to exaggerate positively. I think I should be aware of that. Of course some of the best writing is devastatingly critical, it can be brilliant. You can slice the thing up into...and throw it into the bin. I mean I tried very, very hard, it's a basic need not to think about what the effect of what you say would be on the person you are reviewing. I think it's really important to try to do that. But there are difficulties because you get to know people, which is one thing, and then...

I was once asked to review an opera as it happened since back to what I said just before, and it's a performance of Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* by some students, basically a student production. And I went to this, and actually it was so bad that I said to the Arts Desk I think it would be cruel to review this because one could only be dismissive, and there wasn't enough to...you would have to say it was terrible, and this is to artists right at the beginning of their career. Some of them, I mean I can't remember the detail of the performance now, but I have a feeling, some of the singers were okay. The standard of the orchestral playing was terrible, and so it was a mismatch. But I just think it would have been just cruel to write in therefore. And also I think it perhaps would deter people from going...that's not my concern, but...

H: Can I say that you are kinder to those new musicians, those young musicians?

A: Yeah, I think so, but I honestly don't think that I do or should be more generous than I would to an established person. I think you recognise when what you write that this is your first performance, that it's somebody's first week ...recital or they've never played the Hammerklavier Sonata before, or in public, whatever, you know. I think one can convey that without pulling the wool over people's eyes, because in the end, the only thing you can do is being honest, really. And you have to try your hardest to be honest, to say what you mean. If you start doing anything else, I should think, it would be completely impossible.

H: Just now you mentioned that you also write political columns, how different is writing music reviews compared with political reviews?

A: It's completely different. It's like writing in another language, really. Partly because concert reviews or music reviews are very short. It's a miniature, you have to be very disciplined when you've got a 300-word review of a concert, 'four people taking part', or 'six pieces', you don't have much room to discuss any of them, so you got to be very careful not to use too many adjectives...

H: I see what you mean.

A: because it takes up a lot of space. And that's different from the political stuff, I mean, political stuff is also constrained by space, everything is, but it's not as tight as that.

H: And I was just wondering would you be more strong in making comments in political...

A: I'm not saying I'm not strong...I'm not saying I try to avoid strong language, or strong criticism, or strong views or anything. I'm not trying to say that. All I am saying is I don't think people want to read how wonderful everything all the time, just as they don't want to read how catastrophic everything is all the time. I think it's more interesting to try and bring some texture to it, and that's all I try to do and anything I write, whether it's arts or politics, or anything else.

H: Since you've been writing music reviews for more than 20 years as you've mentioned, has your writing style changed since you started?

A: I'm sure that it has. I don't think I know how it's changed, if I was to go back and look. I remember when I first started doing music criticism, I was learning a new trade so I'm sure that at first I probably didn't write as confidently as I would now. I think I probably know the tricks of the trade more now, but equally nobody has ever said this is how we want reviews to be written.

Nobody in the paper has ever said to me 'you are using too many metaphors', or 'you are not including details of what they actually played' or...those things seem kind of common sense. Obviously it's changed a bit with the web, because in the web when you write something that's going to go on the web, you also have to provide some links and things of that sort, for the people you are writing about or the works you are talking about. For instance, I wrote a review this week, where I refer to an earlier review by somebody else, again you just provide a link to that earlier review.

H: Are there any elements that you always include in your reviews?

A: There are the ones you have to – the compulsory as it were elements, you know, where the concert was, who is taking part, and your name at the end, and the star rating.

H: Oh how do you think of that? It's kind of a new thing.

A: It's not new now, I'm used to it now. It seems universal now, I think. It's come with the web, but never used to exist in the paper as I recall, I may be wrong about that. And we use one to five. I've occasionally tried to check with the classical music editor who's putting all these things in a paper to check that I am applying the stars in a way that she wants and the other people do, and there is some attempt to keep the use of stars consistent across different art forms and between reviewers.

I think with concerts it's quite tricky because on the whole you tend to choose to review concerts that likely to be quite good, so it's pretty surprising if you only give a concert one star, not because you are trying to be kind or pulling your punches. It's just that you probably wouldn't be reviewing it anyway if you didn't think it's going to be an event of some value, and therefore in reality a lot of the time when it's deciding between three and four, with the occasional five (stars), and the occasional two, rather than ever 'this was utterly wonderful' or 'utterly dismal'.

I once wrote a review where I said I genuinely cannot decide whether to...I wrote in the review...I genuinely cannot decide whether to give this performance no stars or five,

because this was a case in both ways. I mean it was a concert in which a pianist played Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto, probably the most famous piano concerto in the repertoire, with a so eccentric play, and yet also brilliantly. It was very, very eccentric, extremely slow, and really, really mad and interesting. I would withdraw the word 'mad' because I don't want to be...

H: Negative?

A: No, it's not being negative, I don't want to be accused of calling somebody mad, because in fact I think the person I'm thinking of has actually had some psychological...so please don't use the word (mad).

H: Sure.

A: But the performance was almost incomprehensible. But it was riveting, it was completely riveting. And so what do you make of that? Do you say 'this isn't what Tchaikovsky really meant, so no stars?' Or do you say 'I've just spent the last 45 minutes completely absorbed in this astonishing, if, completely eccentric off-the-wall kind of performance?' What do you do? I think I ended up gave it a one star in the end. But I made it clear that it was very special and very interesting, and really those things don't...they just show their limits – the starring system.

H: If you could choose, would you prefer to have this starring system or not for your reviews?

A: I think if it was entirely up to me as I writer, I would not have them. But I recognise that they are part of the commercial reality that people are interested to see them, but it particularly indicates a theatre, or a film, or whatever the fact that you give a starring can mark the commercial opportunities of a piece, make other people want to go to see it. With a concert that's less of an issue because by large concerts are a one off and so nobody's going to go and see it, because they can't.

H: But why as a critic you'd rather not have it?

A: It's a marginal choice and I'm not saying that I passionately dislike them. But I think...I just think it's a rather limiting way of encapsulating what you do. I'm not saying there is a better way of encapsulating it because I can't quite think of it. But I think that the stars are...I think they become too important, I think that's what it is, really. I'd rather read the words and got the nuances and got the balance better from the words than being told it's a 5-star review or 4-star review, I mean what exactly is the difference? In my case I tend to think with the 5-star, when I give a 5-star it's because I actually have said to myself 'that was amazing!', or I actually have some feeling this is fantastic, it's reached me, it's absolutely hit the spot for me! And I think you have to...that's the only way you can do it, really.

H: I see what you mean! Before you go to the concerts, writing your concert reviews, would you do some preparation?

A: Not always, but quite often. If it's a work I never heard, then I might read about it or might even have a look at the score in some...or listen to a recording. There were some examples fairly recently which I have prepared, I worked quite hard...I've forgotten what it was. But you know, sometimes quite a lot, sometimes not at all, that reflects many different...in the end.

I think if anything is important about the review is for it to be an honest, spontaneous response to what you've heard or seen. So to that extent you can't over-prepare, and possibly you'd be listen to so many performances of this or that piece, that by the time you actually came to the concert, you think 'oh no, not another one!', and you must never be like that. But obviously, you go to concerts where you know all the works pretty well, you've heard them many times, you've thought about them, you know what kind of vocabulary you tend to use to describe this artist or this composer, and then there would be times you don't! You are just thrown in the deep pan.

I think the best thing when you are thrown in a deep pan with a new piece often, especially if it's a premiere, is just to describe what it's like, and what it felt like. You know, you don't have to write a PhD about it. You just have to say something that, to the best of your ability is honest and true! That's what you are trying to do, and hopefully readable – that goal of course be the third.

H: Over the years, has there been any specific experience that has led you to somehow change your review writing style?

A: I think when you are writing in classical music, there is a question you have to ask yourself, which is who are you writing it for? Are you writing it for the people in the business, if you like, or are you writing it for the obsessively specialist people who know everything about it, or are you writing it for somebody who might be interested, who didn't go to the concert but might find it worth starting the piece to read and finishing it? And I tend to go to the latter example.

I think you have to try to remember that some people again to be reading you who don't know what you are talking about and so you have to try and say the name of the composer, what kind of piece it was, that sort of thing. It sounds obvious, but if you just tear it into a kind of private conversation which you could have with an expert, then I think you are missing the audience. The audience, I think is a people of average interest, not specialists.

H: So can I say when you are writing your reviews you always have your target readers in mind?

A: Yes, at some level, yes, certainly! I would say I never write anything where I am not thinking about how the kind of person who I think of as the reader is going to react – that's a very complicated sentence. To put it better, I always imagine the person reading it, and what they would get out of it.

H: Who do you think they are?

A: I think it can differ, and I think it is one's job to, in a gentle way to educate the reader. So I think it sometimes tells readers things they might not know. For example, I review Bruckner's Third Symphony in a concert this week. I've only got 300 word, there's a Mozart piano concerto to cover in the review. But I thought Bruckner's Third Symphony has got all those funerium connection, so I tried to say that briefly. And I also try to say that there is a work which Bruckner refines many times. I didn't go into that in great detail, but I said that was...I said the piece itself was quite a fractured piece and therefore it was quite difficult to bring off. It's got good moments, but as a totality it's a tricky one. And none of that is about the performance, all of that is about the piece. But I think at least you say that. There's no point saying 'X conducted this with great drive' or 'terrific trombones', or you know...But that's part of it. I just try to give a bit

of a snapshot of these things. It's always a balance – you can't spend the whole review obsessing about something that isn't the music, you haven't got much space.

I wrote a review this week of one of the concerts that Simon Rattle gave at the Barbican this week, been on the radio, of Sibelius symphonies. I reviewed second of the three concerts, and in this concert was the Violin Concerto Sibelius, and the player was Leonidas Kavakos, who is Greek violinist. And this orchestra is German, so it's been a lot on the news recently – the tension between Greece and Germany. I just put in this little fine side you know, here on this occasion, Greek and German were on the same page, in harmony. You do try bringing in a bit of extra material / references, but you mustn't overload it.

In classical music as you doubtless know, there is a priesthood...almost of people who are obsessed, and they know about every single different recording, they go on about Haitink does that, or Karajan does that, or Harnoncourt does the other...And it's all quite interesting. I don't mind listening to that or reading it. But I don't think the person reading the paper is going to be like that. So you gonna be careful not to write for the anoraks.

H: so it's not to the very specialised...

A: No. I think it'd be wrong to do that. Otherwise you are just...you are saying to the other readers you can't take part in this conversation because you don't know enough, you haven't heard Mangleburg's 1937 recording on Brahms' Fourth Symphony, therefore what do you know? You can't start talking at that level. I haven't had so many bad experiences, so I try to engage with them a little bit. As I said to you just now, I review the Bruckner Third symphony performance and somebody wrote 'in this review doesn't say which act edition they did perform. It didn't say that because that's quite specialised information, but I did say it's the Leopold Nowak edition, so you know, I kind of...that's fine. I think with those things, I have a very simple rule: if they are polite, I try to reply; if they are rude, I ignore them.

H: But it wouldn't make you change your style or anything?

A: No. I'm sufficiently self-confident to know that I did my best and I did it honestly. And if I've made a mistake, I'm sorry about that; but if I've not said what the person wanted to say or take a different view, well, that's too bad.

H: Do you think your reviews might affect the readers' purchasing decisions like buying the CDs of the musicians or going to the concerts in future?

A: A bit, yes, I think that's probably right...I think so, a little bit. I think it's rather specialist example because recordings are not...it's not like...say in pop music or rock music, if you are reviewing somebody, very likely they've got an album out, or they've got a tour, whatever, and people will be thinking 'wow that sounds good, I'll try that'. With classical, that's much less of an issue. It's there. I think if you write somebody up and say 'whenever X appears...when Christian Gerhaher comes and sings in the Wigmore Hall, you got to have a pretty good reason for not going, because it's always very special.' You can say that, and I'm sure that's helped his...

H: So you might have some influence on the musicians' career prospects, whatever...

A: Might have some, I wouldn't exaggerate it.

H: Would you take that into consideration when you give comments to the performance?

- A: I don't think so. No, I think if that happens, that happens.
- H: When you are writing your concert reviews, do you expect the musicians that you evaluate read your piece?
- A: I've no idea. There are one or two people I would not review because they are friends, and I wouldn't wish them to read something I've written. Just because I think, if you get yourself into friendship with somebody, it becomes difficult. You don't want to offend them.
- H: Yeah, there is actually a music critic who said that 'sometimes I find it difficult to criticise my musician friends'.
- A: Yeah. I think that's right. I don't want to make myself sound like a kind of sad person, but I don't go out of my way to make friendships in the music world. So there is only one person, possibly two that I immediately think of that I would not want to review for the reasons I've said. I think you need to be prepared to say that someone is, you know, good, or bad, or wonderful, or very disappointing. You have to use the right words, you know, be as honest as you can. I keep saying honest, but I think you have to be honest to...you have to be, you have to tell the truth.
- H: Have your reviews ever been quoted?
- A: Many times, yes. Often. I'm always surprised...does this happen to everybody? But if you say, 'Philharmonia strings were wonderful' – XXX (name of the critic), XXX (the newspaper). It's not that I can't remember saying that, you just have to live with that. What you must not do is write in such a way that is phishing to be quoted, I think. Everything...you must feel confident that you can defend what you've written. But you must not write just to be quoted. It's a temptation and journalists of every kind fall into it sometimes.
- H: But like you said, honesty is very important.
- A: Yeah. In the choice between telling the truth and making an effect – tell the truth. Sometimes telling the truth makes an effect, but I personally think that the truth is more important than the effect.
- H: So whether you know the musicians would read the reviews or the agents would quote them wouldn't make a difference in your writing?
- A: I said I hope not. I think there was an interesting example of this: last year some time, I went to review a concert where his agent came up to me beforehand and said, 'I think he's not very well and not in very good voice'. And it was! He was ill, we've heard he had flu. But he sang, so I said so. I said he was trying to fight over the nature that kind of thing. But I think that's okay to be clear what I'm saying is okay. What is okay is to take account of some special circumstance if you are told about it. You just have to judge it. I think that's normal, it's mainly singers that applies to it.
- H: And there's a critic who said something different – it's about the...'sometimes I got offers from the concert organisers, musicians' agents or advertisers, I always turn them down.'
- A: Absolutely! I completely agree with that. There are some interesting issues in there. If an agent says 'would you like to interview X?' The answer is: in principle, sure, but you have to decide it is valid and you have to consult with your editors about that, and

make a decision about it. If people who do this a lot send you an email saying, 'Martin I would like to invite you to our next concert somewhere wherever it is and if you want a pair of prize tickets, let me know'. I never accept those, I never accept those.

H: Why?

A: Because I only go to concerts...I think it creates the wrong expectation. Because I think that creates an expectation of them that by doing something else to you they'll get some treatment. No, they will get coverage. I don't mean inappropriate coverage, but just coverage. And that's not in my gift. It's not my decision as I said right at the beginning, as to what I'm going to write about is XXX's (the chief music critic) decision. And it's not for me to make those arrangements. I go to a lot of concerts out that I don't review. For those I always pay for my own tickets. I said 'always', correction I would say 95% of cases I would pay for my own tickets. Sometimes I would accept prize ticket for something I know I'm not going to write about, but normally I would only ever ask for prize ticket for something I knew I was going to write about. Otherwise you are just stealing, really.

H: Honesty is important...

A: Yeah. There must be lots of...you go to a concert of performances, and there are a lot of people there that you just know have not paid for their tickets, and I think it is...you are clear the critics do not pay?

H: Yeah.

A: The promoter of the venue provides normally two tickets for an event that you are writing about. And there is also...there also seems to be there are other people who...I'm not quite clear why they are there, because they want to be.

H: Do they write reviews? No idea?

A: Don't know. Obviously there are some...part of the problem with the English National Opera at the moment is that they do invite awful lot of people to their premieres to make it, in the hope that if they invite lots and lots of people, some or other will get more buzz than usual critics, so...they are unusual in that respect. But I would be very reluctant ever to ring up any and ask for tickets if I wasn't absolutely clear I was going to write about yet. There are one or two exceptions, but...

H: Normally don't

A: Absolutely I don't. Life is too short. I don't want to go to concerts every night anyway.

H: Yeah I understand. Have you ever got any feedback from the musicians that you comment on?

A: Yes, sometimes. Mostly not. I think a lot of the musicians don't read the reviews, and I think they are right to do so, really. You know, they have enough to worry about performing, and they know whether they've played well or their ability. They don't need to be told by somebody who couldn't play a Bartok Violin Concerto, if you put a gun to their head.

H: There are actually comments saying 'okay many critics do not really know the music they criticise about'. What do you think?

A: Of course that's bound to be true. I would not write music criticism if I didn't believe that it's legitimate for an informed outsider to write about these things. I can't see there is any other...it seems the only way to do it because it's not peer group review, it's not medical science where you have to be reviewed by your peers. It's journalism, and journalism is about trying to write as truthfully and entertainingly as possible about something in a confined space, with a limited space to write it, and under pressure of time. And you are doing your best!

And after that, you try to do it better next time. It's not that complicated. But it's ridiculous, you wouldn't say that you can't criticise David Cameron because you've never been Prime Minister. You know, that's a critic position. You can do your best to evaluate what David Cameron has done or has said, and you can be informed about it without ever having had to take the decisions or lead the sort of life that he leads, and I think it's the same for music too.

H: How about editors of the newspaper, do editors give you any guidance in writing concert reviews?

A: I occasionally talk to colleagues, it's all informal. I think could be more of it. Sometimes an arts editor comes along and says, 'I want you in your reviews to do X and Y', that's normally okay. The main thing about classical music reviews in any newspaper is to make sure that they get in the paper, and make sure that they get a decent showing on the web because it's a small niche part of the paper, and it would get overlooked unless you make sure that it doesn't.

H: How about newspapers, are there any guidelines about this concert reviews writing?

A: I've never seen any.

H: Is there an expected length that you have to write...

A: Oh absolutely! It's about 330 words.

H: Is it always like that long or...

A: Pretty much. And they'll cut it if it's longer. I've never been asked to write more. 330 is the guidance for a normal review. It's a bit more for a lead, you know, if it's...you just have to...what editors want is they want the words when they ask for them, and providing they are reasonably coherent – that's what they are pleased about. Because you can't make a wall without any bricks. Your job is to provide the bricks to the editors to make them into a wall, or any other similar analogy.

H: Have the editors ever changed anything or ask you to change anything in your reviews?

A: Very occasionally. Very occasionally we've had an argument about how many stars to give something, and the editor said that this reads like a 3-star review not a 2-star review, or vice versa. And I don't argue, it doesn't matter to me very much.

H: But how do you...

A: we discuss what they mean, to me these are not issues which I intend to have great, big arguments. Very occasionally they said could we leave this bit out or...But these are completely professional decisions, they are not arguments about whether you are unfair to somebody or...

H: Not the content

A: No, not in a real...

H: Would they change something without telling you, just let it out?

A: Probably not. Because I'm quite senior, and I'm here in the building.

H: So they can ask you...

A: If I was a freelancer working from home, they might change it without telling me, and they just...you know...I think that would probably be right...I don't know...you would have to ask them.

H: Are there any other factors that affect your evaluative style?

A: It's a broad question. I worry sometimes that...sometimes you go to a concert and you're tired or you are not feeling well or you are upset / you are distracted in some way, what do you do about...how do you cope with the fact that you got something else on your mind, which can just simply be that you are tired. How do you deal with that? You try your best to set to decide, but if you've just had a blazing row with somebody, it's quite difficult to sit down and focus on Bartok String Quartet or something, but you just have to do your best, I guess, which is a phrase I seem to be using too much.

I think there's quite an interesting sort of issue about how the personality of the writer and the circumstances of the writer affect the interaction with what they are hearing and how they write it. I don't think there can be general rule about that. Sometimes the character of the writer is so fundamental to what's being written. I'm trying to think of it. When Clive James used to review television for the Observer, you read what he wrote, not because you were going to watch the programme or anything like that, because it was Clive James being brilliant or impossible, or just doing a ...being Clive James which you might like or dislike or whatever. There's a bit of that with some writers. There are some writers, some reviewers, that you think, 'I want to know what X says' because they are always quite interesting. They can be quite witty, or something like that. And there are others who have less to offer.

H: What makes a good music critic?

A: I just think it's about the confidence to say what this was like and why it mattered. And you don't often get that right, sometimes you do. I can remember reading a review when I was about 15, of a piano recital by Richter in the Festival Hall. It said it felt he was tearing the keys from the keyboard. I thought 'Wow!' That's something to say! I was rather impressed that somebody has the confidence to say a thing like that, they probably didn't mean anything at all! That always stuck with me that, you know...

H: What are the functions of music critics? What do you think?

A: To be read. I don't think there is any other purpose. You know, what you are doing, in the newspaper or on the website, all you are doing is saying 'look, here's some stuff which we think is quite important, or worth reading, or interesting, or entertaining, whatever you think it is, and it's a selection of stuff that we've produced, and see what you think. If you don't like it, sorry, we will do another lot tomorrow.' And I think it's what it's there for.

Clearly, when there is a big event, like Simon Rattle – Sibelius Symphony this week or something like that, you think 'this is a big event, therefore I'm gonna read as much as I can.' Because it's been exciting, it's been a big thing, it's great to be there, or all that.

So you probably go online and scoop up as many reviews as you possibly can. Most of time it's not like that. Most of time, you are interested in the writer's judgment, I think.

H: And there is a saying that the function of music critic is to ignite debate. Do you agree with that?

A: Not really. I don't think so. I think the function of music critic is what I've said, is to say what it is like to be there, and to do it as honestly and as entertainingly as you can in the space available. I don't think it's to start a debate. I don't think it's about the critic, I think it's about the concert or whether you got that right. And I don't think most people read it to have a debate. They read it to inform themselves, or to entertain themselves, because they are interested or whatever. Most of time there isn't a debate, so I don't think the objective is to create one, that's not really the point.

H: You just mentioned 'entertaining'. There's a music critic said 'when I'm writing a review, no matter I praise or criticise, I try to write it in an entertaining way to attract my readers'. Do you agree?

A: Yeah. If I do, you then have to explore what 'entertainment' means in this way. I think you have to try to write well, readably. It doesn't necessarily mean that you have to make jokes, or use silly comparisons, or imagery, whatever, which is to say you don't do that. You just have to deconstruct entertaining.

H: Define it.

A: To me it's – you want to be readable, you are putting words down in an order, which are pleasing to read and absorbing to read, so you choosing the right word, that sort of thing.

H: What do you think makes a good music review?

A: I think it's readability.

H: That's the most important?

A: Most important thing, yeah! It's somewhere in the interface between readability and importance to the readers, isn't it? So I mean if the reader wants to read about a concert because they been to that concert or because they always are interested in the artists involved, that's part of it. But it's got to be readable, really, I mean, after a while you just...if it's not readable it won't be read.

H: And between information and evaluation, what do you think is more important for a piece of concert review?

A: I think evaluation.

H: Many concerts have been killed after bad reviews, according to some people. In other words, bad reviews are a huge put-off instead of help to the music industry. Do you agree?

A: Maybe true, but you have to be...I've given some bad reviews. I gave a bad review a long time ago to Lang Lang and it doesn't seem to harm his career. You know, give a very good review to artists who has sadly in my view not had success as Lang Lang. So you know, again it's...there's no absolute there, I think.

H: Do you think music critics should be taking part in cheerleading for the development of music?

A: I think you should be careful about that. I think there is a danger that...the classical music world is quite a little world, it's not like the health service or something like that, it's quite a small world. There is a danger that I think the critics either deliberately or without quite realising it have favourites and people they like kicking. There are people they like to praise, people they like to criticise. I think group thing is a danger, danger in all forms of journalism. It's a danger in politics, it's a danger in travel writing, it's a danger in classical music writing, it's danger everywhere – I think there's a bit of it in classical where it shows more because the classical world is smaller so its effect can be perhaps more... can have greater effect.

H: I have chosen 3 reviews of yours...hope you don't mind.

A: No!

H: They are very interesting, I've got some questions if you don't mind. The first one would be the 2013 - the recent one. For the highlighted bit, I've noticed, well, it's actually not only this review, but many of your reviews that your evaluative, like your praise, is highly descriptive, very expressive, using metaphors and this and that. Why would you write it this way?

A: Because it's music. And most of the people who are reading won't have been there. So you got, in a very limited amount of space, to create some sense of what being there meant to you. And that's why I think descriptive adverbs and metaphors...I think that is important. I think music writing can be incredibly academic, and I could do that. But I don't see the point of it in this format at all.

H: So how do you expect your readers to understand this sort of descriptive writing?

A: I hope the words convey something truthfully. I'm sure some of the words don't stand up to serious criticism, but one would redo them if I had more time, but...

H: It's very interesting language used.

A: I don't apologise for that language, I think it's fine, I think it's fine.

H: No, no, no, very nice.

A: I think the important...you don't have much space, so you really have to try and create...have to do something descriptively, and that's challenge! Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

H: Attractive language.

A: (reading with a low voice). Doesn't matter!

H: Here (2010 review), praise-criticism...I can see quite a few pairs here. Either you praise first, and then followed by criticism...

A: But not here! (*Bychkov was probably too measured for some tastes. But he never let the tension slip, the important flute solo was focused, and the daring determination of Brahms's symphonic variations was completely convincing.*)

H: Here is the reverse. But it's kind of in pairs quite a lot. So I wonder why you give your criticism (after praise)?

- A: I think it's unconscious, actually. Probably it's the way my mind works. Probably it's because it's how I express myself generally, which is very, you know, 'on the one hand and on the other hand'. I'm an editorial leader writer, remember? It sounds boring, but I probably take a balance of view, or try to take a balance of view. I'm sure with Semyon Bychkov, who I decided I really liked at one point, I was probably trying to say that I think he's pretty good, but here, really, I wasn't entirely happy with the concert.
- H: So it's rather subconsciously that you write it this way?
- A: I'm just reading this rather quickly, and it's forgotten, the event.
- H: Yeah it's 2012 (M: 10). 2010, yes.
- A: I can defend this. I think Bychkov's important, but on the other hand I wasn't entirely happy with the concert. I was trying to say...And I would do one thing which was: when I write about Shostakovich, I have a point of view about Shostakovich, so I try to get that into things I write about. He's favourite composer, when that's about composers I always got strong views – there's always four...I try to write about them in a slightly more...in a self-consciously consistent way, as long as I can do so.
- H: Do you have your reader in mind when you are writing...
- A: I've often said this line here that 'I don't believe that everything Shostakovich wrote was in code in dissidents.' I think the trouble with people writing about Shostakovich is that they write about his political position and not his music. And in the end we are going to his concert because of his music and not his politics.
- H: Is this the message you wanted to bring to the (audience)?
- A: Sort of, without saying the same thing in the same words every single time.
- H: Of course.
- A: But you have to avoid needless repetition. I love reviewing Brahms' Fourth Symphony, it's almost my favourite piece of music, so I suspect I get a bit technical here. I like the Finale to be fast, Bychkov's a bit too measured for some tastes, i.e. mine. That's alright! I'm pro Bychkov so that's alright.
- H: The 2010 and 2007 (reviews). Some features here. Praise: more direct, more certain when you are praising, sometimes even using boosters to make it even stronger, to strengthen those praise – I marked those praise in here, quite strong and direct. However, the criticism, you hedged quite a bit, like 'probably', 'some', or...
- A: it's true, it's true. That's probably just a failing on my part that I'm being too polite.
- H: Is that your style, like being quite straight with praise but a bit holding back with criticism?
- A: Possibly, Possibly! I suppose you could say you get less challenged for your enthusiasm than you do for your criticism. So if you say 'Bychkov was awful', you got to defend that position, and it's quite a big thing to say. And so you've got to be confident with your ground. So you need to choose the right words. You can't just say 'he's incompetent and mud up to the job' – of course I don't think that at all. But I mean you can't sort of say 'a child could have played better', or you know, 'It's a pity its dog wasn't playing it', or something, you know. You have to choose the right words, and I think it probably matters more when you are being critical, because you are more likely

to be held account to it, unless you are taking a conscious perverse view of something, whether you are praising it because everybody hated it, or whatever.

H: Would you take your readers into consideration when you are having those hedged criticism?

A: I don't mean the criticism to be...I never mean what I write to...I always try to write what I mean to say. And if I've not said what I should have said, that's a black mark against me, I failed on this occasion. So I'm not going to defend to the death every single sentence I've written in my life, that would be foolish and vain. So I think it's rather early in the morning or I had to meet a deadline, or maybe I wasn't on the form.

I think some of these, what you say, I think being...to say something felt too emphatic, I think it's okay, because you are saying what...that's how I felt it. And I think it's okay. You are leaving it to be understood. They are might to be other views, and I might...this little bit I'm saying is a little tentative and a little conditional, it's my opinion, may not be right. And similarly, did not quite gel...that's okay. It's not 'Paul Lewis is not good', he's a wonderful pianist. Sometimes I think he is so poised and balanced that you want him to do something a little surprising or so are...

H: But quite gentle in the way...

A: What's your trying to do? It's not about me. Reviewing is not about the reviewer, it's about what is reviewed, and the reader. I never admire journalism that is all about the writer. I have little time for that. There are some music critics - I'm not going to name them, who is more about them, not so much music critics but people who write about music, who is really about them, and it's not about what's happening, or whether they are right.

H: Hope you don't ask me questions about this.

A: No, it's quite interesting. I probably should read these back through, just to...

H: If you want to keep them, no problem. I have copies. It's really interesting to ask the writer himself why he write it this way, how he write it this way. But you know, it's been a while ago and it's difficult to...you know, very interesting.

A: I think it depends on the piece, on the event, obviously. But I always have a problem, at any concert: what is this piece I'm going to be writing? What is this piece about? Is it about the occasion? Is it about the performer? Is it about the music? Is it equally about every single piece in the concert? Do dutifully have to say 'then you play this, then you play the other, then you play this one'? Does everything have to mentioned? If there is a quartet of performers, do you have to make sure each one gets named? I make my own rules, I make them up. I have evolved my own rules, really, which is, you know, the most important thing is the piece of music. None of us should be there if it wasn't for the piece of music, then it's the performer, and then it's us.

H: So it's a more sort of a journalistic (point of view)?

A: Yeah. You see, I've written here about poor Paul Lewis playing 3 sonatas from the opus 10 of Beethoven. Those were three substantial pieces, they are not the best known sonatas Beethoven ever wrote, but they are important pieces and so that's what the review ought to be. I can remember this concert, and in a way, I remember this concert because I, some reason, something seemed to get lost of the interval. I remember think 'is this just me, or is it poor Lewis, or is it Beethoven?' For some reason it didn't work

for me. It was difficult to work out whether it was...because I was thinking about my dinner, or because Paul Lewis was thinking about his dinner, or Beethoven had been thinking about his dinner when he wrote the music in the first place, I don't know!

H: So you have the questions in mind, that's why you sort of being, or seem to be...

A: I was trying to be honest. The thing I was clinging onto, was the fact that I liked part of it and not liked another part, and I couldn't quite work out why that was. Maybe I didn't express as perfectly as...you know?

H: No, it's just...

A: but I think I knew what I was trying to say, and I did my best to say it, in the end. That's as much as you can ask.

H: Thank you! Is there anything you would like to add to this topic we've discussed?

A: Not really, I mean it's interesting to just to be challenged on these things. Very helpful! It's an interesting subject. But I think I have said the things that really matter to me. They do very much include the fact that this is journalism, there's nothing wrong in the fact that I can't play the Beethoven Les Adieu sonata, Paul Lewis can, that doesn't mean I can't write about it.

H: Of course. The doctor doesn't have to be sick to be able to cure the (patient).

A: Exactly! You know, I don't have to commit some horrible crime in order to have a view about horrible crime.

H: Thank you so much!

A: Actually Mahler said exactly the same about that, slightly...he said 'if you eat beef, that doesn't mean you turn into an ox or something like that'. You know, he said sort of quite similar thing, anyway.

H: Thank you so much!

Appendix H: A Hong Kong Critic's Interview Transcription

Interview date: 13th October 2015

H: Interviewer

B: Interviewee

H: 我想問下你點樣開始寫音樂評論既呢？

B: 我有朋友介紹既。

H: 都係係 XX 報做既朋友？

B: 朋友應該都係 XX 報寫緊既，應該係去外國讀書唔得閑寫，所以介紹我去。

H: 所以應該都係 XX 報寫既，明白。

B: 我知既就係甘既。係有朋友再托既，中間仲有一位朋友做聯絡既。我唔係直接係果位寫樂評既朋友直接聯絡我既。寫樂評既朋友搵我既朋友，我朋友再問我有無興趣。所以再詳細啲我又講唔到俾你聽。

H: 明白。你係幾時開始寫呢？

B: 92 年。

H: 想問下你有無經過咩訓練，有無學習點寫樂評呢？

B: 甘就無特別訓練既。主要我知道大概既字數，甘我就開始寫。佢有字數限制啱。

H: 甘我想問下寫音樂評論係唔係你既全職工作呢？

B: 唔係。我全職主要工作都係教學，教音樂。

H: 教樂器定係教樂理？

B: 一段時間係大專任教，一段時間近呢幾年係一啲音樂學校果度教。

H: 甘你係唔係受過音樂既訓練，有音樂學位甘呢？

B: 我 undergraduate 讀音樂啦，哲學碩士係讀作曲既 - 音樂啦係，博士學位係讀音樂教育既，係潮州音樂既教學果邊做研究既。

H: 潮州音樂教學甘得意既！

B: 係啦，推廣。

H: 好有趣。即你本身係中樂既。

B: 我自己係西樂樂器同埋作曲既，但係我既三叔而家過左世啦，甘佢係潮州音樂既高手、名家來架。所以我就跟佢學好多理論同埋係 ethnomusicology 既研究角度佢

幫左我好多。一路都學音樂既啦，博士就係音樂教育，MPhil 同埋 undergraduate 都係音樂既。

H：好深既底子。

B：唔係，係一路做呢樣野，無乜特別既。

H：好謙呀你。我想問下你一個星期或者一個月平均寫幾多篇樂評呢？

B：其實寫樂評我係好少既。以前就寫多少少既，近呢幾年其實我都係一年寫幾篇既啲。通常藝術節我都會寫既，不過通常都係兩三篇既啲，每年既藝術節。

H：明白。想問下你係寫作樂評之前會做下咩準備工作呢？

B：如果係曲目同埋演奏加曲目，曲目歷史背景，我都會去搵啲資料閱讀一下先既。或者有譜既我都會搵埋啲譜，或者係影音果啲材料如果有我都搵埋既，我都搵埋去參考既。

H：明白。我想問下你有無一啲特別既樂種你係中意去聽去寫既呢？

B：我主要都係寫西洋古典音樂，所以所有西洋古典音樂我都無分，我全部都喜歡既。多數係西洋古典音樂，間唔中一兩篇我都有寫 folk rock，六十年代、七十年代果啲民謠，搖滾樂我都有寫過兩三篇既。因為我自己以前都有玩同埋都有學民謠搖滾樂既，例如出名果啲 Peter, Paul and Mary 果啲就係六十年代出名既民謠搖滾樂既一個代表組合。

H：我想問下你除左幫 XX 報之外，仲有無幫其它報紙或者雜誌寫樂評呢？或者網上？

B：我主要係 XX 報，就無係其它地方寫。

H：我想問下你寫時會唔會避免一啲 technical terms 或者 jargon，或者你會唔會用呢？

B：部分我都用既。音樂上啲字我都會用既。但我又唔會用到好深，因為有部分都係普羅大眾。但係都有啲係音樂上專業啲既字眼我都有用到既。我盡量攞個平衡啦。

H：你所講既普羅大眾意思就係你既 readership 讀者群，係唔係？

B：當然如果讀者見到某啲 technical term, 啲術語係讀左音樂先至知道係咩呢，甘佢可能自己都會跳過去。但係唔會影響到佢理解整篇中心，或者個意思既。

H：明白。甘我想問下你寫作樂評既時候，因為我呢個樂評主要係研究 evaluation，你讚同埋彈個 style 係點樣既？甘你覺得自己係讚既時候係更加 expressive、無保留呀，定係你會收番啲呢？

B：無話特別既，讚同彈有啲咩底綫既。需要講，能夠明白到既，清楚既表達到既我就甘樣寫啦，就無話點樣可以去留咩說話，我都唔會特別既。即無乜特別有個界線係度。

H：即係無論讚同埋彈你都照講。

B：都係既。

H：我想問你甘既寫作風格 - 無保留有咩照講，你係一路都係甘定係有一路改變緊呢？

B：我諗改變係會有既，我相信。我會覺得慢慢有小小唔同既寫作風格，即係一個漸漸既變化我覺得。

H：係點樣既，可唔可以形容下呢？

B：我覺得近年果啲因為係佢係某年既時候開始有插圖果啲樂評，即佢會擺埋果啲藝術家，譬如有時布景如果歌劇果啲，或者係有演出者果啲圖係個稿度，即係比較彩色化啲既。十年前到啦，大概。之前佢係純文字既，最早前，即我參與 92 年頭幾年都會係純文字既。當你有啲插圖既時候我就覺得可能即使係無去聽既睇到呢啲樂評都會有一啲野吸收到既。所以我有時會睇下啲位置或者適合既地方我就會加啲歷史背景呀或者一啲比較 general 啲既野。甘就算未去到在場既佢睇到都會有啲可以話溝通到啲野啦。佢可以得到啲野啦或者睇完之後。

H：你慢慢會覺得要俾啲 general 既背景讀者？

B：即好似你其中你揀左我‘芭托莉從容挑戰高難度’果篇，閩人歌手我有個段落係講閩人歌手個背景，類似甘既野。

H：其實我陣間我會同你討論你呢幾篇樂評，其中一樣就係我發現你寫作既特點係你會俾比較多背景資料、介紹，我都想問你啦已經。

B：你話我有咩自覺變化就係呢一個方面啦其中。我會俾一啲背景或者俾一啲聯性、歷史性，或者果種曲種、果種傳統。如果我能夠搵到、知道既，我都會表達下啦。

H：其實係唔係你覺得你既讀者係普羅大眾，覺得需要俾啲背景資料佢地？

B：我覺得係呀。就係甘樣我希望可以，就算偶然間讀者睇得到，即佢唔係話經常睇，睇得到佢都可以睇下啲野甘咯，有啲樂趣或者。。。啦。

H：明白。甘我可唔可以甘講：係你寫作樂評既時候，你會將你既目標讀者擺係心裏面，為佢地而寫？

B：甘又未必係有甘既。。。我都係比較多元化。一來我就寫樂評係一種文化同埋記錄當時演出者既一個活動，所以多元化。而讀者佢如果有特別參與可能會特別有同意或者唔同意既感覺，層次又唔同 – 如果佢有去過現場。但係我又覺得未去過現場都無妨。所以我後來既樂評我都會希望就算無去到現場佢睇個音樂會發生咩事，演奏家演唱者有咩發揮都係一件好事。佢佢起碼知道有一個當晚係甘既情況，對演出係有甘既意見。

H：你覺得呢個其實係唔係你既讀者想係你樂評裏面睇到既野呢，即當晚發生咩事，或者係？

B：都想架。如果佢有去，我都係想大家交流下之嘛。不過係單方面，我寫出來佢睇啱，我地無特別啲乜野。。。

H：明白。一個係交流，一個係無去過就了解下個音樂會發生左啲乜啦。頭先講報紙上曬網啦呢個世紀。我唔知有無甘既現象：係睇完你既樂評之後，啲讀者即時係網上俾 feedback 你。

B：呢方面我就唔清楚了解。

H：你覺得你既樂評會唔會影響讀者買音樂家 CD 或者去佢將來 concert 既意欲呢？

B：我覺得有可能既，凡是都有可能既。我唔會覺得究竟有幾多影響呢？但係我覺得就算係我自己睇人地既介紹我都會因為某個樂評或者介紹新既 CD、唱片，甘佢講完之後我都會好想去買既。所以我覺得有甘既可能。

H：明白。甘呢個就唔會影響到你寫作既野，你都係照寫？

B：甘又唔會。因為我地呢個就屬於一個音樂會啦，唔係 CD 果種形式。CD 果種形式就係一個錄音，差唔多你聽一百次佢都唔變，係你變左最多。個音樂就唔會變。音樂會既特色係佢係只此一次，你只係可以捕捉到呢次係點去講。所以係有啲唔同咯。

H：明白。我想問下你寫樂評既時候會唔會 expect 啲音樂家係會睇呢？

B：呢個我就無話特別去考究。但係我相信如果係藝術節主辦單位就會有啲記錄，或者反映番都唔定既。我覺得通常都會係甘既，演出者或者佢經理人通常都會收集，譬如佢巡迴演出或者點樣，每一個地方有樂評寫過，甘佢地可能都會睇下既。我覺得呢個係絕對有可能既。

H：甘呢樣野會唔會對你既寫作有啲影響呢？

B：應該唔會有既。我地都係盡量以我地自己既角度或者知識底下去表述。所以我地都係我地既意見，佢可以參考既啲，都唔一定要接受或者一定要同意我地既。

H：你既樂評有無被引用過？

B：有，我見過有人引用過。

H：係啲咩地方呢？

B：作曲啦，有一兩篇係現代作曲既。個作曲家。。。因為我當時俾既係正面既意見，甘佢會引用番落去佢既一啲既小冊子、自我介紹果度咯。

H：你覺得你既樂評會唔會影響到音樂家既職業前途呢？

B：我諗無甘嚴重既。無甘大既影響。我相信如果當有時係。。。如果當我既意見提出左，啲演奏家或者指揮家係有睇過或者點樣。如果佢認為都係既，或者同意既，甘佢或者都會。。。佢都應該有啲改變或者係以後再重新處理安排。呢啲會有可能發生既。

H：明白。甘你有無收到啲你評論既音樂家佢地俾啲反應/feedback 你呢？

B：甘我又無甘樣直接。。。未有甘既渠道去同我溝通啦。

H：普通讀者會唔會俾啲 feedback 你呢？

B：都未試過既。除左頭先我所講話有啲音樂家或者作曲家會。。。無話特別去接觸我既。

H：明白。甘我想問下你寫樂評由 92 年寫到而家，有無咩元素係你一路都會擺係你既樂評裏面，即都會提既呢？

B：我諗無乜特別元素既。每一個樂評都要交代左時間、地點、人物，甘果啲就一定要講清楚啦。跟住其它就係佢既曲目，或者佢成功既地方，或者失敗既地方。如果文字可以講得清楚、可以表達到既我都會做咯。

H：你寫左樂評二十幾年，有無啲特別既經歷係會影響到，令你寫作既風格有轉變？

B：未必係甘啱得甘巧。我好記得係 85 年時我未寫樂評。果時就，而家過左身好耐既 Issac Stern，小提琴家來架。果場音樂會係好難忘既。下半場演出 Franck violin sonata，成個樂章，我諗個個樂章都好緊扣，好扣人心弦。果個水平既音樂會其實到我寫樂評既時候都未必可以再遇到甘既境界。但係果個經驗係永遠係我腦海之中，係好美妙既一個時候，亦都可以話係唔可以多求既。即使 Issac Stern 以後再來香港，佢都無一次音樂會可以同 85 年果次相媲美既。

H：係一個好難得既聽音樂既經驗來架。

B：係呀。所以係好多因素，我相信。音樂家可能長途跋涉來到香港，個地方要適應，或者各樣野，或者觀眾既反應，或者佢自己。好多我地叫做化學作用。我地只能夠係香港呢個地方，佢地啲尤其係外來既演奏家、歌唱家甘。佢地來到既時候我地就睇佢會點樣發揮咯。我相信係會唔同既來，即係佢地本來文化、本來地方既演出，同佢地當地既觀眾，果種我覺得係一個唔同既。。。我覺得係相當大既差異。不過我又唔會。。。我去過外國，聽過音樂會，不過唔係多，所以就唔會話俾到好多意見呢度。但係我相信。。。我聽好多朋友話會有甘既情況。。。同一個音樂家可能係某一啲國家或者地方，佢會特別著重既，特別認真既。你有聽聞過甘樣既意見。但我就無追蹤到同一班音樂家、演奏家或者樂隊、管弦樂團，係好近既時間裏面係唔同既地方聽到佢地既演出，或者相同曲目添，甚至乎，甘我又無甘既機會，所以我唔能夠揣測太多。

H：唔夠 data 所以做唔到 analysis。

B：係啦，我唔敢揣測。

H：不過音樂會係一個好現場既野，同 CD 唔同。。。。

B：我想問下你有無玩音樂？

H：係，我既 degree 係 music。

。。。。

H：我想問下你，頭先我地講過寫 concert review 同埋寫 CD 樂評好唔同。甘你有無寫過 CD 樂評呢？

B：無。

H：你寫左好多 review，二十幾年，有無一篇你覺得寫得好好、好驕傲呢？

B：哈哈，有啲我係好中意既。例如 2014 年 3 月 28 號果次，我就報道兩場音樂會既。一個就係布達佩斯節日，一個係王宇佳果場，就係倫敦交響樂團 LSO。兩場音樂會寫埋一篇，果篇我幾中意。（H：點解？）因為我中意個曲目。我中意維也納七子，我起左個名俾七個作曲家。

H：係啲現代作曲家？

B：維也納七子係海頓、莫札特、貝多芬、舒伯特、布魯克納、Brahms 同埋 Mahler 七個人。係我寫樂評既時間裏面同埋我教書既日子裏面，我慢慢就好深刻甘樣

去。。。呢七位係最突出果七個。果七個人雖然只有舒伯特係維也納出世，其他果六位係其它地方，但係佢地都以維也納作為佢地最後既家，即最後都係果度既家鄉，即屋企。同埋佢地都醉心於寫交響曲，同埋係好緊密既傳承，即一個後輩去欣賞佢既前輩、去學習佢地，然後去突出自己。所以有幾場音樂會我都會聯係番呢幾個作曲家既才情，我會甘用。

H：頭先你提到兩場 **concert** 寫埋一篇，點解會甘做呢？

B：一來都係維也納七子既交響曲來架，兩場都係。我覺得我兩邊一起寫我就可以集中講講維也納七子既關係同埋作出既貢獻，甘就可以有 **background** 俾讀者既。二來布達佩斯就係奏布魯克納，倫敦就係奏馬勒。

H：哦係有個關聯。即係你自己決定既？

B：係呀，有啲時間我都會建議不如兩場有啲關係我都會同 **XX** 報既職員講番，我想呢兩邊合併。

H：通常都 **ok** 既？

B：通常都 **ok** 既。佢都知我甘做一定係有個原因啦。

H：即你講個編輯，係嗎？

B：係呀。

H：其實我好好奇，講開編輯。我想問你寫既音樂會係你自己揀既，定係編輯介紹俾你，或者指定想你去寫呢？

B：間中編輯問我有啲特別既音樂會來到，問我有無興趣。我時間就到，我都會去寫既。但係其他時間都係多數我自己提出係有幾場我有興趣寫，然後通知番個編輯。

H：因為我聽過話有啲報紙好中意某一類型既音樂，可能同編輯既或者報紙既方針有關。我唔知 **XX** 報會唔會？你會唔會揀啲報紙喜歡既音樂會去呢？

B：甘又唔會。我主要寫古典音樂。古典音樂就唔理你係獨唱、歌劇定係合唱團，或者係。。。有一年我淨係寫過一啲少數民族果啲，應該係絲綢之路果啲國家，果啲我都寫過一次。唔屬於古典音樂既我都寫過。係音樂既範疇，音樂劇我都寫過，唔只限於古典音樂。不過我多數寫古典音樂。

H：我想問下你，寫樂評時編輯會唔會俾啲 **guidance** 你呢？

B：唔會。試過初期時因為開始改版面，就係我剛剛講果啲，佢可能就可以話可以講

多啲布景，甘佢插圖可以配合番。果啲有時會俾啲意見：可以講下布景，或者燈光都得。佢可以有啲資料連埋果張圖放落去，就好多係可以豐富啲甘樣啦。

H：其它野就無啦？

B：多數係啦。因為我都寫左一段日子，都知道個 style 係點樣，大家都覺得 ok 既，無乜特別需要去改動。

H：報紙本身有無啲 guideline 俾作者呢？

B：無。

H：有無限字數？

B：有，千零字。多少少佢都可以既，但係我都係好穩定既，千二三字我估。我穩定既，我寫野長度唔會多好多，或者少好多，都係差唔多 10% 到都係。你見到我既長度差唔多，你 paste 果幾篇字數唔會出入好大。

H：編輯會唔會改你啲野或者叫你改你啲野？

B：好少既，有時可能一兩個字眼啲，好少改。

H：係啲咩字眼叫你改呢？

B：好少。我唔記得邊啲係啦，其實好少改。有時成篇差唔多好似我寫既甘樣。一般無乜改既地方。

H：明白。頭先講你自己中意既，甘多年有無樂評係你覺得如果有機會重新寫過好過？

B：甘又無。無甘既需要。每篇我都覺得係果陣時候有甘既睇法，或者有甘既觸動、感動，果時個反應係真既。

H：頭先講左編輯、讀者、你自己寫作風格既轉變，可能有啲改變。你仲有無其它因素係會影響你寫作風格，特別係你既 evaluation style，你覺得有無？

B：我就應該無。Evaluation style 係我自己既？

H：你自己既。

B：無乜。我寫完之後、印左出來我都再睇兩三遍，我會剪報。

H：點解會睇兩三遍？

B：無既，睇下我當日寫左之後邊度覺得滿意或者點樣，等自己有個印象咯，或者一種回憶、回味果場音樂會之類。

H：你覺得樂評個功能係乜呢？

B：反映左一個聽眾，可能係有背景、有知識、有聽開音樂會習慣既聽眾，佢一種溝通能力同埋溝通既園地，去同人地溝通啦。我剛剛講過係一種活動既記錄。有陣時、好多時如果有啲既歷史，或者可能好耐以後既人如果要研究番某個演奏家或者直情某個新既作品，甘佢可能睇番當時既人點樣評論，講過啲乜甘樣。甘呢啲我覺得係只要係保存到、留存到，有機會可以係成為日後做研究，做音樂史研究既材料。

H：明白。你覺得點樣為之一篇好既樂評？

B：我覺得清楚、交代同埋有個核心、一個中心思想，或者一個 message 所謂，係每一個樂評有個 message 去提點出來既。另外我自己讀音樂出身，我就覺得文字節奏，感，文字音韻，選擇用果啲字其實都有一種美感，甘我自己就會希望可以做得好，係音樂上，果啲文章讀出來都係比較好聽啲，自己覺得。我會覺得因為我地有音樂訓練，所以我認為我可以做埋呢樣野。

H：你覺得你既音樂訓練對於你寫樂評有無幫助呢，除左你頭先講果啲？

B：絕對有。因為我地少年時已經去音樂會，所以一路聽都無停，係一個好大既樂趣聽音樂會，只係有無時間去聽既啲，都唔係有無。。。如果你話自己買票既，更加要考慮好多因素。

H：我又有少少好奇，你點解會用筆名寫樂評呢？

B：當時開始時就果個編輯同我講用筆名都好普遍既，甘我就話好呀，甘埋去諗咯。就係甘啦。

H：有人覺得樂評既功能係引起爭辯。你覺得呢？

B：有需要就做啦，唔係要特登引起爭辯。特登引起爭辯無意思，係有甘既需要、要有地方去爭辯，令到人想爭辯，呢個係好自然既野，但係就唔係話每篇樂評方向路綫就係要挑起事端，要令人作出反應。我覺得就唔係甘既。

H：明白。甘有人就話‘我寫樂評時，無論我係讚定彈，我都會寫到好有娛樂性來吸引我既讀者’。你覺得呢？

B：我覺得每個樂評人都應該有自己既風格。你剛剛提果位樂評人我都覺得佢甘做係啱既。因為佢最緊要覺得自己舒服。因為佢自己覺得甘係樂趣既。甘佢自己覺得甘做係有價值既，甘埋甘做埋得啦。因為每個人係應該有自己風格既。

H：明白囉。有人就話‘好多樂評人都唔係好知道佢評論果樣音樂係咩來架’。

B：甘呢啲我就。。。因為樂評就好濶既，所以其實個背景都可能好濶既，好多唔同背景人士都可以做樂評既。所以我覺得佢識唔識就係佢有無聽開果種音樂同埋佢有幾多理論、歷史或者各樣訓練，同埋呢個就係，我地自己身為樂評人就好難去講番人地其他樂評人 - 唔係一個客觀位置有時。大家同行好難話以我既角度去評論人地角度。但係識同唔識就好顯淺，啲人睇得出既，即佢有幾識、有幾熟、有無聽開，或者有無尊重，對人有無尊重，對文化藝術有無尊重，字裏行間睇到既。

H：明白。又有講話好多音樂會俾寫得唔好既樂評消滅左，以後都開唔到啦。換句話，啲寫得差既樂評對 **music industry** 係無幫助既，而係一個阻礙。

B：如果係實事，甘無壞既。甘如果佢講既野係真既，距離實際係唔遠既，甘無問題既，應該係甘講既。好似我啲樂評，我寫啲歌劇，我都成日講好多時啲歌劇既製作係好多缺陷既。有時個主角根本就未係好好，就已經係度唱係度做，諸如此類。甘我都照講，真係好差有時，變左好失望，對啲抱住期望去聽既，結果好失望。甘呢個我地都想表達。

H：照直講。

B：係呀。

H：又有人講音樂評論係應該做一個 **cheerleading** 角色，推廣音樂事業。

B：自然有種效果係度。當你去報道或者去評論一啲音樂會既時候，你講左個來龍去脈同埋藝術家既修養、佢地既預備、佢地既使命感，甘呢個已經好容易就推廣或者推動。或者一個從來無聽來古典音樂既人偶然之間見到一篇係講到某場音樂會、某某作曲家。。。‘哇係唔係甘犀利？係唔係真？’甘‘係唔係真’底下可能偶然佢聽到個 **CD** 或者點樣，甘佢開始中意都唔奇架，我覺得係有甘既可能既。

H：明白囉。跟住有個樂評人講既野就好得意既：有時我收到一啲 **offer** 係啲 **concert** 主辦者、音樂家 **agent**、廣告商佢地俾到我既，甘我通常都唔要既。

B：我又無喔。我參與機構果啲佢淨係俾張門票我之嘛，無其它野啦。所以我無呢個人和呢種經驗。純粹俾門票之嘛，無門票以外所有既東西。

H：我諗佢既意思係怕呢啲野影響到寫作既。。。

B：我諗普通來講都唔應該接受啦。有衝突咯！門票應該要俾我地啦，實係要做既啦，除此之外我覺得唔應該有利益方面既輸送。

H：又有樂評人就話如果音樂家朋友演出我覺得好難去評論佢地。

B：譬如我自己用筆名，其實好多人唔知我係邊個。所以無所謂既，我照寫，佢都唔知我邊個。識我係識我啲朋友，再朋友果啲，好少需要做呢樣野啦。筆名其中一個好處就係根本好多人都唔知我係邊個，甘埋照寫咯，所以我就無需要話怕遇到呢種情況 - 朋友既朋友，甘樣之類咯。當然我係有寫過我啲朋友，作曲家朋友，佢既音樂，其實可能根本唔知係我來架。所以我照寫，無野既。其實個作曲家係我朋友，佢首演。。。但係我都係照寫之嘛，無影響既，照我所見提出來咯。

H：最尾我有果幾篇你既樂評，我就想同你討論下，有啲問題。第一條關於背景資料既已經問左。第二條就係好得意，睇番你呢幾篇樂評，我就發現你寫作係跟次序既。

B：多數都係跟既。（H：點解會甘寫呢？）個音樂會既 flow 係甘既。你坐係度聽你係跟個 flow 聽既。可能好多時音樂家係音樂會初頭果首都未定神，即果啲音樂家、演奏家、歌唱家或者係樂團都係，未入狀態，個 flow 係甘。甘我理由頭講到佢尾咯。

H：跟住條問題係關於你既評論啦。我就發現，唔知道係唔係淨係呢幾篇野係甘既，我就發覺總體來講，你既讚係多過彈既。

B：呢幾篇係既。除做呢五篇你仲有睇其它既係唔係？定係 random 甘搵既？

H：有既有既。其實我既 corpus 時間就設係 03 到 13 年。我就搵左呢十年裏面所有既樂評。跟住我有啲 criteria，譬如如果係 multi-concert review 我就唔揀，淨係揀 single concert review。同埋中樂我就唔揀，淨係揀西樂，因為要同英文果邊 comparable。甘你有啲樂評就無用到，呢幾篇就係啱。

B：甘你覺得西人好明顯，或者同我有咩分別？

H：我又唔覺得有咩好大分別，反而佢地西樂文化深厚啲，音樂會文化，特別係倫敦、曼徹斯特，好多音樂會，所以佢地寫得好多好多。

B：係呀，好長期既一個。。。好深厚傳統。

H：無錯，佢地無論編輯都好，好上軌道。反而香港散啲。譬如佢地大報有音樂版，香港無，香港都係好零零散散，幾日一篇或者一星期一篇。佢地係每日都會出甘樣，同埋有啲固定樂評人，香港都有，甘佢地係出得好密既。至於其它野，因為我而家仲係做緊 analysis，我又覺得可能睇個人，樂評人本身背景、性格可能有更大影響。講開你呢幾篇，我又覺得你讚多過彈。

B：佢無野可以大彈，呢幾篇都係。第一個三重奏一半半。佢上半場我彈，佢奏舒伯特果度，一半半其實呢場，我覺得。佢柴可夫斯基係好，但係舒伯特係唔好，其實係一半。齊默曼都有彈既。佢都有啲唔係好夠既地方判斷得。**Bartoli** 就好既，**overall** 係全晚都好既。另外維也納果場都有彈既。復興古樂又係有彈既。其實你揀呢五篇我又再睇一輪，其實係 **Bartoli** 果篇係好少彈，其餘果幾場都係有彈既地方。多少就唔需要衡量係一個數量化，因為佢係甘既情況埋甘既情況咯，係需要講佢唔好講佢好，講佢唔好係邊度，如果佢真係有心睇既就可以改進，或者佢同意既話，個演奏家或者個樂團。如果我地去到甘既影響力甘係好啦，希望有甘既影響力，呢個只係一個希望啫。

H：點解會問你呢個問題呢？我都聽過有啲樂評人話如果場音樂會太差直頭唔寫添！

B：又唔需要甘樣呀。好差都可以講架。好差，如果佢係一個好認真，或者係一個好重要既 **presentation**，我又覺得唔同喔。如果你係好隆重或者好貴門票，但係你又好差既，甘你又要講喔。不至於話要避左佢喔。我覺得要睇下佢係點喔，我覺得。你有責任係度，因為佢收左人好多錢，但係出來係好垃圾既，呢個係要話既。

H：我再睇仔細啲，睇番你果個寫作手法，讚同彈既手法：你既讚就無甘 **mitigated**、**reserved**，相對來講會比較直接既。其實每一場都係既。‘維也納’你話佢‘令人激賞’、‘好精彩’，果首樂曲‘地位好崇高’，有‘分外清新既感覺’- 呢啲直頭強調添，效果令人更想專注去聆聽。我睇到好幾篇都係，讚都係甘樣。但係調番轉，你既批評，我就會搵到比較多既 **mitigate**，你會將佢軟化啲既，我唔知你有無發現。

B：有有有，我係甘處理既。

H：點解呢？

B：因為。。。我唔知呢，我自己認為甘樣講係好啲呢。即使我係批評佢或者我係覺得唔滿意既，我都可能可以甘樣寫。我諗可能睇落舒服啲？但係佢亦都知我係彈緊佢，係批評緊佢，（H：個音樂家？）我覺得甘樣已經足夠啦。我又要唔想令到人難受、難堪。我覺得令到相關既人好難堪、好難接受既。。。我覺得我一樣講果啲野，但係我唔需要講到佢好難堪、好難接受。我需要甘樣 **hurt** 佢、傷害佢。我去批評佢，佢聽到我既意思，甘埋得咯。我覺得甘就得啦，又唔需要係去傷害人？文字係好大傷害可以，尤其係呢啲佢印出來既，佢十年都唔變既嘛啲字。你話我現

場聽完之後左耳入右耳出，好耐之後已經唔記得左啦，但文字係唔會變既，永遠係度既，啲字係永遠係度既。我覺得呢個就係可以話我寫既時候一種手法又好，風格又好啦，當我批評人既時候，我唔想去傷害到人地太多。

H：你所講既人地就係音樂家本身？

B：無錯啦。當事人。所有佢一定清楚我係講緊佢不足、不好啦。佢知我無預備啦。

譬如果場三重奏，佢係準備得唔好。我寫出來係話佢準備有問題，唔熟既根本。

H：意思好清楚係話佢做得唔好，但係我就覺得你婉轉啲咯。

B：但係我唔會鬧佢或者講到佢係垃圾，睇我時間。。。果啲我就唔會咯。

H：反而你讚就無甘樣既避忌。你會放啲。

B：讚係一種係令到人愉快。睇既人都愉快。無去到現場既人睇都。。。係好正能量既。我覺得係正能量。你覺唔覺得如果係睇到甘樣都係正能量？呢呢幾場你有無係現場？（H：無）你睇完我講啲所謂讚既有咩感受，身為一個讀者？

H：我都覺得幾舒服既，我覺得人既心態係中意睇好野既。我會甘諗咯。

B：你都係甘既，係唔係？我自己既出發點就係甘既意思。

H：甘你唔淨止係考慮個音樂家，你考慮埋讀者感受喔。

B：讀者有，讀者絕對有。讀者係。。。當事人只係果個團體或者係果團團體，獨奏家就得一個兩個甘樣，或者個主辦單位之嘛。但係讀者群就可以潤啲。

H：都係當事人來架你覺得？

B：唔係當事人。當事人應該係果啲 performer 啦應該。

H：但係你覺得讀者睇完尖酸刻薄既說話都會覺得唔舒服既，或者睇完開心既讚揚都會覺得好正能量既。都會考慮佢地既感受既？

B：我就唔係考慮佢地既感受。我自己希望甘樣講野。出發點係唔同。我出發點係我認為甘講好，我亦都知道甘樣講個讀者睇落去都會舒服，會收到我既意思。就唔同話先諗左讀者，就唔係。係我自己想甘講好呢，甘講係唔係合理呢？就係甘做。

H：我唔知你有無睇過 George Bernard Shaw 既樂評？

B：可能睇過，不過無乜記得啦。

H：佢就出名比較刻薄既，用好多諷刺既筆法去寫，其實支筆都好辣下。佢係十九世紀既作家。

B：應該有睇過下既，不過無乜深刻印象。你話好辣果啲我睇過，尤其係外國既樂評人都睇過類似既。諷刺性果啲我有既。

H：我又唔覺得你有用果啲手法。

B：因為我覺得係受傷害既。我會覺得當事人係好難受既。你寫未必係好公允既。其實你好多野唔知既。或者你當時既判斷你認為你自己係專家既時候，其實個事情唔係甘既。你以為自己坐係個樂評位，自己就係專家，自己就好似有支生死簿甘，好似好不如威。其實你可能會錯。你講既野係一 rui rui 落去，吸覺得自己係啱囉，甘可能你係錯既。你係錯但係仲去傷害人地，埋錯上加錯？不如當你要批評人既時候就講咯，但係唔需要去人身攻擊、傷害人既自尊。你無需要去傷害人既自尊既嘛。因為人係可以改進，人係有機會既嘛。如果你一次過就講到佢不值既、不屑既，‘此人不屑、此人不值，唔應該出來做表演者’，或者個作品係唔應該擺出來奏俾大家聽既，諸如此類。呢啲說話係你係果時係認為係甘，但係唔係實際係甘呢？好多歷史上好多作曲家，**Bruckner** 尤其是，果時啲 當 critics 係鬧到佢一棟都無啦，但係一百年之後你睇下全世界有幾多人以奏 **Bruckner** 既音樂為榮。幾多指揮家去到晚年先敢接 **Bruckner** 既音樂呢？佢要經過成一百年既時間佢先能夠係全世界獲得平反。你何況你一個樂評，會唔會都會犯果啲毛病呢：你以為人地唔得，其實人地都唔知幾得呀！你講得好差好差既時候你自己諗一諗會唔會你都係好大問題，係唔係真係啱？所以說話就係你表達到得啦，就唔需要好似以前啲人抨擊 **Bruckner** 甘樣。有個好出名既樂評人抨擊到 **Bruckner** 真係體無完膚。結果人地知啦，一百年之後就係果個樂評人。。。佢雖然出名，但係好離譜，都唔係要。皇帝約瑟夫問 (**Bruckner**)要乜野，佢話你叫個樂評人收斂下，唔好攻擊我甘多。

H：甘反而係佢自己有損失，如果個樂評人係甘尖酸。

B：係呀。所以得唔得呢？你都唔可以話佢錯，因為佢既角度係甘。佢無錯，因為佢係甘諗就甘寫，係甘表達呀嘛。係佢既意見其實。只不過有人會好 care 佢既意見，或者受佢影響，或者佢係好有影響力。

H：明白。留番啲餘地俾人，都留番啲餘地俾自己。我可唔可以甘講？

B：係啦。我覺得係甘。好多時會有呢啲毛病。樂評人自己唔知道，以為自己支筆好勁，以為自己好有權威，傷害左人都唔知。我就盡量唔好犯呢啲毛病。係好早期

既作品我已經知道背後有呢個意思係度，我自己，所以我睇番我啲樂評，我都會係甘樣。

H：係呀，你寫得好平和。特別係啲彈既野，你有時反而會用啲建議既形式：如果佢奏得深刻啲會更加好啲個效果。

B：我都認為係甘。其實音樂家演奏家係人來既之嘛，佢都唔想唔好，但係礙於體力、時間、或者揀既曲目。。。好多因素令佢無辦法俾到最好既你，係唔係？佢都唔想既。

H：唔該曬。最後我想好快甘問下你，果啲標題係唔係你改既？

B：有部分。果篇文裏面有，但係後來好多時都係編輯係我篇文度搵到啲字做標題。

H：你講 section title？

B：係呀，早期係我自己俾既，但係後來我就發覺唔需要啦，好多時佢睇完之後擺到果啲重要既字作為標題。我覺得都效果唔錯。

H：大標題係唔係都係編輯改既？

B：都係架。而家近來多數都係個編輯睇完我篇文發覺我係甘寫既，佢都會搵啲 positive 既出來，通常都。有得揀都揀啲 positive 既出來。

H：唔該曬。關於我地今日討論呢個 topic 你仲有乜野想補充呢？

B：暫時都無乜特別。

Appendix I: The Interview Coding Scheme

- 1. Background of music critic:** Background information of participants including How long has they been writing music reviews, how did they become music critics, why do they write music criticism, whether they are working full-time or part-time as music critics, training received in writing music criticism, etc.

Sub-code	Definition / Sub-categories	Example
How did the critic start writing music reviews	Initiated by critic: Through volunteering, writing for free, extending earlier work at newspaper, offering texts to outlets, etc.	And it was during that time that I got work through the Times Arts Desk there. I came back after I graduated from my postgraduate diploma on a casual basis shift work every day. During that time I started writing classical music reviews. And since then I have become the deputy arts editor and one of our regular classical music and opera critics.
	Initiated by others: Invited by editor, colleague, friend, etc.	Actually there was one concert that the editor wanted someone to write a review on, she came to me and asked me if I could do it. That time I was at the SCMP, I said why not? So that evening I went to the concert and wrote a review on it.
How long has the critic been writing concert reviews		First from <i>Opera</i> , I wrote in the end of 1999, and it was the year before that I was writing at university.
Favourite genre of music reviewing	No preference	No really. We don't really have specialists because we are a general newspaper and there are five regular classical music critics including me, so everything is spread out equally among us.
	Specific genre	I like to write more about contemporary music, if possible.
Mode of work as a music critic	Full-time	Yes, more or less. Most of what I write about is music.
	Part-time	No, I suppose it's half my job.

Music background of the critic	Professional training (University or conservatoire)	I studied music at Oxford University, long time ago.
	Non-music related degree	I read English in university.
	Some instrumental training but not professional	At school I learned piano and I learned flute, and I played as a percussionist. At university I sang a lot at choirs and choruses but I never particularly wanted to be professional musician.
Other career: other job(s) the critic does apart from writing music criticism	Music related	I teach here at the Royal College of Music, the academic side.
	Writing related	I'm not a professional music critic. I am a professional journalist. I have worked for a number of publications in my life.
	Neither music nor writing related	做紡織工業既，管理同埋計劃果方面既工作既。(I was in the textile industry. My job was about management and planning.)
Reasons for writing concert reviews		... I wanted to have free tickets. You get nice tickets for nice concerts, nice operas, sitting in the best seats in the theatre, in the concert hall, and can take a guest usually. So it's all very nice.
Training received on writing reviews		I learned by myself. I learned on the job. I've never written a concert review until I was written by the Guardian for the first one. And the rest is history I'd say.

2. **Music criticism for the media:** This category includes general information regarding the participants reviewing music for the media, including the types of media critics reviewing music for, average number of reviews published in a week/month. It also records each participant's preferred media and critics' comparisons on writing for different types of media. For the English corpus, critics' comments on star-rating the reviews are also recorded (Star-rating only exists in English reviews).

Sub-code	Definition	Example
The critic's comment on music criticism in the newspaper industry	The general situation music criticism and music critics are facing in the newspaper publication industry	We used to write 450 words as an average. Then it came down to 375 and now it's 360. So it keeps getting smaller... Because the newspapers are shrinking. They have fewer pages and fewer writers, and fewer sales. And occasionally you write an extra long piece if it's something very important, but on average it's 360 words now.
The critic's comment on star rating (British critics only)	The critic's view on the star rating system, which can be positive, negative or neutral	The stars are pernicious, I really don't dislike that. I don't mind you say that. (negative)
Comparison of writing concert reviews for different media or genres	The critic compares their writing for different media (newspaper, magazine, website, etc.), different newspapers, or different writing genres (political reviews, academic articles, etc.).	... academic writing is very different from media writing. I had a transition when I joined SCMP. I was forced to lower down my academic writing and write short sentences, more direct expressions, and I find that very helpful in making myself concise and clear to my readers. So my academic training is more a training on my intellect and my research methodology, but my writing style I really had to credit it to the media.
Preferred media	The type of media the critic prefers writing for, i.e. newspaper, magazine, online forum, or no preference	The one I had the most experience of is writing for newspapers of course. that's what I have done most and that's what I like most. That's the easiest because I have done that every other day.
Types of media reviewing music for	The type(s) of media the critic has been writing music reviews for, i.e. newspaper and other media, or newspaper only.	I didn't write solely for the Guardian, I write for other magazines, Opera Magazine and so on and so forth.
Types of review written	The types of review the critic has written, i.e. only concert reviews;	I have done this very criticism for a magazine called the <i>Literary Review</i> , I haven't written for them

	concert reviews and other types of music such as jazz, folk, pop, and etc.; concert review and non-music reviews, such as drama, dance, politics, and etc.	for some time. I would actually sometimes think I'd like to do more literary criticism as well as music.
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3. **The role of music critics:** This category includes participants' reflection on their work as music critics, their views on the roles of music critic and the qualities a music critic should have.

Sub-code	Definition	Example
Roles of the music critic	Critics' views on their roles as a music critic	To inform, to change people's perceptions of things, to draw in people into the art form you love who might not be drawn in, you know, you always think or someone say "I'd really like to hear that" or "I really wish I'd been there, I'll go the next time", that I think is also extremely important. To have a cultural record of what has happened, I think it's very important to have a Historical record of what has happened.
Quality a music critic should have	Writing skills: Qualities related to writing skills, such as readability, precision, etc.	To me it's – you want to be readable, you are putting words down in an order, which are pleasing to read and absorbing to read, so you choosing the right word, that sort of thing.
	Personal qualities: Qualities related to the personal values or ethical principles of a critic, such as confidence, empathy, enthusiasm, honesty, etc.	I think one can convey that without pulling the wool over people's eyes, because in the end, the only thing you can do is being honest, really. And you have to try your hardest to be honest, to say what you mean. If you start doing anything else, I should think, it would be completely impossible.
	Knowledge (music and/or non-music):	I think you need to have a clear idea of what good performance is.
A critic's public image	The critic's opinions on being recognised by the public, i.e. the use of pen	But in my early years I was very timid, so I always used a pen name. Every time I used a different pen name, so no

	name, or having their photo published next to their reviews.	one would trace me, trace who this guy was, you know. So I had tens of pen names in the early years. When I decided to really be responsible and accountable, so I decided to use my real name. That would be during my Asia Weekly days.
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4. **Critic-reader relationship:** Participants are asked who their target readers might be, what they think their target readers expect to see in a review, critics' perception of their impact on their readers and musicians they evaluate, etc. They also compare their target readers across different media they write for.

Sub-code	Definition	Example
Target readers	Non-music professionals: general readers with no or little music knowledge	For The Guardian, my reviews appear on the Arts page. And the rest of the page is taken up with reviews of plays, ballets, films, pop concerts, arts exhibitions and so forth. So people look at that page, you would expect them to have a general interest in the arts, maybe one art more than the others, that they are interested in the arts, enough to look at the arts page. So I'm trying to communicate with them or at least write in a way that if they are reading down the page, when they get to my review they won't stop because it's a classical music review, they will continue to read. I hope. So yes, that's it. I assume they are educated people, the Guardian is written for educated people. Yes, with a general interest in the arts.
	Music professionals: musicians or people working in the music industry, such as concert organisers, musicians' agents, etc.	But also aren't you be writing even in Particular circumstances or a person consults, that performer, you might feel quite strongly about the performance where you want to be able to communicate that something special had happened, which that the musician would want to know that they did it. Because it's a practice that most musicians said that they never read reviews, but I think that some of them do, some value them, but the other thing is that one knows and this is partly the

		role of the internet now, one knows that the agents read them, and the people in the business read reviews...
	Comparing target readers across media , i.e. newspapers, magazines, the internet, and etc.	... you have to bear in mind the readership of the publication. For instance, The Guardian is a newspaper is not a music specialist magazine, so you cannot expect people to know as much. It would be a mistake to use technical terms, I think, to describe the performance. Whereas if you are writing for Opera Magazine, you will expect people to know quite a lot about opera, you don't need to tell them anything about the plot, you don't need to introduce the singers – they will be familiar with the singers, and so. If you are writing for something like Musical Times, which I have done, I don't currently write for them, their readership is very, very highly educated musically, people like you and I with degrees would read that...
	What the readers expect to see in reviews	Depends what they are hoping for or what they are expecting. You are always hoping for a strong opinion, I suppose. When I read reviews of other art forms. But you can't always deliver that.
Critic's impact	On general readers: Possible influence critics think they might have on their readers, such as their purchasing decisions. Readers' feedback is an example of critic's impact on readers.	If I hear someone fabulous abroad, I hope Hong Kong audience would have the chance to experience them themselves. So I hope local organizers would consider bringing those artists to Hong Kong after reading my review. If such chances do come along, I hope people would really go and see them. My answer to the question is "negligible". I don't think I'd make a big difference on purchasing decisions.
	On musicians: Possible influence critics think they might have on the musicians they comment on	Maybe true, but you have to be...I've given some bad reviews. I gave a bad review a long time ago to Lang Lang and it doesn't seem to harm his career. You know, give a very good review to artists who has sadly in my view not

		had success as Lang Lang. So you know, again it's...there's no absolute there, I think.
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5. **Writing concert reviews:** This category includes aspects regarding the critics' writing of concert reviews, such as their views on what should be included in a concert review, their styles of praise and criticism, and so on.

Sub-code	Definition	Example
Average number of reviews written per week or month		Again that's changed. I would say used to be about 20 a month. It's now about 10 a month. So in 30 years it's halved.
Preparation before writing concert reviews		It varies enormously to be honest, depends on how much time I have. It varies depends on how much I know the pieces being played. The one thing I wouldn't do on the same day is listen to another recording of the pieces being played. I would not do that.
What to review	The critics' opinions on what should be included in a concert review	In my writing I try to focus on either the music or the musicians. I hate to mix the review with my impression on the audience or on other non-music things. I think that would be very unfair to the music or to the music makers on stage. but I notice there are some music reviews who are keen on talking about non-music things, like the rowdy audience, the noise, the poor house programme, that sort of thing. I don't like that. I think music review after all is about music, and music makers. So as much as I could, I focus on those two things.
Style of evaluation	Praise: how the critic expresses praise in the reviews	My praise, I guess between those two it would be expressive. Because there is a page in the section in the back of a newspaper that you want people to go to, you want people say: 'why should I read this review in this newspaper, because this writer is exciting and he is enthusiastic, he's passionate about his art form, and

		whether he likes something or doesn't like it. When you write about it you should be as engaging as possible. So when you have the choice of being enthusiastic or reserved, I don't have any hesitation saying 'expressive'.
	Criticism: how the critic expresses criticism in the reviews	I think it depends on the context. But I think you have to be overall direct. I mean, the first thing to point out is that I have on average 350 words to write a concert review or an opera, that can be a 3-hour concert or could be a 5-hour opera. The 3-hour concert could include a new piece, a symphony, a staged/semi-staged opera, so there is a lot to say. If you are going to be critical, I think you have to be direct and to the point, hopefully with some humour and interest in the way you write as well.
Evolution of writing style	The changes: how the critic's writing style has changed over time	Yes, I think it probably has. I think I have tried to make it more direct, even more direct than when I started. I think, obviously I was a very young critic, and you do the experiences you have as a music critic, the more music you are exposed to, it does change your ability to criticise and to, hopefully get to the heart of the matter. I don't think my writing has changed dramatically, I think I would definitely recognise my writing as being the same person, I think most people would, over the last 10 years. I think it has probably become more 'streamlined' I would say, and hopefully a little bit more authoritative.
	The unchanged: element that has always existed in the critic's reviews	I suppose on a very basic level: who is performing, where they were performing, what they were performing... And then was it a successful performance and what was the news interest, because often there may be a topical

		<p>connection, or there may be a reason why it is important to be covering this in a newspaper, (e.g.) the composer has not written anything in 20 years. So you have to assess all this sort of things as well as the way in which the music sounded and was performed.</p>
Refuse to review extremely bad concerts	<p>Some critics refuse to write about concerts they think were very bad, and they explain why</p>	<p>I was once asked to review an opera as it happened since back to what I said just before, and it's a performance of Verdi's Simon Boccanegra by some students, basically a student production. And I went to this, and actually it was so bad that I said to the Arts Desk I think it would be cruel to review this because one could only be dismissive, and there wasn't enough to...you would have to say it was terrible, and this is to artists right at the beginning of their career. Some of them, I mean I can't remember the detail of the performance now, but I have a feeling, some of the singers were okay. The standard of the orchestral playing was terrible, and so it was a mismatch. But I just think it would have been just cruel to write in therefore. And also I think it perhaps would deter people from going...that's not my concern, but...</p>
Reviews ever been quoted	<p>Critics state whether their reviews have ever been quoted by musicians' agents or concert organisers, and the possible impact of that.</p>	<p>Yeah, there is always that. But that's a two-edge sword. I can give you an extreme example just to amuse you. I wrote a really quite scathing review for a particular show, it was years ago, stage thing, musical or opera. I said someone had... "sung by so and so with his stunning blonde hair...". And all over the billboard just said "Stunning -XXX, the Times". And when you see it on the theatres round here, "Brilliant! - so and so, the Telegraph", "Amazing". They could have said that the quality of humour in this show to me was amazingly bad, they'd pick out "amazing". So those</p>

		<p>quotations are very carelessly used. Of course really agents and managements would give a whole sentence or a whole paragraph. But yes, they are widely quoted in concert programmes. If you go to the LSO, London Symphony, their programme in the material beginning and the end will quote what we have said about different other concerts to make the people going to that one thing, “oh, must come to more LSO concerts, they have so much praise by the press”. So they are quite widely quoted.</p>
Using technical terms	Critics explain whether they would use technical terms of music in their reviews and why.	<p>You have to be very careful about that. There are a few words which are very, very difficult. The one that always causes a great problem is <i>Sprechgesang</i>, which is atonal thing like (singing atonal phrases), because there is no English equivalent of it. It is very difficult to explain to people what it is, and the word <i>Sprechgesang</i> doesn't mean anything in English... Sometimes I get away with it, sometimes my editor would say: “Can't use that, no one would know what it means.”</p>
What makes a review good: The criteria critics think a good review should have	Enlightens the reader	I think if it stimulates interests, if it stimulates discussion, if it stimulates opinion, if it makes people think. I think all those are actually very important.
	Gives a clear account of the concert	Accuracy in terms of ‘you must know what you are talking about’; you must be familiar enough with the material to comment in an intelligent way on what the experience is, and how the quality of that experience. I think authority is very important.
	Nicely written	Another that makes a good review is it is gracefully written, so it's nice to read, it is sorting of like driving over a bumpy road, I think that's important.

6. Factors that affect writing: This category records the factors that might (or might not) have an impact on critics' writing or evaluative styles, such as their consideration for the target readers, the influences of editorial/newspaper policies, etc.

Sub-code	Definition	Example
Consideration for readers: The influences that target readers might impose on the critic's writing. There are two main type of target readers: the general public, and the musicians who composed for or performed at the concert.	General readers: General readers of the newspaper. Not the musicians who composed the music at the concert or performed at the concert	Yes, I think one should always have their readers in mind. I think in some senses, you just have to write what you are going to write. One is never writing for artists, I mean some critics think they can tell artists how to do something better or...we shouldn't be writing for artists, we should be there to mediate between the art form and the public. So yes you have to bear the readership in mind, but up to a point, then you just have to write what you are going to write.
	Musicians: Those who the critics comment on in their reviews	...In fact the musicians probably are the most I have in mind as my target reader. Because I hope them to realise someone is listening to them in a critical way, so that they'd better perform good up there. They are my number one readers actually, when I write, I have them in mind first.
Editorial policy: participants talk about their interaction with their newspaper editors and the possible impacts editorial / newspaper policies such as expected length have on their writing	Choice of concert to review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By critic • By editor 	It varies again from one publication. With something like the Guardian, we have a number of critics. I have various colleagues, in London for instance, I think there are five of us. So the chief critic divide it up between all of us. So he would assign me to cover something or somebody cover something else on the same evening.
	Guidelines on writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From editor • From newspaper • No guideline 	Every newspaper has its style guide, its general style guide, like really basic thing, like how they use apostrophe's, where they use commas, how many spaces between words, that kind of thing. There is an official Telegraph guide about things like that, about use of prepositions.

	Word limit	The word count is an important thing, and I do make it a big effort to be only one or two words either side. 398 is okay, 402 is okay. If it comes out of 405 then I try to cut a few words.
	Editor's intervention on content of reviews	Once you send your copy in, it goes to sub-editors. If they feel that something isn't clear, they will change it. Usually phone you up first, or they might need 20 words less on that day, and they'll be the ones to cut it. Partly because I'm an editor myself, partly because I'm a bit of control freak perhaps, but I don't find my copy gets change very much, and I write with that in mind.

7.Prompt card questions: This part contains 7 questions, which aim at eliciting critics' opinions on other critics' or musicians' comments on music criticism. These questions were primarily focused on the critic's perception about the function and writing style of concert reviews relating to evaluation.

Question	Sub-codes	Example
The function of music critic is to ignite debate.	Agree	Yeah! That's right. Ignition would be a ...yeah. I wouldn't it's the only function, but I'd say it's a good...
	Disagree	No. I do not agree. I think the function of music criticism is to evaluate inform the reader as to what happened. Debate could be a result of that, but I don't think it's a critic's purpose.
A music critic said: 'When I'm writing a review, no matter whether I praise or criticise, I try to write it in an entertaining way to attract my readers.'	Agree	That's a very good way of looking at it. I would agree with that. It should be entertaining, should be entertaining.
	Disagree	I personally would not do that. I don't particularly think you write in a specific way to attract readers. If the subject is interesting enough then readers will be attracted. If what you are reporting on is interesting enough then readers will be attracted. I don't specifically set out to

		attract readers. If I do, it's wonderful. It's not what I set out to do.
Many critics do not really know the music they criticise about.	Agree	That might be true, I don't know. I'd like to think it's not true for me. When I review new music, it's more difficult than I review Tchaikovsky or Mozart, but I still do as much homework as I can.
	Disagree	On the whole I would say my colleagues are very knowledgeable. I find when I discuss things with them, they know a great deal. I don't think that it's a fair comment. It may be to some, but not many, not many at all. Because you wouldn't be able to keep your job, you see. Many people would complain, and it would be obvious to many readers if you don't know what you are talking about. I don't think it would last very long.
Many concerts have been killed after bad reviews. In other words, bad reviews are a huge put-off instead of help to the music industry.	Agree	Well, yes, they do kill off a lot, but perhaps bad music is no use to anybody. We want more good music, don't want bad...Bad music, shut up. It's better to be quiet.
	Disagree	There again, I would dispute. What does many concerts killed mean? The concerts are over anyway. Maybe an opera. Yes, a play can be killed, especially New York I think. In England, I'll say that happens less.
	Other	Well, I think that is...an agree and a disagree - it's all to do with the circumstances I'll say...
Music critics should take part in some of the 'cheerleading' for the future of music art, industry, and funding for music activities.	Agree	I hope we do that, we should support...I hope we do, I do support the future of music and art, and in terms of funding, which is very, very important to the continuation. Yes, I hope we do, I hope we do support...
	Disagree	No. I mean maybe some of my colleagues might think differently, but I would say absolutely no to that.

A music critic said: ‘Sometimes I get offers from concert organisers, musicians’ agents or advertisers. I always turn them down.’	Agree	It’s certainly true. This is a difficult issue actually.
	Disagree	Of course there is in no exchange for good reviews. You’ve got to make it clear, if you invite me, I shall say what I think, are you willing to risk that? Most of them would say yes, because even bad review is publicity. Lots of them say don’t worry about that, we don’t mind that, because we got space in the paper. If we pay for that space, it would be 1000 thousands. They have free space in the paper even if I say something negative.
	Other	Never get of this for me. I think the British presses are very, very uncorrupt.
A music critic said: ‘Sometimes I find it difficult to criticise some musician friends of mine who appear in the concerts I write about.’	Agree	Yes, of course. You know, you’ve become friends with musicians... But the other answer is if they are really a friend, and you tell them what you think anyway.
	Disagree	I won’t say it’s difficult, but you want to be careful. When I say careful, it’s very particularly you would not want to not tell the truth because you have once met them. You want to be telling the truth, and as being...you always want to be careful when you say something if you are being profoundly negative. And equally, if you say something that you thought was overstating it, overenthusiastic, you’d always be careful, you wouldn’t say it.

- 8. Discourse-based questions:** Each participant is asked a few questions based on their own reviews selected from the corpus. These questions are categorised into Word choice, Evaluation strategies and other issues.

Sub-code	Definition	Example
Word choice	The choice of vocabulary / expressions / technical or non-technical terms by a critic and the reasons of making such choices	If Cantonese phrases are more precise in describing what I’d like to express, I’d use them. If readers feel that these phrases are more vivid, that’s how I intend them to be.

Evaluation strategies: Critics are asked why they use certain approaches to express praise and criticism in their reviews, and/or how they expect their readers to understand these	Praise	<p>(... page 2, last bit, I have highlighted. I am quite interested in your way of writing it: "<i>Their final 'Saltarello' left the City of London speed limit standing.</i>" Why did you write it this way?)</p> <p>I wanted a nice punchy ending, and I wanted something a little bit imaginative than saying "they played it very fast".</p>
	Criticism	<p>(It seems that you've softened your criticism a little bit, like the second paragraph, "but I can't say I'm overwhelmed".)</p> <p>That's a bit British. We like that sort of thing: "I'm rather", "a bit", "not so much" – I think that's a very British thing, very English thing, to put it rather indirectly, or to use the double negative. Not be too direct.</p>
Other	Writing strategies/approaches critics use in their reviews which are not about evaluation or word choice.	<p>(I found something also from your reviews, not from this one but other ones: whenever there is new music, you tend to give more background information, like the composers... Why do you do that?)</p> <p>Because I'm assuming that people are familiar with Ravel and Prokofiev, but they are not familiar with Turnage. Because not everybody is onto new music, some people avoid it completely. And I want to give out the kind of knowledge they need to understand what I'm going to say about the piece. So it's always the new piece to which I'd give more background information, or the rare unusual piece from the 19th or 18th century, I would say something about that.</p>