

LÜ

(Live interactive work for Erhu & Max/MSP)

by *Jing WANG*

(2005-06)

Duration: Ca. 9'09"

What is Erhu?

From Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erhu>)

The **erhu** (二胡, Pinyin èrhú), commonly known in the West as the 'Chinese violin', is a two-stringed bowed instrument, capable of producing sad, mysterious, joyful or voice-like melodies. It belongs to the huqin family of Chinese instruments, together with the zhonghu, gaohu, banhu, and sihu. The erhu dates back to the 13th century. It is believed to evolve from the xiqin(奚琴), which was described as a foreign, two-stringed lute in an encyclopedic work on music by music theorist Chen Yang called *Yue Shu*, written during the Northern Song Dynasty. The xiqin is believed to originate from Central Asia, and have come to China in the 10th century.

The first character of the name of the instrument (二) is derived from the fact that it has two strings. The second character (胡) indicates that it is part of the *huqin* family. The name of the *huqin* family, in turn, indicates "barbarian" origins, showing that the instrument may have been based on Mongolian bowed instruments.

The erhu is unique in that sound is produced through the vibration of the python skin stretched over the qin tong (sound box) of the instrument (which in Southern China is hexagonal, while it is pentagonal in Northern China). The bow hair is never separated from the strings (which were formerly of twisted silk but are today usually made of metal); it passes between them as opposed to over them, as with western bowed stringed instruments.

Program Notes:

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A recurring theme in composer's work is the concept 'balance of dichotomy': East vs. West, tradition vs. modernism, and acoustic vs. electronic. In this particular work this theme is revisited in its attempt to meld together two temporally and spatially distinct instruments – erhu (Chinese two-stringed fiddle) and computer – through the utilization of the computer music language Max/MSP.

The title *LÜ* (Chinese for 'Journey') is methodically chosen here as it illustrates a musical journey of gradual morphing between the roles of erhu and electronics. Over the course of the work, the natural acoustical quality of erhu gradually gives way to the computer's mounting manipulation until eventually the electronic timbre secures its dominance in the end. The session in the closing stages of the work suggests a mirroring of the one we observe in the introduction; only now the erhu performs with much freer improvisation, which creates another sense of "journey".

Truly, this work serves as a sheer metaphor to life itself. With the implementation of Max/MSP combining with expression of evolution of timbre, we can render a parallel of reflection in how our own history has continually evolved in the advent of technology through the ages.

Performers' Note

Symbols and Abbreviations:

1)  – a slight glissando. The pitch range is approximately within a semitone. It is supposed to sound like a short and soft tail of previous note.

2)  – scratching strings.

3)  – indicates a prolonging of a single note or a repetition of previous music event (pattern). Music stops at the end of the line.

 – the repetition of previous pattern goes to next music event without stop.

4) n.v. – non vibrato

s.p. – sul ponticello

p.o. – position ordinary

s.p.  p.o. – play sul ponticello and gradually change to ordinary position

R.H. pizz. – right hand pizzicato

L.H. pizz. – left hand pizzicato

LÜ

(for erhu and msp)

1 **ad libitum**
♩ = ca. 90

Erhu

ca. 8"

mp *mf* *pp* *p* *f* *pp*

5 L.H. pizz. *rit.* *arco* *mf* *p* *f*

9 *mp* *mf*

12 *f* *pp* *p*

15 *mf* *f* *ppp*

17 *a tempo* *accel.* *fp* *f* *p*

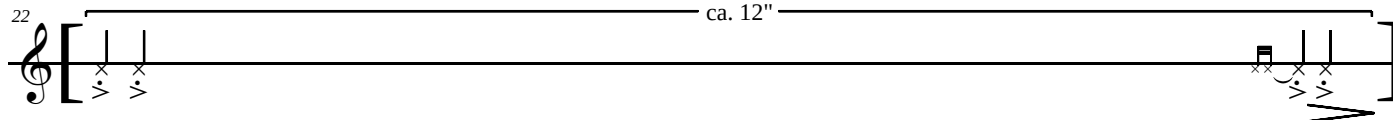
19 *mp* *f* *pp*

freely interpret the intervals of the trill
p.o. — s.p.

LÜ

2

cue 1



2

R.H. pizz.

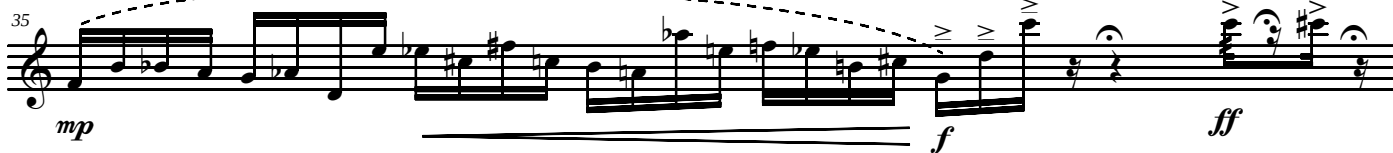
N.V.

arco



3

Allegro (M.M. ♩ = c. 120)



39 *f* 6 *ff* *rit.*

41 **cue 2** ca. 6" plucked sound enters ca. 8"

43 **4** *ad libitum* ca. 10" repeat the boxed pattern 2-4 times *pp* ca. 5"

47 ca. 4" continue the previous melodic contour and modulate upwards while accelerating *ff*

50 ca. 14" freely choose the notes in the box and switch between two strings as fast as possible *ffff*

cue 3 bell-like sound builds up

54 scratching D-string *fff* *p* bell-like sound fades out gradually

cue 4 58 distant bell-like sound ca. 4" hiss ca. 4"

LÜ

4

5

freely choose the order of the boxed patterns for approximately 20"; any repetition or omission is allowed
arco with light bowing

6 distant sounding. Free improvisation session which could be based on (but not limited to) the following patterns.
let the electronics predominate throughout. the duration is approximately 1'20".

80

mf

Glissando

Glissando

85

f *mp* *p*

88

mp

light bowing