

Shanghai Chinese Orchestra Teacher Guide

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About the Orchestra



Established in 1952, the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra is the first large-scale orchestra in China to employ traditional Chinese instruments. It is known for creating music that evokes vivid imagery of the splendor of China's past, with repertoire comprised of both traditional folksongs and newly orchestrated works. As a commissioning body, the orchestra has played an important role in the development of Chinese music.

SHCO has performed in more than 80 cities in China and also toured more than 30 countries. The orchestra also has had the honor of performing for many dignitaries and world leaders visiting China. In 2001 and 2003, the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra performed Chinese New Year Concerts in Vienna's Musikverein to great European acclaim. In addition, the orchestra is frequently invited to perform for major activities at home and abroad, such as the 2006 Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit, the ASEAN Summit, the 2007 Special Olympic Games, the 2008 and 2010 Shanghai National Day Concert, and the 2010 Shanghai EXPO Week.

Wang Fujian, Artistic Director and Conductor:

In Addition to being the artistic director of the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra, Professor Wang Fujian is the Voice Chairman of the Conducting Department of Central Conservatory of Music and the Resident Conductor and Artistic Director of the China Youth Chinese Music Orchestra. He has also conducted the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, Singapore Chinese Orchestra and Taipei Municipal Chinese Orchestra in many successful performances.

As the director of SHCO, Wang has led the orchestra to a new era. Under his baton, the Orchestra had its first concert season in 2006, in which new Chinese pieces such as *The Echoes of Shanghai*, *Earth, Human and Life*, and *Fire Ritual* were premiered to tremendous applause.

Wang has led the Youth Orchestra to attend many international music festivals and academic exchanges in both Asia and Europe. He has also a composer and arranger, orchestrating many folk songs for the orchestra's use.

About China



GEOGRAPHY AND POPULATION

Official Name: People's Republic of China

Capital: Beijing

Population: 1.33 Billion

Land Mass: 3,696,100 square miles

Borders: Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, India, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russia, North Korea

China is famous for its beautiful and diverse geography. The Kunlun and Himalayan mountain ranges are landmarks in Eastern China. The Gobi Desert defines the northern border with Mongolia, while central China- known as China Proper- boasts three large rivers, the Huang, the Yanze and the Xan.



CULTURAL OVERVIEW

Rapid industrialization has caused the population of Chinese cities to grow rapidly, as many people have left small rural villages to find higher paying, more reliable work in the cities. Despite this, villages still remain a significant part of the Chinese population and agriculture remains a vital sector of their economy. As in many countries, the densest portions of the population are centered around the river valleys, where both industrial and agricultural growth and rampant.

Traditional Chinese Instruments

Pipa

A four-stringed lute with 30 frets and a pear-shaped body. The instrumentalist holds the pipa upright and play with picks attached to each finger of the right hand. The history of the pipa can be dated back at least 2000 years . This instrument has extremely wide dynamic range and remarkable expressive power.



Ruan

The ruan is commonly referred to as "Chinese guitar". It is an ancient four-stringed moon-shaped lute that dates back at least to Qin Dynasty (around 200 BC). The Ruan is mostly used for Peking opera, and now also in modern Chinese orchestra. There are various sizes of instrument in the ruan family. "Zhong Ruan" (middle ruan) and "Da Ruan" (large ruan) are used in the same sense as viola and cello in western orchestra.

Erhu

A two-stringed fiddle, is one of the most popular Chinese instruments in the Hu-qin family, where Hu stands for "foreign" or "the northern folk" in Chinese, and "qin" is a general name for all kinds of string instruments.





Yangqin

Yangqin is a Chinese hammered dulcimer with a near-squared soundboard. The instrument is played with two bamboo sticks.

Liuqin

A smaller version of pipa with four strings, which sound similar to mandolin. Liuqin is played with a piece of spectrum, and is used to be accompany instrument for folk songs and local opera. However, in recent decades, Composer Wang Huiran has written many pieces for solo Liuqin.



Dizi

Dizi is the traditional Chinese flute. It is believed to have been brought in from Tibet during the Han Dynasty and since then it has been used over the past 2,000 years in China. The player plays the Dizi by blowing across the mouthpiece and produces different notes by stopping the six holes found in the rod.

Bangu

It is also commonly called Jing Bangu (bangu for Peking opera) and Danpi (single drumhead). The drum's frame is constructed of thick wedges of hard wood glued together in a circle, wrapped with a metal band. Its body is bell mouthed in shape and open at the bottom. Its top surface is covered with a piece of pig or cow-hide and has a small convex central circular opening, which is called the Guxin (drum heart), the actual sounding position. The player strikes on this central area with a pair of bamboo sticks.



Dagu

The dagu has a body made of wood and has cow hide surfaces on its top and bottom. The Chinese bass drum has a strong character and is highly expressive, often taking the lead in orchestral pieces and wind and percussion ensembles.



Zheng

Zheng is an ancient Chinese instrument. It has been developed from a small instrument made from bamboo, originally used by herdsman. The Zheng has an arched surface with 13 to 21 strings stretched over individual bridges. Although metal strings are common today, the strings were made of silk in ancient times. The zheng rests on two pedestals and is played using 3 to 4 imitation fingernails. On the right side of the bridges, both hands pluck the strings and on the left side, the left fingers bend the strings to change pitch or to provide embellishment.



Traditional Chinese Classical Music

Generally speaking, there are two kinds of music traditions – classical and folk. Music from the “classical tradition” refers to art music or “sophisticated” music composed by scholars in China’s historical past. Chinese classical music often has thematic, poetic or philosophical associations and is typically played solo, on instruments such as the qin, 7-string zither, or the pipa. Traditional music in the classical sense is intimately linked to poetry and to various forms of lyric drama, and is more or less poetry without words. In the same manner as poetry, music sets out to express human feelings, soothe suffering and bring spiritual elevation. The instruments demand not only a mastery of technique but a high degree of sensitivity (and inner power) to evoke the subtle sonorities and deep emotional expression that rely very much on the left hand techniques (such as sliding, bending, pushing or crossing of the strings to produce typical singing effects and extreme dynamic ranges), where synchronized ensemble playing is virtually impossible without losing certain subtlety. This type of music has come down to us as an oral tradition from masters to students, although written scores that combine numbers and symbols representing pitch and finger techniques respectively have been in use for nearly two thousand years. For instance, the earliest scores for qin we still have today were from the third century. However it is almost impossible to play directly from the score without first having learnt from a master.



"Listen to the Qin" by Emperor Huizong (1083-1135) of the Song Dynasty.

In traditional China, most well-educated people and monks could play classical music as a means of self-cultivation, meditation, soul purification and spiritual elevation, union with nature, identification with the values of past sages, and communication with divine beings or with friends and lovers. They would never perform in public, or for commercial purposes, as they would never allow themselves to be called “professional musicians”. This was in part to keep a distance from the entertainment industry where performing artists used to be among the lowest in social status. In fact, masters of classical music had their own profession as scholars and officers, and would consider it shameful if they had to make a living from music. They played music for themselves, or for their friends and students, and they discovered friends or even lovers through music appreciation (there are plenty of romantic stories about music in Chinese literature). Up to the beginning of the twentieth century, classical music had always belonged to elite society and it was not popular among ordinary people. Today it is really for everybody who enjoys it, and professional musicians playing Chinese classical music are as common as elsewhere in the world. However, it is still rare to hear classical music in concert halls due to the influence of the so-called “Cultural Revolution” (1966-1976), when all classical music was deemed to be “bourgeois” and outlawed, and the spiritual side of traditional arts was “washed out” through the “revolutionary” ideology. As well, the influence of modern pop culture since the 1980s has had a negative impact on the popularity of classical music performances.



"Five Dynasty" (907-960 AD) Depicting pipa playing

While the classical tradition was more associated with elite society throughout Chinese history, the resources for folk traditions are many and varied. Apart from the Han Chinese, there are many ethnic minorities living in every corner of China, each with their own traditional folk music. Unlike classical music, folk traditions are often vocal (such as love songs and story telling), or for instrumental ensembles (such as the “silk and bamboo” ensembles, and music for folk dances, and regional operas). The various folk melodies have become a major source of inspiration for the growing repertoire of contemporary music. In fact, in many contemporary compositions, existing folk melodies were simply modified, enriched (creatively through advanced playing techniques and the use of harmonies), and extended. Some were transcribed so successfully that they may be regarded as an important part of the growing classical repertoire; for instance the famous "Dance of Yi People" composed by Wang Hui-Ran for solo pipa. The repertoire is further extended by pieces composed or arranged for multi-instrument ensembles. Needless to say, most contemporary works are quite Westernized, particularly those for ensembles and orchestras (modeled on orchestras in the West), which are easily accessible to the general public, yet veer further away from the classical traditions. Quite often some of the traditional classical masterpieces are presented in commercially-packaged shows to look and sound “modern”, which often gives a wrong impression to listeners who never really knew the original flavor of the music, particularly the spiritual side of the classical tradition.

With all that said, there are still a growing number of performers and listeners who have begun to seriously rethink the spiritual side of the classical tradition, such that there seems to be a revival of traditional culture as part of a growing interest in Chinese classical philosophy, literature, traditional medicine, calligraphy, painting, Taiji and Qigong.



Curriculum Connections

Geography: China

Put up a map of the world. Ask students to locate China. Ask them what they notice about it just by looking at the map. List all the facts they can come up with, such as which countries it borders, how its size compares with that of other countries, if there are any bodies of water nearby. Ask students what route they would need to take to get to China from Kansas. Which countries would they fly over? Which bodies of water would they cross?

Tell students to look up the population of China. Do some population comparisons. Have each student pick a country and look up the population. Make a graph showing the populations of these countries, China and The United States. Ask students which countries have the largest populations. Either as a class or in small groups have students brainstorm some problems that might occur if a country has a very large population. What kinds of things does a large population require to survive?

The performing group your students will see is part of the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra. Locate Shanghai on a map. Google some pictures of Shanghai. As your class looks at the pictures have them describe the city they see.

Kansas Standards:

The student uses a working knowledge and understanding of the spatial organization of Earth's surface and relationships between peoples and places and physical and human environments in order to explain the interactions that occur in Kansas, the United States, and in our world.

- *B1: Geographic Tools and Location: The student uses maps, graphic representations, tools, and technologies to locate, use, and present information about people, places, and environments.*
- *B2: Places and Regions: The student analyzes the human and physical features that give places and regions their distinctive character.*

History and Economics: China

Shanghai is located at the mouth of the Yangtze River. Ask student how this location might help the city prosper. Shanghai is the commercial and financial center of mainland China and one of the most prosperous cities in the world. A discussion of Shanghai and its importance as a port city can easily lead into a discussion of trade in general. Go back in history and talk about the Silk Road, the network of routes connecting parts of Asia, the Mediterranean and European countries and parts of Africa. Explain that not only goods and people traveled these routes, but ideas, culture, religion and philosophies were spread from region to region by the Silk Road travelers.

Have students explain the advantages of international trade. Bring things up to date by talking about trade today. Define import, export and tariff. Who does China trade with now? What does it export? What does it import? Who do we trade with? What are some of our exports? Imports? Does China have more exports than imports? Do we? Why would that be important? Is there any

country with whom we don't trade? Why?

What do geography and natural resources have to do with trade? Countries are sometimes divided into "The Haves," and "The Have Not's." What do they have and what don't they have? Why is that important? Older students might discuss how natural resources or the lack of natural resources, has led to wars.

Kansas Standards:

Economics

The student uses a working knowledge and understanding of major economic concepts, issues, and systems applying decision-making skills as a consumer, producer, saver, investor, and citizen of Kansas and the United States living in an interdependent world.

- *B1: The student understands how limited resources require choices*
- *B2: The student understands how the market economy works in the United States*
- *B3: The student analyzes how different incentives, economic systems and their institutions, and local, national, and international interdependence affect people.*

Language Arts, Science: Chinese Mythology

Ancient Chinese mythology suggests that Pan Ku, or Pangu, a primeval man, was the basis of the universe. He split into many pieces, each of which formed parts of the universe. To listen to this story and see a short video narrated by a child, go to www.thejaderoad.com/creationlegend.html

Read some creation stories to your class or have different students find, read and retell creation myths from different countries and peoples. An example is "Sun Mother Wakes the World: An Australian Creation Story" which explains the Aboriginal view of the beginning of the world. What do these creation myths have in common? Why did people have creation myths? What were they trying to explain?

A long time ago, people looked for ways to explain their world and the universe. They wanted to know how it came into being and how it worked. Discuss the various ways people used to explain the natural phenomenon around them. Ask students how we find explanations for things today. Combine this with a unit on the scientific method.

Kansas Standards:

Science:

- **Science as Inquiry:** *The student will develop the abilities to do scientific inquiry, be able to demonstrate how scientific inquiry is applied, and develop understandings about scientific inquiry*
- **Life Science:** *The student will apply process skills to explore and understand structure and function in living systems, reproduction and heredity, regulation and behavior, populations and ecosystems, and diversity and adaptations of organisms.*
- **Science in Personal and Environmental Perspectives:** *The student will apply process skills to explore and develop an understanding of issues of personal health, population, resources and environment, and natural hazards.*

Language Arts:

- **Key Ideas and Details**
 - *Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.*
 - *Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).*
- **Craft and Structure**
 - *Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.*
 - *Analyze how a drama's or poem's form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning.*
 - *Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.*
- **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**
 - *Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.*

Music, Language Arts: Imagery in the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra

The Shanghai Chinese Orchestra is known for creating music that instills vivid imagery. Ask students what that means. Define, or have students define imagery.

Play some music that will easily create images in the minds of your students. "The Grand Canyon Suite" is good for this. Play a section of the music and ask students what pictures come to mind and what the music makes them think about. This can be done verbally or by having students write their thoughts down while they are listening to the music and then asking the class to share. Explain the story behind the music. Ask students if they think it matters if they picture something different than what the composer intended.

Music is one way to create pictures in a person's mind. Another way is to describe something in writing. Talk about the use of similes, metaphors, adjectives, verbs and their use in descriptive writing.

Use the computer to create an image and then describe it in writing. Use the computer to write a description of something and then create an image that illuminates that description.

Kansas Standards:

Music

- Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
 - B2: The student demonstrates perceptual skills by moving, answering questions about, and describing aural examples of music of various styles representing diverse cultures
 - B3: The student uses appropriate terminology in explaining music, music notation, music instruments, voices, and music performances.
 - B4: The student identifies the sounds of a variety of instruments, including many orchestra and band instruments from various cultures, as well as children's voices and male and female adult voices.

Resources

Seaside Serenade, Shanghai Traditional Chinese Music Orchestra

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3PLogV4WMA>

A documentary produced by AZ Cultural Enterprise in August 2009

Kansas City Chinese Music Ensemble

<http://www.chinesemusickc.com/>

The ensembles website

The Musical Instruments E-Book

<http://resources.edb.gov.hk/musiceb/english/Instrument/chinese/index.htm>

Listing of Chinese Instruments by category. Includes pictures, labels, and description

The Kennedy Center Arts Edge

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/themes/china.aspx>

Teacher resource with detailed videos, lesson plans, and audio

Asian Art Appreciation

<http://asia-art.net/>

Online Chinese Art galleries

China Institute: China 360

<http://www.china360online.org/>

New York China Institutes Website

Columbia University: Asia for Educators

<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/>

Useful for educators and students. Online modules about culture and history, lesson plans, and much more

Make Your Own Erhu (Worksheet Attached)

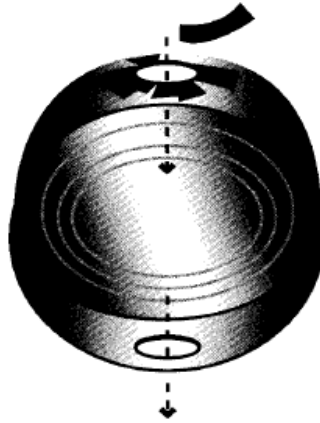




Making an Erhu

Music Educators National Conference

1 Open one end of can. Make two holes with the nail or awl on opposite sides near closed end of can.



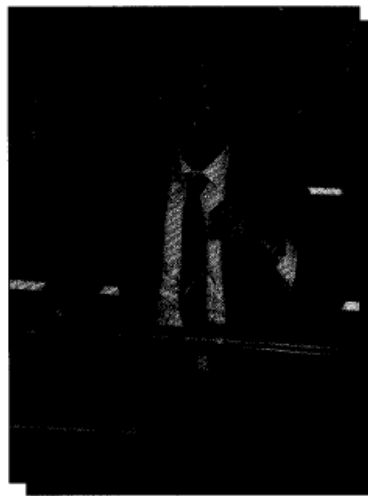
2 Widen each hole with metal shears to 1" diameter.

Tape around jagged edges of holes.

5

Run the guitar string through the 1/8" hole in the big dowel, over closed of the tube, and through the 1/8" hole in the little dowel.

Twist the little dowel to tune.



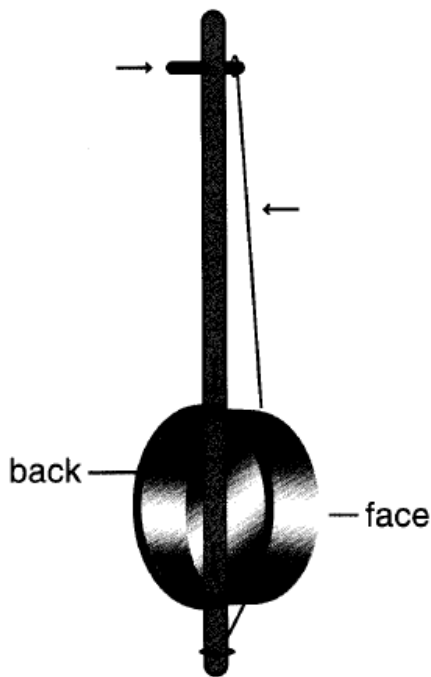
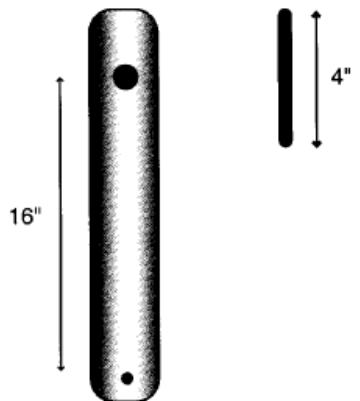
On the 1" dowel, drill a 3/8" hole 2" from one end, and an 1/8" hole at other end.

On the 3/8" dowel, drill an 1/8" hole near one end.

3

1" dowel

3/8" dowel



4

Stick the 1" dowel through the tube; stick the 3/8" dowel through the 1" dowel.

materials

- can (large, such as 28 oz tomato sauce)
- 1" wooden dowel, about 20" long
- 3/8" wooden dowel, about 4" long
- piece of wood, about 3" x 1/2" x 1/4"
- metal guitar string (about .010 gauge)
- electrician's or duct tape

Tools

- 1" drill
- 3/8" drill
- 1/8" drill
- metal shears (tin snips)
- nail or awl

Playing the Erhu

Hold the upright spike of the instrument between the thumb and palm of the left hand. Place the lower spike against the right thigh, and hold a bow in the right hand. While drawing the bow across the strings, you can *lightly* touch the strings with the fingers of the left hand to get new pitches. Don't try to push the strings all the way down to the spike.



The Erhu in Science and Culture

The name "erhu" means two-stringed barbarian [fiddle]—it was introduced into China in a period of expanding foreign influence. The real erhu has two strings, with the bow passed between them. The erhu fits into the general classification of "spike fiddle" or string instrument in which a single spike, which holds the string or strings, is driven through a resonator.

Instruments of this type show up in many cultures and are possibly at the basis of modern Western bowed string instruments.

This guide was created for teachers taking part in the yearlong Teacher's China Workshop. The workshop is a yearlong exploration for teachers in our area to learn more about the Chinese culture, history and art. The workshop was organized by the Lied Center of Kansas and KU's Center for East Asian Studies. There will be additional guides as we journey through the various Chinese focused events and performances here at KU.

We hope the general public finds these guides useful as well.

