

# Traditional Musical Instruments

Dumplings: October 7, 2006

## Schedule

10:30-10:40  
10:40-10:50  
10:50-11:05  
11:05-11:50  
11:50-12:00

Welcome: Arrival, Nametags  
The Handkerchief Game!  
Memory! And Musical Instruments  
Make your own instrument!  
Snack Time



## Zhenqin (古筝)

The Gu Zhenqin is an ancient Chinese instrument that is played by plucking the strings on the right side and pressing the strings on the left. It was originally used by herdsmen in ancient times. The Zhenqin is made of bamboo and was most popular during the Qin Dynasty.



## Pipa (琵琶)

The pipa is a plucked Chinese strings instrument made from a pear-shaped wooden body. It is a very old instrument, having been played by the Chinese for over 2000 years. There are 4-5 strings on a pipa. The loquat tree and fruit is known as the pipa in Mandarin Chinese because the tree is named after this pear-shaped instrument.

## Erhu (二胡)

The erhu sounds similar to human voice, and can imitate many natural sounds such as birds and horse. The horsehair of the bow runs between the two strings. One cannot take off the bow from the instrument unless one of the two strings is taken off or broken. The player of an erhu usually sits, and the erhu is placed on his left upper thigh in front of his left hip.



## Ruan (阮)

The Ruan is also known as the moon guitar. It comes in a variety of sizes and has four strings attached to it. The Ruan was initially called the Qin Pipa but later the name changed to honor a master player of the instrument whose name was Ruan Xian. Nowadays, the Ruan accompanies Beijing opera and is a vital part of modern Chinese orchestras.

## Dizi (笛子)

The dizi, or the Chinese flute, is a major Chinese musical instrument, popular not only in Chinese folk music, Chinese operas, and Chinese orchestras, but also used in music exported to the west. The dizi has a deep, rich history, and a lasting appeal. Traditionally, the dizi has also been popular among the Chinese common people, since it is simple to make, easy to carry, and beautiful when played. Most professional players have a set of seven dizi, each in a different key (and size).



## Sheng (笙)

Sheng is an ancient instrument that dates back about 3400 years old and used to be played in grand palaces. It consists of various numbers of flutes tied together, having 21, 24, or even 36 pipes. It is a good companion instrument to Dizi, and they are played together often.

## Cymbals (铙钹)

Even though there are many different types of cymbals in the world now, cymbal making first began in China. Chinese Cymbals come in all sizes and shapes! The smallest Chinese cymbals are called "splash cymbals" because when used with other cymbals and drums, it adds a unique tone and sound! Today, Chinese cymbals can be seen at all types of celebrations and festivals. It has even been incorporated in various Chinese dances!



## Xun (埙)

The Xun is one of the oldest instruments of China with approximately seven thousand years of history. It is said that the xun originated from a hunting tool. During ancient times, people often tied a stone or mud ball to the rope that was used for hunting wild animals. Some of the balls were hollow, which allowed them to make many sounds when thrown. Since many people enjoyed the sounds, they learned how to blow into the balls, and gradually the tool became the musical instrument we know as xun.

## Bo Lang Drum (拨浪鼓)

The bo lang drum is one of the most traditional drums in China. Although today it has become a popular toy for small children, it has an almost 2000-year history, and played roles in areas of society ranging from everyday life to military camps. The decoration of the drum is often a crucial feature of the instrument, and lends it particular character.

