

**tǔ**  
for String Quartet

**Luyun Ming (Yue Ming)**

Duration c. 11 minutes

November - December 2021

## Composer's notes

The Chinese word - 土 'tǔ' is often understood as soil, land, hometown, folk customs, and rustic.

In this work, the term 'tǔ' is borrowed to metaphorically reflect the 'Emptiness philosophy' in Buddhist study, representing our creative 'dependent origination.' This set of work consists of four distinctive sections. I attempted to use the rustic folk customs from my hometown - crosstalk, gong and cymbal performance, folk tunes, etc. as inspirations, combined with my sympathies on these experiences and interlocked with the sonic characteristics of String Quartet. I hope to break our stereotypical reflections of a particular culture, ideology, and creative imagery to explore multifaceted expressions of music.

## Introduction of each section

### I. Gong Passion

(Duration c. 1' 30")

It is known as “汉沽飞镢” in Chinese - a comprehensive folk activity in Tianjin China, integrating folk music, dance, and martial arts.

In this section, I attempted to use fierce bowing, Bartok pizzicato, frequent sliding combined with the occasional body language of the performers, in order to express the exuberant, witty sound of gongs and drums in the “汉沽飞镢” activity.

### II. A Tune that Does Not Exist

(Duration c. 3' 30")

The inspiration comes from my experience on an autumn morning. I felt a faint tune from afar while wandering around my schoolyard. The question that hanging in the air whether it exists and the emptiness nature it conveys offered me unlimited space of creativity.

Instead of depicting the 'emptiness' through dissolving melody and dynamics for a chaotic 'imagery,' I chose a traditional, more concrete way to fill my understandings in the 'imaginary space.' I attempted to use faint, nuanced timbre while retaining the typical Chinese melodic thinking, flowing a clear tune though the entire section and assisted with dynamic changes - a commonly used music developing technique in Chinese operas that adds tension to the music so as to recall and recreate my shadowy experiences through music.

### III. Stormy River

Duration c. 2'

tbc

### IV. Cross Talk

Duration c. 4'

tbc

# Performance notes

The staff attached above each part is the actual pitch of the overtones in order to facilitate the performers in reading the score.

## I. Gong Passion

bow taps

slide up (or down) to a certain pitch through the aftertone, creating a Guqin like sonic effect

intuitive up or downward glissando (wider pitch range)

intuitive up or downward glissando (small pitch range: minor & major second)

percussive sound (Chop/Guiro)

hit the body of the instrument by the bottom of your bow to create a percussive sound

The image shows several musical staves illustrating performance techniques. The top staff is labeled 'pizz.' and shows a series of notes with stems pointing downwards. Below it, a staff shows a glissando with a curved arrow indicating a slide up or down. Further down, two staves are labeled 'Chop' and 'Guiro', each with a specific rhythmic notation. At the bottom, another staff shows a percussive sound with a downward-pointing stem.

## II. A Tune that Does Not Exist

tremolos gradually vary from sparsity to density, then slowly return to sparsity



moderate vibrato, in order to create a wavy sound



viberato accelerando



slow viberato



over press the bow for a nasty, sharp sonic effect



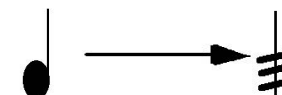
half press on the string for an illusory sonic effect between ordinary sound and harmonic



gradually vary from ordinary, half harmonic, and harmonic



gradually vary between non tremolo and tremolo



variations form ordinary sound, white noise, and half white noise



tap the board of the instrument with your fingertips



trills, vary from sparsity to density, finally return to sparsity



### III. Stormy River

tbc

### IV. Cross Talk

tbc

# [I] Gong Passion (circa. 1' 30" )

♩=80-86 exuberant, and witty

Violin I *fff* Chop Guiro *mp < mf* *mp* *mf < f* *ff* arco *pizz.* arco *p* *mp* *p* *mf* Batok *pizz.* *8va*

Violin II *fff* Chop Guiro *p* *mf* *p* *mp < mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

Viola *fff* Chop Guiro *pizz.* *p* *mp* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mf*

Violoncello *fff* Chop Guiro *pizz.* *mp < mf* *mp < mf* *f* *mf < f* *pp < p* *p* *mp* *mf*

8 arco Chop Staccto Martele *fff* Chop Guiro Col Legno *mf* Chop Guiro *fff* Chop Guiro *mp*

arco Chop Staccto Martele *fff* Chop Guiro Col Legno *mf* Chop Guiro *fff* Chop Guiro *pp*

arco Chop Staccto Martele Hit the Viola body by your bow Chop Guiro Col Legno Chop Martele *mf* Chop *fff* Chop *mp*

arco Chop Staccto Martele Hit the Cello body by your bow Chop Guiro Col Legno Chop Martele *mf* Chop *fff* Chop *pp*

14

Musical score for measures 14-17, featuring four staves. The top staff has dynamics *pp* and *f*. The second staff has *mf*, *f*, *pp*, and *f mp*. The third staff has *f*, *p*, *mf*, and *f*. The bottom staff has *mp*, *mp*, *mf*, and *f*. Performance instructions include *pizz.*, *arco*, and *Chop*.

18

Musical score for measures 18-21, featuring four staves. The top two staves have dynamics *ff* and *fff*. The third staff has *p* and *ff*. The bottom staff has *ff* and *ff*. Performance instructions include *arco Chop*, *Batok pizz.*, and *Guiro (pizz.)*.

24

pp *fff* *p*

pp *fff* *p*

pp *fff* *p*

arco Chop *pp* over press *f* *fff* N. pizz. *p* arco Chop *p*

28

*f* *fff* *mf* *fff* *mp*

Sul D Sul G *f* Sul A Sul D *fff* *mf* Sul E Sul A *fff* as high as possible *mp*

arco *f* *fff* *mf* *fff* gradually raise the pitch *mp*

arco Guiro *f* *fff* *mf* *fff* *mp*





[II]  
*A Tune that Does Not Exist*  
(circa. 3' 30")

A ♩=52-56 Melodious, like someone singing from afar...

*Rubato* *A tempo*

Violin I

Sul E  
pppp  
ppp  
p  
mp  
vib.  
f  
p  
mf  
f  
mf

Violin II

Sul E  
Sul A  
pppp  
pp  
ppp  
pp  
jete, ricochet *ad lib.*

Viola

ppp

Violoncello

*Rubato* *A tempo*

pizz.  
arco  
Sul D  
Sul A  
sul pont.  
ppp  
p  
ppp  
Ord.  
sul tasto  
sul pont.  
pp

7

Sul A

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

vib. accel.

vib. accel.

pizz.

3

8

vib.

vib. accel. .... calm down.... ..lingering....

Sul E  
Sul A

sul pont.

Ord.

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

9

pizz.

Sul D  
arco

sul tasto

sul pont.

Ord.

*p* *ppp* *mp*

10

Sul A  
Sul D

sul tasto

Ord.

sul pont.

over press

*ppp* *mp* *pp*

II

arco (non vib.)

gradually increase the speed....

pizz.

Sul A arco

mf — f — mf — mp — mf — mp — p — f — pp

Intuitively adjust the notes

Sul D arco

sul pont. — Ord.

pp — p — mf — p — mp — pp — p

jete, ricochet *ad lib.* Sul A Sul D

ppp — ppp — ppp — p — f — p

Sul D

pizz. (free plucking, like Pipa)

arco

Sul A Sul D

pizz. (free plucking)

Sul D arco

p — ppp — pp — p

14 (9) rit. **B**

Sul A  
Sul D

jete, ricochet *ad lib.*

pizz.  
(free plucking)

Sul D  
Sul G  
arco

sul pont.

Ord.

*ppp* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *ppp* *pp* *ppp*

jete, ricochet *ad lib.*

pizz.  
(free plucking)

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

arco (vib.)

arco (vib.)

arco (vib.)

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

Sul A

Sul D

*mp* *mf* *pp* *p* *ppp*

Sul A  
Sul D

pizz.  
under the bridge

plucking, like Guzheng.  
*improvise the rhythm*

*pp* *mp* *p* *mp* *pp*

C ♩=20 accel.

♩=56 accel.

20

sul pont. over press

pizz. free pluckings

Sul E Sul A arco

*pp* *ff* *mf* *f*

arco (vib.)

sul pont. over press

Sul D Sul G

pizz. free pluckings

Sul D Sul G arco Ord.

*ff* *mf* *f*

Sul G Sul C

a very dry sound

sul pont. over press

pizz. free pluckings (over the bridge)

free pluckings (over the bridge)

*pp* *ff* *f* *f*

slow but firmly!!!

very sharp 8va

Martele arco

*mp* *ff* *fff* *mf*





32

**Violin I:** *sul pont.* Sul D, Sul G. *ppp* → *pp*. *gradually from sparsity to density*. *ppp* → *pp*. *gradually from density to sparsity*.

**Violin II:** *sul pont.* Sul A, Sul D. *ppp* → *pp*. *Col legno* *ppp*.

**Viola:** Sul D. *pp* → *p* → *pp* → *mp* → *ppp* → *pppp*. *S.P.* → *on the bridge*. *Sul A*.

**Cello 1:** (Sul G) *pp*. Sul A *p* → *mp* → *pp*. Sul C *arco* *pp* → *p*. *gradually fill in white noise effect* (black square → white square).

**Cello 2:** *pp* → *p* → *mp* → *pp*. *ppp* → *pp*.



35

*intuitively adjust the pitches and rhythm*

*gradually fade away...*

**ppp**

*gradually unheard...*

*jete, ricochet ad lib.*  
*(gradually vary from sparsity to density, then back to sparsity) Sul A*

**pp**

**ppp**

*pizz.*  
*intuitively pluck behind the bridge*

*gradually unheard...*

Sul C  
*combine the pitch with white noise (50%)*

(70%)

**pp**

**ppp**

**ppp**

*white noise, gradually dissolving...*