MYTHIC FOX: A COMPOSITION FOR MIXED ENSEMBLE OF EAST ASIAN AND WESTERN INSTRUMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

*Mythic Fox* is a composition for large mixed ensemble of 15 players, consisting of traditional instruments from Korea, Japan, China, and Western instruments. The purpose of this paper is to offer a more in-depth view of the musical work. The paper is comprised of two parts. The first part deals with reasons for the choice of instrumentation, compositional techniques, precedents for the ensemble, the purpose of the piece, what challenges were encountered during the compositional process, the anticipated challenges during the performance, and the extra-musical idea (the fox folklore). The second part focuses on the analysis of the composition: form, timbre, texture, pitch and rhythm, performance techniques, and the cultural aesthetics involved.

The ultimate reason for composing a piece of music is to create music that is accessible to the audience, providing a sonic world that draws in the listener with a balance of the new and the familiar. The piece is designed to be as exciting for the performers as it is for their audience. For performers, the piece provides an unusual opportunity to play alongside instruments they may have yet to encounter in a performance setting, and be part of creating a unique combination of cultures; not just the familiar and overused “East meets West”, but “East meets East meets West.” Japanese, Korean and Chinese instruments would not normally be found within the same ensemble. Though their origins are intertwined, each culture’s traditions developed the instruments, sonorities, techniques, and styles with distinct differences.
INSTRUMENTATION

Shinobue
Flute
Dizi
Oboe
Hichiriki

Piano 4 hands

Sanjo Gayageum in F

Violin
Erhu
Sanjo Ajaeng
Violoncello

Percussion 1
  Muyu (Temple Blocks)
  Jing
  Xylophone
  Vibraphone

Percussion 2
  Uchiwa-daiko
  Large Tam-tam
  Medium Chinese Gong
  Large Chinese Gong
  Large Suspended Cymbal

Percussion 3
  Janggu
  Buk
MOTIVATION BEHIND THE INSTRUMENTATION

There are three reasons for choosing such an unusual instrumentation. The first motivation is a desire to explore the uniqueness of the timbres involved, especially the timbres that lie outside of the standard Western orchestra. The sonorities of traditional instruments from East Asia in particular have long captured my interest. Living in Hawai‘i and studying at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa has exposed me to the music of many cultures, and provided an extraordinary opportunity of hands-on learning with ensembles, as well as guidance from professors and guest performers. My studies lead to the second and most profound reason for the selection.

The instrumentation is largely based on having studied the fundamentals of how to play, and ultimately compose for, a number of specific Asian instruments included in the piece. Being part of a Gagaku ensemble (Japanese court music) I have played hichiriki, the double reed instrument of the ensemble, on traditional pieces such as Etenraku and Hyojo-choshi. In connection with Gagaku, another traditional Japanese instrument I studied is shinobue (a transverse bamboo flute). Another ensemble I participate in is the Samulnori ensemble (Korean folk percussion ensemble). The janggu (hourglass-shaped drum), buk (bass drum) and jing (large gong) are three of the four instruments that make up Samulnori. Most of my study and practice was focused on janggu, an instrument that is seemingly ubiquitous in Korean folk and instrumental music in general. By playing in these ensembles I learned to execute basic techniques as well as gaining insight from more advanced performers in the group, knowledge invaluable for composing idiomatically for the instruments.
My learning how to compose for other Asian instruments included in this piece (dízi, erhu, ajaeng, gayageum, etc.) took a slightly less direct route. Though I do not play the instruments, I was able to study with performers specializing in these instruments via workshops and rehearsal sessions, similar to how I gained my understanding of most Western instruments.

Score order was devised as I composed the piece. The initial thought of placing the instruments in an order similar to the Western orchestra (instruments of the same family will be ordered based on the lowest pitch playable) worked well and ultimately complied with logical order according to their predominant function (harmonic, melodic, etc.) in the piece. For example, the hichiriki comes below the oboe in the order simply because more often than not, the hichiriki part plays lower notes than the oboe part. The principle is the same for the erhu and violin; ajaeng and cello; and the flutes. I decided to place the gayageum just below where the piano falls in the standard Western score order because of the gayageum's relation to and interaction with the piano string plucking and strumming throughout the piece. The third reason for choosing this sinfonietta of sorts is the extra musical idea of the fox, another common thread tying together all of the instruments (and their respective cultures) of the ensemble.
PRECEDENTS

Part of the objective for the mixed ensemble of *Mythic Fox* is to blend instruments and aesthetics of different cultures. Though the specific instrumentation is unique to this piece of music, there are numerous musical works integrating Asian and Western instruments. Composers such as Minoru Miki, Lou Harrison, Toru Takemitsu and many others have conceived ensembles considered as precedents for the instrumentation of this piece.

The cross-cultural ensemble for Minoru Miki’s *Symphony of the Earth*, for example, combines instruments from Japan, China and Indonesia with Western orchestra. Miki’s instrumentation includes soloists performing on shakuhachi and 21-string koto from Japan, pipa from China, and Balinese gamelan percussion.

In Lou Harrison’s *Double Concerto for Violin and Cello with Javanese Gamelan*, the strings and the gamelan amalgamate. One approach Harrison uses to successfully unite the diverse instruments is instructing the strings to match the microtonal tuning system of the gamelan, specifically, just intonation over equal temperment. All of the instruments chosen for my own ensemble are tuned according to equal temperment. Another approach is weaving pentatonic melodies in the strings throughout the traditional formal structures of gamelan music. Though I do not use any formal structures found in the traditional music of the cultures involved in my piece, the melodic material is often derived from pentatonic scales common to those cultures.

Toru Takemitsu’s *November Steps*, features shakuhachi, biwa, and Western orchestra. Throughout the piece, Takemitsu divides the ensemble into Western instruments and Japanese instruments, never fully blending the two.
By placing Eastern and Western sound worlds in juxtaposition, he emphasizes the differences between the two traditions. Takemitsu’s approach to using the sound worlds and traditions from different cultures in the same musical work differs from my own. The crucial idea in *Mythic Fox* is to obscure the barriers between the cultures and traditions involved, and present them as one cohesive entity.

The most extreme examples of atypical ensembles are perhaps those produced by Harry Partch, who created instruments used exclusively in his own music. *The Delusion of the Fury* is a stage play that features instruments built by Partch that are tuned according to the overtone series (just intonation). Some of the instruments include a diamond shaped marimba (diamond marimba), a reed organ with a forty-three-tone octave (chromelodeon), and a rack of suspended glass carboys played with soft mallets (cloud chamber bowls). The other commonality between Partch’s work and my own is the combination of mythologies from different cultures. *The Delusion of the Fury* is based on a Japanese Noh drama and an Ethiopian folktale that share common themes. The extramusical idea in *Mythic Fox* is based on fox myths from Japan, China, Korea and the West.

Another piece that uses a one-of-a-kind ensemble is Stephen Scott’s *Vikings of the Sunrise*. The ensemble devised by Scott consists of ten performers all playing the same piano, but in an extremely rare manner. The ensemble uses rosined fishing line to bow the strings of the piano, and in addition to bowing the strings, the performers are asked to pluck the strings with plectrum, strike the strings with piano hammers, and various other means of producing a wide variety of timbres on the piano. The piano part for four hands in *Mythic Fox* is inspired by some of the techniques used in Scott’s piece, in particular,
the plucking and strumming of strings with guitar picks and the interlocking melodies. While Scott’s piece does not involve the combination of instruments from different cultures, it does encompass an extramusical idea similar to my own. The extramusical idea behind *Vikings of the Sunrise* blends Polynesian mythologies ranging from Tahiti to Rapa Nui and even includes myths from Hawai‘i.

The ensembles, strategies, compositional and performance techniques, and extramusical ideas in the aforementioned works are an inspiration for this piece. The perseverance of these composers, their music, and the performers of their works have broadened the horizons of the musical world culturally and philosophically. Moreover, as with those works, several obstacles must be overcome during the process of the realization of *Mythic Fox*. 
CHALLENGES

Devising such an atypical ensemble presents numerous challenges. The most obvious challenge is the likelihood of such instruments being all in one place is isolated to only a handful of locations, and such a location having the all performers to play the instruments narrows possibilities down even further. Though the performers and instruments are available at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa at the time of the work’s composition, finding these conditions elsewhere in the world, and even at the University Hawai‘i at a different point in time is a major consideration for the performability of this piece.

One strategy for increasing the performability of the work would be to substitute more common instruments. However, while the function of some of the instruments can be substituted, some of the specific timbres are irreplaceable. Some cases of substitution are more detrimental to the concept of the piece than others. For example, the Western tom-toms could easily substitute for the uchiwa-daiko. Both instruments provide the same function, and their individual timbres are close enough so that it would not compromise the integrity of the piece. Though a second cello could possibly fulfill the role of the ajaeng in this piece, it would lack the volume and timbral diversity the ajaeng provides. In fact, the ajaeng’s timbre is so singular that no other instrument could effectively take its place. The same can be said for the timbral and technical uniqueness of the gayageum, hichiriki or dizi. Even if the timbre of the gayageum where sacrificed for that of the guitar or koto, neither of the instruments are capable of the techniques performed by the gayageum, specifically the microtonal progressions involving pitch bending to the interval of a major third or perfect fourth.
Though many of the traditional Asian instruments share similar origins and are found within the same instrumental family, it is often problematic to substitute an instrument from one culture for that of another. Without even considering cultural issues, practical matters sometimes preclude doing so. For example, Piri, a Korean double reed instrument, has a comparable timbre to the hichiriki, and could be a plausible stand-in, but the basic pitches of two instruments are too diverse, rendering the hichiriki part incompatible for the piri. Similarly, while the buzzing membrane that gives the dizi its characteristic color is also similar to the Korean flute, daegeum, the basic pitches and range of these instruments are not interchangeable.

Most important to the work is the concept of traditional instruments from individual cultures coalescing into an innovative sound.

The pure musical challenges encountered proved to be the most arduous to overcome. With Western instruments being the foundation of my compositional studies, the temptation to compose for instruments from other cultures in a similar manner created a new set of difficulties within my compositional decisions. For example, most traditional instruments from Asia are not designed to easily play all twelve chromatic pitches, yet their ability to perform microtonal inflections idiomatically is excellent. Tuning is a prevalent limitation for pitches available to ajaeng and gayageum, and retuning during the performance is risky. Instead of focusing on a broad chromatic pitch collection, pitches within the spectrum of the standard tuning of the gayageum were chosen (example 1).
Example 1: Standard Tuning for Sanjo Gayageum in F

As seen in example 2, only two strings were altered from the typical tuning of the ajaeng. The highest string on ajaeng is tuned a minor second lower, and the second to highest string is tuned a major second lower (also the retuning of the bottom C string up a half step in the third section of the piece).

Example 2: Altered Tuning for Sanjo Ajaeng

The ajaeng and gayageum are are designed to produce a variety of tone colors rather than large pitch collection. The dizi, shinobue and hichiriki share the limitation of a narrow register where playing is most effective. Though it is common for the performer use different lengths of shinobue and dizi (each length having its own tuning, thus increasing the effective range of the part), I chose to use the eight-length pipe, which I found to be the most compatible with the standard tuning of the sanjo instruments. The eight-length pipe is tuned to a C major scale, which includes all of the pitches of the open strings on a standard tuned ajaeng and gayageum. Initially, the 25-string gayageum was chosen for the piece, but since the instrument is typically tuned to E flat major, and since there is no shinobue in key of E flat, I used the sanjo gayageum.
The pitch collections chosen for the piece are based on pitches that are idiomatic to the Asian instruments. The pitch collections for individual sections and themes will be discussed later in the paper. Examples 3a-3e illustrate the collection of pitches for the open strings of the two zithers and the pitches of the basic fingering for the wind instruments. (Due to the instrument’s capability of easily playing any chromatic notes, the erhu is not included.)

Example 3: Pitch-class Collections for Asian Instruments

a) Gayageum (not transposed)

b) Ajaeng

c) Dizi

d) Hichiriki

e) Shinobue
D and G are the only two pitches shared by all of the instruments. As a reflection of this commonality between the instruments, I chose D and G to be the most frequent tonal centers throughout the piece.

The parts within the piece call for pitches outside of the fundamental pitch collections. The majority of these pitches are ornamental in function, like the ones in examples 4a and 4b.

Example 4: Ornamental Pitches

a) (Gayageum Transposed)

\[\text{Gayageum}\]

b)

\[\text{Shinobue}\]

Blending and balancing timbres within the ensemble may prove to be challenging as well. The piercing qualities of the hichiriki can easily overpower other instruments (and its timbre will standout even in tutti passages). Most of the hichiriki part occurs when a larger part of the ensemble is playing (e.g. mm. 103-119), however there are instances when the pungent double reed sounds in much thinner textures (e.g. mm. 347-353)
Like the hichiriki, the ajaeng has a tendency to overwhelm other instruments as well. Balancing the ajaeng’s volume becomes particularly troublesome when the cello and ajaeng are playing in the same register. One solution to the dynamic dilemma of the hichiriki and ajaeng is to mark the dynamic one level softer than the instruments in danger of being concealed. Another solution, which I am more prone to use, is instructing the performers or conductor to use relative dynamics, a level of loudness that corresponds to the rest of the ensemble rather than the actual dynamic indicated in the part.

The gayageum on the other hand has the exact opposite problem of the two previous instruments, and can only be heard when accompanied by the lightest of textures. The instrument excels at timbral shading and microtonal techniques, and in order for these subtle colors to be observed, its part usually occurs in solo-like passages. As a result, the gayageum has limited options of interaction with other instruments playing at any dynamic above *mezzo piano*. The techniques employed by the piano involving the manipulation of the strings within the piano also suffer from similar dynamic limitations.

Keeping the dynamic restrictions of the gayageum and piano (*pizzicato* and aeolian harp techniques) in mind, I composed the bulk of the second section of the piece (mm. 170-228) exploit their quiet dynamics that set the mood for the entire section. There are other situations in the piece where the gayageum or inside piano parts overlap with louder, thicker textures, rendering their parts inaudible. Mildly amplifying the gayageum and piano should resolve this issue.
EXTRAMUSICAL IDEA

Mythology and folklore, another preoccupation of mine, inspires many of my compositions. Throughout the rich folklore of Korea, Japan and China, the fox appears in numerous tales. The fox is multifaceted character. Even within the folklore of a single culture the fox serves multiple roles. The three most common roles shared by the folklore of the cultures involved are: the trickster/seducer fox who misleads, the benevolent fox who brings good fortune, and the fiendish fox who thirsts for destruction and slaughters humans.¹

Each section of the work depicts one aspect of the fox. The first section evokes the cunning and sultry nature of the fox, known as kitsune in Japan, kumiho in Korea, and hilu jing in China. In the more erotic stories this fox usually takes on the form a seductress who lures a person into a harmful or unfortunate situation. Subtly shifting rhythmic pulses, ambiguous tonal centers, and suggestive gestures portray this deceiving fox. For example, the shifting pulse created by janggu and cello throughout mm. 10-47 establishes a pattern and then breaks the pattern by adding or subtracting pieces of the motive, allowing the listener to latch on briefly before unexpectedly displacing the beat (examples 5 and 6). Though this section revolves around tonal centers of D, G or C, it is unclear at any given moment which one is predominant, due to the polytonality of the melodic lines and the ambiguous quartal harmony they create. Furthermore, the ascending glissando motive (e.g., the erhu line in mm 25-26) suggests the moaning of the temptress fox with her captured prey, (example 7).

The demeanor of the fox in the second section is in stark contrast to that of the first. A slower tempo and clearly perceived meter represents the benevolent fox from the outset of the section. Though there are subtle changes in the pitch collection, the tonal center remains on F throughout nearly the entire section. Longer sustained tones and minimal dissonance induce a more tranquil feeling. The stable pulse and diaphanous textures create a sensation of well-being and safety. Smooth swells in dynamics rather
than sudden changes heard in the first section aid in creating this peaceful scene. Only near the section's end is the sublime upset by the tremolo in the strings, the outcry of pitches foreign to the established collection by the flute, and the piano's chromatic strumming. These act as a foreshadowing of the third section, as if clouds have blotted out the purity of the sun.

The last section depicts the evil fox that seeks to destroy all that is good. Harsh dissonances among winds and strings and the stabbing sforzandi from the chords in the lower strings in a frenzied rhythmic pattern combine to conjure a destructive image. For example, piano four hands creating timpani-like rolls and blasts of clusters all in the guttural range effectively evoke calamity (example 8).

Example 8: Fiendish Fox Piano Motive
Similarly, the Heavy Metal-like sixteenth note motive in the lower strings set the mood for the fiendish fox (example 9).

Example 9: Fiendish Fox Lower Strings Motive
FORM

As mentioned earlier, the work consists of three sections played without pause, each portraying a different perspective on the piece’s subject, the fox. The total duration of the piece is approximately thirteen minutes; five minutes for the first section, four and a half minutes for the second section, and three and half minutes for the third section. Each of the themes from the sections share a similarity in the way they are presented. Each theme undergoes cumulative processes in which fragments are presented in successively expanded form until the theme is eventually stated in its entirety.

On the broadest level, the first section can heard as an ABA' form. The A and B sections are distinguished from each other primarily by timbre and motivic material. The strings play most of the material in the A section, while the winds are the predominant timbre in B section.

In the opening twenty-four measures, the motivic material in the A section is gradually introduced by the janggu, pizzicato cello, and temple blocks (example 10).

Example 10: Opening Motives
While serving as foreshadowing for melodic material to come, the shinobue in mm. 19-26 is meant to deceive the listener into anticipating that it will deliver the primary motive that will eventually result in the theme, but the true motive sounds in the erhu's ascending glissandi at mm. 25-26 (example 11).

Example 11: Erhu Motive

The A section progresses in a cumulative nature; each time a fragment of the theme is presented, a little more of the theme is added. The first fragment is heard in the erhu mm. 25-26. The second fragment in 32-39 starts with the erhu again and reveals little more of the theme through the violin, ajaeng and cello in mm. 34-39. The fragments fully unfold to form the overall theme for the A section (the piece's first peak) in mm. 47-60, where the erhu is doubled a perfect fourth higher by the violin. The gayageum accents the cello and punctuates phrases (mm. 27 and 40), but also serves as a bridge between the interrupted theme and the fully stated theme in the pickup to mm. 41-47. This connective role can be observed multiple times throughout piece. As illustrated in example 12, the piano also acts a connector and is used primarily as percussive accents on the keyboard as well as with the aeolian harp effect, which continues into the next section.
Example 12: Aeolian harp effect

The shinobue, flute and dizi begin to sound a motive from the B section before the A section has ended, aiding in the transition between the two sections. Though the first motive starts in m. 51, it is not clearly audible until mm. 55 and 56, while the strings descend from their peak. The motivic fragments are echoed back and forth among the three flutes until m. 77, overlapping the oboe's entrance in m. 72. The oboe enters with a fragment of the new theme, which is promptly interrupted, and the oboe too begins echoing the flute motives (example 13).

Example 13: Fragments of B Section Theme
Similar to the theme of section A, this new theme is presented in small fragments (mm. 75-84) that eventually accumulate into the whole theme heard in mm 85-94. Meanwhile the xylophone has taken over the temple block motive from the previous section, and occasionally mimics the flutes. The gayageum also undergoes a cumulative process that forms the countermelody in the theme. The microtonal progression by the gayageum in m. 102 signals the second peak and the first tutti section of the piece, from mm. 103-120. A permutation of the oboe motive (example 14) is now heard in the xylophone (mm. 103-105) and then answered by the flutes (mm 106-109). The hichiriki makes its first entrance at this peak, and is colored by the dizi heterophonically.
Percussive four-hand chords from the piano are accented by buk and a barrage of cymbals, tam-tam and gongs.

Example 14: Permutations of Oboe Motive

![Example 14: Permutations of Oboe Motive]
As the climax recedes, the violin and cello play fragments of the B theme mixed with fragments of the A theme from the ajaeng and erhu. This mixture of thematic material serves as a transition to the final section of the first section.

The return of the janggu motive at m. 126 prepares the listener for A' theme which begins a series of false starts and miniature climaxes at measure m. 130. The music builds tension over the next twenty-two measures until to the final climax of the section at m. 152. The expanded version of the A theme ends abruptly at m. 166. As the full sound of the ensemble dissipates, with murmurs of the erhu and dizi, the gayageum emerges with a microtonal progression reaching out to grasp the beginning of the second section.

The cumulative process is utilized to its largest extent in the second section, as it takes place over the span of mm. 170-233. This tranquil section begins quietly with gayageum and piano, and slowly adds one new instrument until the entire ensemble is playing at m. 233. Example 15 shows how each instrument enters with its own permutation of the fragmented theme (e.g. pizzicato piano, erhu mm. 233-234 and flute), or provides some sort of harmonic support (e.g. violin and cello), or both (vibraphone). In mm. 205-210 the vibraphone participates in the melodic line, while in mm. 212-227 switches to a harmony.

Example 15: Permutations of the Second Section Theme

mm. 233-234

Erhu
The climax of the second section lasts from mm 233 to 251. A sudden insertion of new pitches in the piano and flute in mm. 247-250 creates a harmonic plight, causing the mood to unexpectedly shift as the climax fades into the last statement of the theme in mm. 251-258. Though the melody of the theme is kept intact, the harmonic support of the strings and melodic dialogue of the vibraphone introduce a new pitch collection that transforms the theme from radiant to funereal. The section slips into near silence, with the only voices remaining a single bent note of the gayageum and an ethereal violin harmonic. Suddenly a timpani-like roll in the lowest register of the piano surges to meet stabbing *sforzandi* of chords in the cello, ajaeng and gayageum, along with strikes on the janggu in mm. 264-265. The final section mercilessly commences.
The cumulative process in the third section works similarly to that of the previous sections, as fragments of the theme increasing in length each time they are stated. The timpani-like piano motive, *sforzandi* and descending *glissandi* in the lower strings, strikes from the janggu, and 5/8 meter make up the smallest unit of the fragment that is expanded.

Descending glissandi in the upper stings are added at m. 270, sixteenth notes are added to the lower strings at m. 271, the 5/8 rhythm is extended in mm 274, uchiwa-daiko and thundering clusters in the piano enter the fray at mm. 279-285. The melodies in the flutes that emerge from m. 283, and in m. 286 and 293 are derived from the flute motives in the B section of the first section. The fragments are dispersed throughout, building tension and propelling forward with the pizzicato strings and rising flutes and oboe. The theme erupts into full force in mm. 306-319 (example 16).

Example 16: Third Section Theme
The sixteenth note figure heard earlier in the lower strings (example 17) is introduced to the upper strings in m. 322. Other variations of the flute motives from the B section of the first section are heard in mm. 332-334 and again in the oboe at mm. 346-352. Interplay between the strings with the sixteenth figure occurs mm 347-352. One final build up occurs from mm. 355-370. The tumultuous extended theme ensues from m. 371 to the end.

Example 17: Lower Strings Motive
Performance Techniques

There are several traditional techniques for the Asian instruments employed throughout the piece. The shinobue is instructed to perform a technique that involves bending the fundamental pitch up or down the interval of minor or major second. Notating the technique calls for a line to be placed from the fundamental pitch to the desired pitch, essentially the same as a glissando. Lowering the fundamental pitch a minor second is called *chū-meri*, while lowering it a major second is called *ō-meri*. Raising the pitch up is called *kari*, and normally the pitch can only be raised a minor second. Example 18 provides an example of *ō-meri*. Examples of *kari* can be found in mm. 55-56 and mm. 74-75. The techniques are executed by half-hole fingering or by adjusting the embouchure. In m. 115 the technique is moderately extended so that a bend of major second up is achieved. The performer starts on the fundamental pitch, uses half-hole fingering to bend to the second fundamental pitch and then a half-hole again to the notated pitch, all in one fluid motion. The same techniques are implemented on the dizi as well.²

Example 18: Phrasing Shaped Traditionally

Similar to the shinobue, the hichiriki also uses a technique that bends the fundamental pitch, called *enbai*. The passage in example 19 (mm. 111-114) primarily consists of this technique, typical to the instruments traditional use.\(^3\)

Example 19: *Enbai* for Hichiriki

Traditionally there is no tonguing for the Asian wind instruments that are used in the ensemble. Contemporary pieces include tonguing, like the tonguing that shapes the phrasing in example 20. Throughout the piece there is a balance between phrases with and without tonguing. For example, compare the slurs in mm. 19-22 to the slur in mm. 79-82.\(^4\)

Example 20: Phrasing Shaped by Tonguing

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\(^3\) Minoru Miki, *Composing for Japanese Instruments*.

\(^4\) Ibid.
There are four main techniques used for the gayageum in the piece, three of which are also used for ajaeng. The most prominent techniques are based on raising the pitch of a string by pushing it with the left hand, which is notated with the cross arrow symbol indicated in m. 83. The performer must press the adjacent lower string to get the desired pitch. To cancel the pressed note, the arrow pointing in the opposite direction is used. A note may also be pressed to from two strings below the written note, as in example 21. This technique is also used for the ajaeng.  

Example 21: Push and Vibrato

The first technique based on the push is the lingering tone, (example 22). In this technique tones are connected through the lingering sound of the initial pluck. The plucked note is notated with the "x" and is slurred to the next note(s) by pushing the string with the left hand.

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Example 22: Lingering Tone Technique

The second technique is called *jeonseong*, and is notated with the as symbol found in example 23. The performer must push the string while simultaneously plucking, and then immediately releasing the pushed string after the pluck. A weaker version of the technique is found in m. 211.⁶

Example 23: Weak and Strong *Jeonseong* for Gayageum

The third technique is vibrato, which is indicated by varied wavy lines, as seen in m. 182. The ajaeng also uses vibrato extensively, and the cello imitates it (e.g. mm. 230-237)

Microtonal progression is the fourth technique used. Indicated with "x" note heads, the performer plays microtones between two fixed pitches, like the passage in example 24.

⁶ Yi Ji-young, *Contemporary Gayageum Notation for Performers and Composers*. 28
Example 24: Microtonal Progression

A slightly different version of the technique is heard in mm. 343-345 (example 25). The player alternates plucking between two strings, one string remains fixed while the other moves microtonally. The ajaeng uses a bowed version the technique in mm 332-335 (example 25).

Example 25: Microtonal Progression on Gayageum and Ajaeng

With the exception of the tonguing techniques used with the Asian wind instruments, the instrumental techniques in the piece are traditional. What is new about the techniques is their re-contextualization. The techniques are used to shape the motivic material within Western formal structures of the piece.
ASIAN AESTHETICS

Instruments in Korean music, particularly sanjo, are capable of producing a variety of timbral hues, which comprise an integral part of their tradition. Ajaeng and gayageum are prime examples, and this piece exhibits a number of techniques that exploit their colorful possibilities. Microtonal progressions, like the ones used by gayageum in mm. 44-45 (example 26) and ajaeng in mm 332-335 (example 27) are a common sanjo technique. Playing the same pitch on two separate strings allows for a subtle shading of the pitch (e.g. mm. 42-44). The concept of alternating shades of a repeated pitch plays a major role in Mythic Fox.

Example 26: Microtonal Progression

Example 27: Timbral Shading
Throughout much of the second section, the piano frequently alternates between playing a note on the keyboard and plucking the strings of same note with a guitar pick.

The same mixture of timbral hues applies to the interaction between the flute and dizi in the passages of mm. 335-343 (example 28a), and later between the hichiriki and the oboe in mm. 346-353 (example 28b). A type of timbral shading often occurs within heterophonic textures.

Example 28: Timbral Shading via Heterophony

a)

![Example 28a: Timbral Shading via Heterophony](image)

b)

![Example 28b: Timbral Shading via Heterophony](image)
Heterophony is a major characteristic of the traditional music of Asia. Two examples are Japanese court music (gagaku), and the gamelan music of Indonesia. In the second section heterophony begins early in the piece between the piano played on the keyboard and the plucked strings of piano.

As the section develops, flutes and vibraphone join the piano in heterophony. During the climax of the section the most of the ensemble combines into one mass of heterophony. Other than texture, the composition shares similarities with gagaku and gamelan concerning pitch collection.

The first section primarily consists of a pitch collection resembling those heard in gagaku and koto music. In fact, the collection correlates directly to koto strings 3-7 in the hirajōshi tuning (example 29a). The pitch collection in the second section uses the equal temperament equivalent of two different modes of the pélog scale found in gamelan music (example 29b). The greater part of the third section's pitch collection is comprised of a combination of the second pélog mode and a mode derived from the katakumoijōshi koto tuning (example 29c).

Example 29: Pitch-class Collections Used in the Piece

a) Section 1

```
\begin{music}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\node[anchor=east] at (0,0) {{\tiny g,b,c\sharp,d,e\flat}};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{music}
```

b) Section 2

```
\begin{music}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\node[anchor=east] at (0,0) {{\tiny g,c\flat,d,e\flat,f\#}};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{music}
```

\begin{music}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\node[anchor=east] at (0,0) {{\tiny g,b,c\flat,d,e\flat}};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{music}
c) Section 3

The rhythmic patterns that make up the theme of the third section are inspired by rhythms found in traditional Korean percussion ensembles (*samulnori*). The *janggu* and lower strings relentlessly pound out the rhythm in mm. 371-394. The rhythm is a variation on *chilchae* (example 30), a traditional *jangdan* (rhythmic pattern implying tempo and character in addition to a specific rhythm).

Example 30: Lower Strings and Percussion *Chilchae* Variant
Throughout the piece there is balance between passages that draw upon traditional techniques for the instruments and the employment of techniques that lay outside the bounds of the instruments’ tradition. The passages in the piece are built upon what is idiomatic for the instrument. It is not my intention to imitate or recreate the music of a specific culture, but to forge an original and refreshing sound world of my own.
Conclusion

The purpose of the *Mythic Fox* and its unique ensemble is to merge a variety of timbres and blur the boundaries between Western aesthetics and the aesthetics of different Asian cultures. Despite the challenges of assembling an ensemble of this nature, it is important to explore the possibilities of intercultural ensembles. This work aims to encourage the spread of knowledge of these instruments, to invite more opportunities for composers and musicians to learn about and experience these extraordinary instruments.

Casal’s article examines stories, essays, and accounts concerning mythological creatures of Japan. The article’s main focus is the fox, but also includes the badger, the cat, the dog and the wolf. Exploring numerous folktales throughout Japan (and China), the article compares and contrasts the different views and roles of these mythical creatures throughout history.


This volume is a collection of essays by ethnomusicologists, musicologists, and music theorists that supplies a comparative study of Asian-influenced Western composers and Western-influenced Asian composers. The book investigates cross-cultural exchange with a focus on compositional strategies that use musical ideas from the East and West.


Along with detailed descriptions of the different types of gayageum and the genres in which they are used, a thorough presentation of how to notate traditional and contemporary performance techniques for gayageum is found in this book.


The article discusses the role of the fox found primarily within Asian and European folklores. Although revered as cunning and wicked in most fox fables, this article emphasizes folktales that reveal the fox as a benevolent and helpful animal.


This book serves as a comprehensive guide to Japanese instruments. Construction, ranges, tunings, timbres, and performance techniques are all included within this single volume.

The compendium includes an array of definitions and illustrations of mythological beasts, gods, heroes, demons and an array of strange creatures from ancient China.


Thrasher’s article provides an overview of the history, descriptions, and diagrams of Chinese transverse flutes. Fingering charts are included in relation to individual temperaments and modes. The article also explains the role of the flutes in traditional Chinese music.


In this article, Johnson surveys the various roles of the fox within the legends of Japan, China and Korea. Johnson explores other fox-lore and superstitions via accounts of “fox-possesion” and other malignant encounters.
Mythic Fox
for Large Ensemble of Strings, Winds and Percussion

2013
William M. Watson
**Instrumentation**

Shinobue (+8)
Flute
Alto Dízi (D)
Oboe
Hichiriki

Piano 4 hands

Gayageum in F

Violin
Erhu
Ajaeng
Violoncello

Percussion 1
Muyu (Temple Blocks)
Jing *
Xylophone
Vibraphone
Large Chinese Gong
Large Tam-tam *

Percussion 2
Uchiwa-daiko (4)
Medium Chinese Gong
Large Tam-tam *
Jing *

Percussion 3
Janggu
Buk

* shared between perc. 1 and perc. 2
Mythic Fox
for mixed ensemble

The Seducress

William M. Watson

ca. 13'

\( \hat{\} = 120 \)

cunning and sultry

Shinobue

\( \frac{4}{4} \)

Flute

\( \frac{4}{4} \)

Alto Dízi

(D)

\( \frac{4}{4} \)

Oboe

\( \frac{4}{4} \)

Hichiriki

\( \frac{4}{4} \)

I

Piano

\( \frac{4}{4} \)

II

Sanjo Gayageum

in F

\( \frac{4}{4} \)

\( \hat{\} = 120 \)

cunning and sultry

Violin

\( \frac{4}{4} \)

Erhu

\( \frac{4}{4} \)

Sanjo Ajaeng

\( \frac{4}{4} \)

Violoncello

\( \frac{4}{4} \)

Temple Blocks

Uchiwa-daiko

Janggu

Scratch drum head with fingernails (RH)

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Mythic Fox 1
Mythic Fox 2
Mythic Fox 5
Mythic Fox 10
Mythic Fox 15
Mythic Fox 16
Mythic Fox 25
molto rit.

move to guitar picks
The Acolyte

{ benign and soporific

Sh.
Fl.
Dz.
Ob.
Hich.

I

Pno.

II

Gy.

Vln.
Er.
Aj.
Vc.
Perc. 1
Perc. 2
Perc. 3

Mythic Fox 28
Mythic Fox 35
The Fiend

violent and merciless
Mythic Fox 50
Mythic Fox 56