

The background features a textured, light beige paper surface. In the center, there are stylized, layered mountain ranges in shades of light brown and tan. On the right side, there are several dark, thin branches of a willow tree, each adorned with numerous small, dark, round buds or leaves, hanging down.

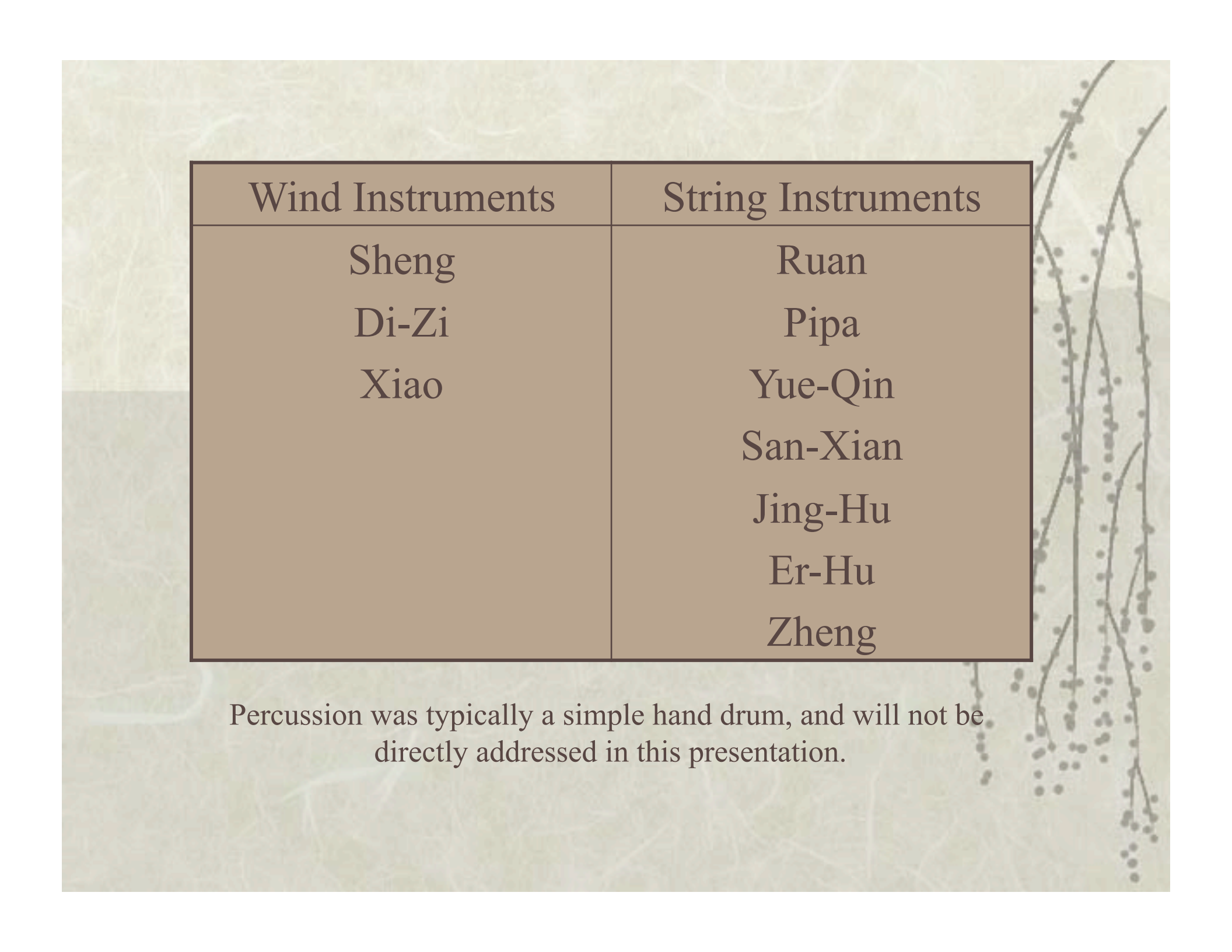
Sounds of the Mountains

An Exploration of Traditional Chinese Musical
Instruments

By Taylor Vogel

Introduction

- ❖ Traditional Chinese instruments date back at least 8,000 years and provide a magnificent link between the music of the present and the traditions of the past.
- ❖ There were two major types of instruments:



Wind Instruments	String Instruments
Sheng	Ruan
Di-Zi	Pipa
Xiao	Yue-Qin
	San-Xian
	Jing-Hu
	Er-Hu
	Zheng

Percussion was typically a simple hand drum, and will not be directly addressed in this presentation.

Sheng



- ❖ Chinese Mouth Organ or Chinese Pan Pipe
- ❖ Dates back to 500 B.C.
- ❖ Reed instrument with 12-36 bamboo pipes
- ❖ All of the pipes are a different length with a brass reed at the bottom

Sheng



- ❖ Each pipe has a hole.
- ❖ For a note to sound, one must cover the hole.
- ❖ This allows for multiple notes to be played at once (chords), so a melody can be formed.



Di-Zi

- ❖ Flute
- ❖ Many can be dated back 8,000 years
- ❖ Popular instrument, often used for solos and accompaniment
- ❖ Some made of bone, but mostly of bamboo



Di-Zi

- ❖ Often wrapped in bands of silk to provide cracking resistance
- ❖ Range of about two and a half octaves



Xiao



- ❖ End-blown notched flute, similar to a recorder
- ❖ Able to be dated back to 420 B.C.
- ❖ Often performed as solo or duet in chamber music settings

Xiao



- ❖ Made of 9-joint black bamboo
- ❖ Typically has 8 finger holes in the front, 1 in the rear, and 2-4 finger holes in the lower end



Yue-Qin

- ❖ Often called the “moon mandolin”
- ❖ Typically has a moon-shaped soundbox, but can also be octagonal or hexagonal in shape
- ❖ Two strings tuned a 4th or 5th apart



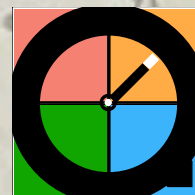
Yue-Qin

- ❖ Two other strings may be added, and are tuned in unison with the other two strings
- ❖ Frequently used to accompany operas and narratives



Ruan

- ❖ Derivative of the Yue-Qin
- ❖ Dates as early as 221 B.C.
- ❖ Played with a plectrum
- ❖ Often used in ensembles, but as a solo instrument more recently



Pipa



- ❖ Belongs to the Lute family
- ❖ Dates to 221 B.C.
- ❖ Often called the “King of Chinese instruments,” due to its expressive nature
- ❖ Four strings (typically tuned to A, D, E, and A)
- ❖ Body is made of hard wood

Pipa

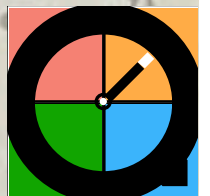


- ❖ Measures nearly four feet long and one foot across the belly
- ❖ Neck has six ledges made of wood, horn, or ivory, and the belly has twenty-six bamboo frets

Pipa



- ❖ Strings are typically plucked with all five fingers, which have picks attached.
- ❖ The instrument is held vertically while played.



San-Xian



- ❖ Banjo said to be derived from a stringed rattle drum (xiantao)
- ❖ Has a resonator of padauk (red sadal) covered with python skin
- ❖ No frets on the neck

San-Xian



- ❖ Strings are nylon-coiled steel wires
- ❖ Typically plucked with fingernails
- ❖ One of two major types (quxian and shuxian) is often used as accompaniment in large productions



Jing-Hu

- ❖ The principal melodic instrument in Peking opera ensembles, giving it the nickname of the Peking opera fiddle
- ❖ Smallest of Chinese spiked fiddles
- ❖ About 20 inches long



Jing-Hu

- ❖ Body is a bamboo tube
- ❖ The playing end is covered with snakeskin
- ❖ The silk strings are held on by pegs on the slender bamboo neck



Gao-Hu



- ❖ Also called the Canton Music Fiddle
- ❖ High pitched 2 string fiddle
- ❖ Held between the knees to reduce unwanted noise
- ❖ High, sharp timbre, used for quick, ornamented melodies



Er-Hu

- ❖ Also called the two-string violin
- ❖ Dates back to 1100 A.D.
- ❖ About three feet long
- ❖ Small sound box, about 3-4 inches in diameter and 5-6 inches deep



Er-Hu

- ❖ Scroll and sound box are often decorated
- ❖ Will also use a metal clamp to change the open pitches of the strings
- ❖ Bow is made of bamboo



Zheng

- ❖ Also called the Chinese Zither and the Lap Harp
- ❖ About 47 inches long and 12 inches wide
- ❖ Galley-shaped resonator
- ❖ Curved top and flat bottom



Zheng

- ❖ Strings are stretched over the surface and attached to the left and right, where they may be tuned
- ❖ Movable bridges under the strings can alter their pitches
- ❖ Typically have 21 silk strings



Zheng

- ❖ Played on a table or rack
- ❖ Player plucks the strings to the right of the bridges using the first three or four fingers of the right hand



Zheng

- ❖ The left hand is used to press on the strings to the left of the bridges in order to create ornamentations and pitch alterations



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