

Yuko Ohara

Chimera

Instruments: violin and piano

In Greek mythology, a *Chimera* was a grotesque beast, a fire-breathing female monster with a lion's head, a goat's body and a serpent's tail. The word was later adopted by biologists who used *Chimera* to signify an organism containing a mixture of genetically different tissues, formed by processes including fusion of early embryos.

Chimera consists of two main sections, based on the pitches A (bars 1-69) and on E (bars 95-141) plus a third, shorter rhythmic section (bars 70-94) in between. Firstly, harmony and the progression of notes were considered. Then came the idea of having the pitch A as a reference point, often meeting and fusing with notes from the other sections and, at those points, forming a musical chimera, or fusion of notes. That was the genesis of the piece.

I used two strings as the basis for the violin part. From the second bar of the piece, I included two types of articulating A on the D-string, both long and pizzicato. The A-notes are written in quintuplet for the opening bars of the violin part, the distinct timbres like twins, genetically different but obviously a pair. This is one of the themes of the piece.

The piano part is derived from the violin part. It too sounds on A and follows the same patterns with the same notes and a quintuplet structure, but pitched four octaves lower. The sound is of the plucking of the A-string inside the piano. Subsequently, the violin part in D-string has microtone deviation as it maintains an A-note together with the open A-string. The violin part becomes increasingly technical while the piano part introduces a major second around the pitch A in an echo of the moments preceding the division of a cell.

There then follows a more rhythmic section, created from different values of tuplet for each instrument, quintuplets for the piano and septuplets for the violin. They tend to feel like they are going against the metre and the tuplet values increase more and more during twelve bars. They are *antimetric* figures, going against the rhythm, and the sound leaves a 'gap' for our ears. The irrational rhythms increase in value becoming difficult to count until the piano solo begins using only semidemiquavers. The piano solo suddenly has very soft dynamics.

The last section begins on E in both the violin and piano parts. The piano plays whole tone scales whilst the violin plays with other microtonal scales. It is similar to the first section, but is more complex. The violin part incorporates double-stops going from major second to major seventh. It is much freer than in the first section and many glissandi appear in major sevenths and are protracted. In this section, the progression of notes adopted in the first section is completely obliterated. This section is constructed from the semidemiquaver material for the piano from the previous rhythmical section. Thereafter, the piano part insistently plays C-sharp, B, E flat, and A notes, which spell out the word 'Chimera'. Finally the C-sharp falls to C-natural in the violin part to indicate the end.

The piece was written in 2005 and premiered by violinist Eiichi Chijiwa and pianist Junko Yamamoto at the Takefu Composition Prize 2006 at the Takefu International Music Festival (music director, Toshio Hosokawa) in Japan.

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