This final chapter functions as a coda in that it is short, it is different from the preceding, regular chapters and it attempts to end this study in a way that transcends simple termination—but most of all, that it is to do with music. Brevity aside, its difference from chapters One through Twelve lies in that it covers much less material than any of those and that it is no hardcore scholarship inasmuch as section 1, a report on a spectacular poetry recital in 2003, tends toward the journalistic instead. I first wrote this for the publications page of the Modern Chinese Literature and Culture Resource Center, a forum which has room for a wide range of things including quick on-site reports and translations.

I hope to do more work on interfaces of poetry and music or poetry and other art forms in future. Here, rather than expanding the original piece into something more like the preceding chapters, I choose to present section 1 in its original form as a recollection of the experience at the time, with only minor editorial changes. As such, it is a stepping stone toward section 2, which contains some brief reflections on the current state and scope of the Chinese avant-garde as a more or less coherent, Easthopian poetic discourse. In chapter One, I said that the difficulty of studying something from our own time lies in the closeness and the ongoing transformations of the object of study. This chapter presents the original on-site report—indented like a long quote, and thus set apart from the main narrative of this study, which was drafted in 2007-2008—in the hope of conveying the excitement of studying something from our own time, which has precisely the same source. It is positively wonderful to experience firsthand not just poetry’s written, static sediment but also its dynamic emergence in local settings with which it interacts, be they institutional or individual, public or private, formal or informal, domestic or foreign in whatever way.

But it is for the reader to decide what section 1 conveys: difficulty, or excitement, or both, or something else.
Figure 13.1. Yan Jun, 2007 (photograph by Qiaoqiao)