

Sonic Reverie

"Sonic Reverie" is a celebration of the rich tapestry of melodies and tunes crafted by both established and emerging Chinese composers. The programme is divided into four distinct sections, each serving as a sonic palette that centres around a melodic instrument or voice. Through these sections we aim to offer you a deep and immersive experience, taking you on a voyage through the intricate stories and emotions woven into the compositions.

18:00 - 19:30

26 January 2024

Martin Harris Centre

The University of Manchester

Part 1

Flute & Piano

Three Bagatelles From China West

Chen Yi 陈怡

Inspired by authentic folk music from western China, Yi's work includes elements drawn from folk songs, such as "Shan Ge" for a wind instrument called the "Lerong", "Nai Guo Hou" for a wind instrument called the "Ba Wu", and "Dou Duo," a folk song designed to evoke the sound of the Lu Sheng ensemble of the Miao people. (Only the second and the third movements will be performed.)

Stepping Stones Mishap (world premiere)

Xia Xinyue 夏欣悦

I took a tumble while playing stepping stones when I was four years old.

The Sun Shines on Tianshan 阳光灿烂照天山

Huang Huwei 黄虎威

The Sun Shines Brightly on Tianshan Mountains is a flute work written by composer Huwei Huang after he went to Xinjiang to study the style of music in the region. The piece vividly depicts the magnificent natural landscape of the Tianshan Mountain and the harvest celebration scene of the people in the border area through the flute's unique high-register pitch and rich technique, showing the fascinating scenery of the Tianshan Mountain and the vibrant prosperity of the northwestern border area of China.

Part 2

Violin & Piano

***By the Ruili River* 瑞丽江边**

Shi Guangnan 施光南

The piece was written by Chinese composer Shi Guangnan in 1963. It depicts the Ruili River in China's southwestern Yunnan Province and the life of the Dai people there. The piece features a very lyrical melody with a distinctive ethnic style incorporated into a simple sonata-style framework, depicting the pleasant life and labour of the industrious Dai people by the river.

***Sunshine Over Tashkurgan* 阳光照耀着塔什库尔干**

Chen Gang 陈钢

The piece was written by Chinese composer Chen Gang in 1976. It paints a picture in sound of the landscape and people of Tashkurgan in Xinjiang. This is an area on the border with Afghanistan, inhabited now by Uighurs, Tajiks, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks – minority peoples whose culture and music is quite different from that of the majority Han Chinese. There is a rich diversity of rhythms – from the long and lyrical to the lively and staccato, spiccato – and the melody is built on related major and minor scales, which gives the music a variety of colours and moods. By using Tajik folk music melodic material and absorbing the techniques of folk instruments, the piece presents the strong ethnic characteristics of Xinjiang.



Interval

Part 3

Voice and piano

Virtues of the Secluded Orchid 幽兰操

Zhao Jiping 赵季平

Secluded Orchid (幽兰) conveys the image of a flower. This piece extolls the virtues of the orchid spreading its fragrance by itself and the orchid buds nurturing whilst in a solitary environment. The composition style borrowed from traditional Chinese instruments which is inspired by the way the singer performs with the sound of guqin 古琴.

Crying Ospreys 关雎

Zhao Jiping 赵季平

The text is from 诗经 (Book of Songs) which is the earliest poetry collection in China. The whole text uses Zhou as a place of passion, conveying emotions through the cries of Ospreys. The essence and spiritual connotation of the poem expresses a young man's admiration and longing for a gentle woman. It vividly expresses his love and carries the struggle and anxiety he experiences, finding it difficult to receive love from a woman.

Song of the Yue Boatman 越人歌

Liu Qing 刘青

Song of the Yue Boatman is recognized as the earliest “translated” poem in Chinese history. The text was written 2500 years ago. It was a song of praise and of a profound and sincere love. A love poem that describes the excitement and euphemism of love, expressing the conditions of a good life among different classes and different nationalities at that time. It's a lyric about cross-class love.

Part 4

Zheng & Piano

Ode to the Land of Qin 秦土情

Zhou Zhan 周展

The music was composed in 2008 and consists of introduction, adagio, allegro, and largo. It uses the characteristics of Shaanxi music in Shang mode to express the author's love and longing for his hometown.

Blue Heaven Overture 苍歌引

Chen Zhe 陈哲

Blue Heaven Overture is performed on the zheng and the piano which fully encapsulate the blooming and fresh season of Spring. Be prepared to be wowed by the vitality of this music. In ancient times, people usually viewed the Heavens as the almighty deity that ruled over all. In the 8th chapter of Er Ya (the oldest surviving Chinese dictionary), "Explaining the Heavens", it was written that "In Spring the Heavens are blue, and in Summer the Heavens are clear and endless". Spring is the season when all life germinates and grows, and its freshness and vitality is analogous to daybreak in a day or youth in a person's lifetime. The composer's apperception of "Spring" brings forth the respect and adulation of life fully evident in this piece.

Featured musicians

Part 1

Qinghui Cao 曹清惠

Doris (Qinghui) Cao commenced her studies at Shenzhen Art School in China. In 2016, she began her sixth form studies at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, where she studied for two years with Belinda Gough. She then studied at Royal Northern College of Music for both Bachelor's and Master's degrees under the tuition of Kevin Gowland, Cormac Henry and Laura Jellicoe. Doris performed in concerts at many prestigious venues including Stoller Hall, Manchester Grammar School and Bridgewater Hall, and participated in masterclasses with internationally renowned teachers such as Adam Walker, Katherine Bryan and Andrea Oliva. She has played regularly in RNCM orchestras and the Wind Orchestra as Principal and Second Flautist.

Jianing Pan 潘嘉宁

Jianing Pan was born in Xi'an, China. She completed her undergraduate studies at the Xi'an Conservatory of Music, specialising in performance and studying piano with Lili Cong. She is a postgraduate student at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, and a major in Piano Accompaniment, which she studied with David Jones. During this period, Jianing received the guidance of domestic and foreign pianist such as Harvey Davies, Jeremy Young, Paul Janes, Jonathan Fisher, Roger Hamilton, Sally Ann-Macleod, Mikhail Aleksandrov, Andrea Lucchesini, Yuyin Jia Svetlana, and chamber musicians like Hancheng Lan, Gefang Yang, Hanxiang Gong.

Xinyue Xia 夏欣悦

Xinyue Xia is a Chinese composer currently pursuing her composition degree at the Royal Northern College of Music under the tutelage of Adam Gorb and Laura Bowler. Her musical endeavors are dedicated to the exploration of innovative musical languages and approaches. With a focus on chamber music, she has composed for various chamber ensembles and is currently engaged in an open score project. Xia's music has been performed across the UK and Europe. Notably, her piano trio was premiered in Vienna by the ensemble Trio Immersio in Summer 2023.

Part 2

Ziluo Huang 黄子洛

China-born violinist Ziluo Huang is currently a PhD student in musicology at the University of Manchester. Zi-luo graduated from the Royal College of Music with a Master's in Music in Performance with distinction. She also obtained a Bachelor's in Music from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire with a scholarship. She won the Absolute First Prize in the UK International Music Competition in 2023. She has performed in venues around the country such as the Birmingham Town Hall, Symphony Hall, St James Concert and Assembly Hall in Guernsey among others. Ziluo has also played in masterclasses for Kun Hu, Mark Messenger, Elly Suh, Radu Bildar, John Gilbert and Tamsin Waley-Cohen.

Yidong Lin 林逸东

Yidong is a young pianist from Canton, China, and currently a PhD student in Musicology at the University of Manchester. He won the first prize of individual music all-round award from the Ministry of Education of China in 2018, and graduated with First Class Honours from the University of Melbourne in 2021. He has participated in more than 150 concerts, including six solo concerts. Benjamin Martin said this about Yidong: 'He demonstrates a genuine poetic instinct, artistic stature, and musical receptivity, that is conspicuously rare among young pianists who have such technical gifts'.

Part 3

Nuo Han 韩诺

Nuo (Helen) Han is a Chinese-born soprano based in Manchester, United Kingdom. She has completed her Bachelor's in Music (with Honours) and Master's in Music in Performance at the Royal Northern College of Music. She was under the tutelage of Susan Roper and Deborah Rees whilst studying at the RNCM. Helen performs in operas, recitals and concerts across the UK and abroad. She has performed at esteemed venues, including St. Peter Cathedral, Chiesa san stae (Venice) and Suzhou Poly Grand Theatre (China). Recently, Helen performed the role of Frasquita in Bizet's Carmen in Suzhou, China.

Xiaqian Liu 刘夏千

Xiaqian Liu is a second-year postgraduate student at the Royal Northern College of Music, studying the piano accompaniment with Dr Harvey David. Throughout her undergraduate career in Wuhan Conservatory of Music, she took part in many collaborative performances with both Western and Chinese instruments as well as some solo competitions that gained Gold Prize at the London Young Musician and Singapore International Piano Competitions. During the first year of her postgraduate life, she participated in a series of chamber competitions and in a masterclass performance as accompaniment with wind and string instruments

Part 4


Li Yang 杨莉


Li Yang is currently studying for a Master's in Performance Studies at the University of Manchester. She started learning the Guzheng at a young age. In 2013, she was admitted to the music school attached to the Xinghai Conservatory of Music with first place honors. In 2016, she was admitted to the Guzheng performance major of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in Singapore. In 2022, she was admitted to the University of Sunderland in the UK to study Top-up in Music Performance, where she graduated with First Class Honors and received "Sustainable Future Prize."

Siyi Dai 戴斯意

Siyi Dai began studying the piano at the age of four and gained admission in 2011 to the music school attached to Xinghai Conservatory of Music. In 2018, she was awarded a scholarship to study Bachelor of Music at the Royal Northern College of Music under the tutelage of Bingbing Li and graduated in 2022 with First Class Honours. In the same year, she continued her Master's of Music study at RNCM under the tutelage of Graham Scott. Siyi won in several competitions, including the Third Prize in the Mark Ray Recital Prize and the First Prize in the Sixth Hong Kong International Piano Competition.

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