

Chinese Aura: a special concert featuring



The New Purple Forbidden City Orchestra

China Conservatory of Music (Beijing) 11-member orchestra: contemporary music on traditional instruments
(International tour airfare provided by the Chinese Ministry of Culture Oriental Express Music Project)

The New Purple Forbidden City Orchestra was jointly created by 10 virtuoso traditional instrument players who are engaged in education and performance at Beijing's famous conservatories of music.

Individually they have given considerable thought to the contradiction between the traditional music theory system and modern music innovation and practice, to conflicts between the classical aesthetic and the more personality-based modern arts, and to balancing received tradition with the development of a national music of China. This new ensemble carries on the exceptional legacy of Chinese folk music, and also forges new paths of national music development, both displaying the artistic aspirations of contemporary composers and creating a new context for Chinese music.

The music is evocative, refreshingly appealing and accessible. No academic stuffiness here, but fresh, vital and approachable sounds with a decidedly contemporary feel and rhythm. **Ask for our sample CD.** These musicians bring a completely new outlook to traditional Chinese music, Chinese Opera and Chinese Classical music. Their music embodies the considered thought of leading practitioners about the future of Chinese traditional music, and their insight into the balance between the great changes taking place in contemporary Chinese culture and the essential identity of ancient instruments.

Programme

The programme consists of 7 chamber music pieces of different styles, all of them written after 1980. Among these, **“An Interrupted Dream” and “Changes of all kinds” in the second half have been commissioned especially for the ensemble and will offer a premiere in Australia and New Zealand.**

- **Zhu Lin:** Queqiao Xian (The Immortality of Maggie Bridge) (Quintet) (Australian/New Zealand Premiere)
- **Wang Feinan:** Feibu- Half Beihuai (Quintet) (Australian/New Zealand Premiere)
- **Qin Yi:** Shu Gu (Trio) (Australian/New Zealand Premiere)
- **Gao Weijie (arr):** Xiaoxiang Water and Cloud (Trio) (Australian/New Zealand Premiere) Original composed by Guo Mian (Song Dynasty) **Gao Weijie (高为杰) is the father of famous NZ composer Gao Ping**
- **Liu Qing:** Sha Wei (Sextet) (Australian/New Zealand Premiere)
- **Wang Danhong:** Sweet Dream (Dixtuor) (**World Premiere**)
- **Zou Hang:** Shibian Wuhua (Changes) (Dixtuor) (**World Premiere**)

Enquiries: John Ballard | john.ballard@maximaltd.com | +64 9 522 1620



Programme Notes

The Immortality of Magpie Bridge

The Immortality of Magpie Bridge is one of the traditional melodies about love from Chinese classic poetry. This piece attempts to re-create the poetic aura of piece, capturing its wonderful feeling with a wholly new language and new sounds on traditional Chinese instruments.

Neverness & Sorrow

The name comes from Mr Lu Wencheng's novel *The Sorrows*. Two characters from the Chinese words for sorrow are combined to form a new word for Never. The piece looks at sorrow in a humorous way. It is based on the style of melody found in Guangdong province, ornamented with modern language and a pulsating beat. The fluctuating emotions of the piece range from segmentation to completeness, from confusion to harmony, from hesitation to serenity and even to passion.

Shugu (a small accompaniment drum played in a kind of singing, versified story performance, known as Dagu)

Shugu is an important instrument for a genre of popular entertainment employing both talking and singing. This piece's composer is fascinated and inspired by the frequent and seamless role-changing of the genre and the way the roles speak with each other. Shugu attempts to express a smooth rhythmic flow using the melodic dialogue typical of this art form.

Xiao River and Xiang River's water and cloud.

The piece was originally written by Guo Mian, an accomplished Guqin player of South Song Dynasty (1190-1260 A.D.). This piece depicts the river Xiao and Xiang's vast water and lingering clouds at the top of mount Jiuyi through a mellifluous and emotion-ridden melody employing rich Guqin playing techniques. At a deeper level, the music also portrays an endless sadness the composer feels about an ill-fated country and the uncertainty of his current situation. The music was arranged for trio by Gao Weijie (高为杰), a famous Chinese composer at China Conservatory (and father of University of Canterbury composer and pianist Gao Ping). The structure of this abridged version is more compact and tightly-knit. Using sophisticated polyphony and skill, the Gao creates a mood that's more impressive and lively than the original composition.

Shawei (a sudden and clean end)

Shawei refers to the simple ending that occurs in Gong and drum music. Centred around dynamic rhythmic material, this piece uses various instruments to mimic the percussion sounds found in Peking Opera, and attempts to arrive at a harmony between rhythmic and melodic material. The piece also borrows special techniques of Suona to portray the characters of various Peking opera stories. The whole piece is interwoven by 2 conflicting elements -- powerful prisons and the tuneful melodies -- which ultimately come to a sudden, simple yet complete stop in unique Beijing Opera style. This end contrasts with the animated and varied mixture of sounds, leaving the formal cadence reverberating and ringing in the listeners' ear.

Jing Meng (An interrupted dream)

Somewhere in life destiny obscurely stalks in the distance;
Lovers' predestinated paths unexpectedly meet, they wordlessly smile.
That picture once stored only in a dream suddenly manifests itself in reality,
Reversing time and space, transverting back and forth between life past and present.
Quietly but surely, tender but obstinate, intangible but real.
Love in dreams needn't be real. There is no shortage of people dreaming or being dreamed about in the world!

"You Yuan Jing Meng" is a chapter quietly tucked away in the ancient story of Peony Pavilion from the Kunqu Opera. When opening this chapter, you can't but be touched and struck by the blaze of color among the dilapidated wells and crumbling walls. During the time warp and in a melancholic mood, it's both real and illusionary, in doubt and for sure. All the dreamers from past and present are now living in another's dreamland.

Shibian Wuhua (Changes of all kinds)

The work is composed exclusively for the The New Purple Forbidden City Orchestra. The name is a Chinese idiom and literarily means ten changes and five variations. In this piece, Shibian also refers to the ten musicians - nine players and one conductor of the New Purple Forbidden City Orchestra - and their instruments. The permutations and different combinations of the musicians and instruments, between individuals and groups are full of musical possibilities and represent countless changes. They both repel and complement one another, are both united and opposed, and perfectly reflect the Yin & Yang philosophy of China.

The concept of Wuhua is of great significance within Chinese traditional culture. In Yin & Yang theory, and the five elements theory of ancient China, Wu is a heavenly number that can either make or break. Wu explains the interaction among the physical universe, which, according to the ancients, is composed of the five elements of metal, wood, water, fire and earth. It's the interaction between the five elements that produces the endless changes. The two principal forms of interaction are mutual promotion and mutual restraint. Either of these conflicting aspects can be divided further into either being promoted or promoting others, or else being restrained or restraining others. These four changes, along with the holistic feature of matter itself are the so-called 5 states collectively.

Concepts that contain the number 5 are very popular within Chinese traditional culture. For example, the five directions (the four cardinal points and the centre), the 5 basic moral concepts of human being, the 5 (pentatonic) notes of music, the 5 skandhas of Buddhist tenets, the 5 techniques of dark learning and the 5 features of the spirit. These concepts are pervasive throughout nature and in the lives of ordinary people.

Shibian Wuhua is structured into 5 movements, following the chapter-by-chapter mode of traditional Chinese storytelling. It adopts all 5 performance possibilities: blowing, bowing, plucking, striking and singing to fullest effect, with the composer employing the reasoning of modern scholarship to demonstrate the essence of traditional Chinese culture.

Maxima Artist Management Limited

Level 2, Southern Cross Building, 59-67 High Street, Auckland CBD | PO Box 1072, Auckland 1140, New Zealand

Tel +64 9 522 1620 | web www.maximaltd.com | email maxima@maximaltd.com | member acmma.org