

Williams College Department of Music

Music From China & Talujon
Tales from the Cave

PROGRAM NOTES

Mount a Long Wind (2004)

ZHOU LONG

For pipa, flute, erhu, zheng, percussion

Mount a Long Wind is dedicated to Music From China on their 20th anniversary. It is inspired by Tang dynasty poet Li Bai's "The Hard Road" (One of Three). The music reflects the vivid imagery of the poem. Textured waves accompanied by strong rhythmic chords on pipa and zheng symbolize a journey -- to mount a long wind and break the heavy waves. As the music briefly calms, a vigorous rhythmic section ensues which shapes a scene of driving the dragon boat. In the middle section, a melody played by erhu with harmonics on pipa and glissandi on zheng evoke sounds of nature. A recapitulation of the vigorous rhythmic section brings the music to a celebratory climax.

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Zhou Long is internationally recognized for creating a unique body of music that brings together the aesthetic concepts and musical elements of East and West. Winner of the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for his first opera, *Madame White Snake*, Dr. Zhou also received the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award, and the 2012-2013 Elise Stoecker Prize from Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society. He has been two-time recipient of commissions from the Koussevitzky, Fromm Music Foundations, Meet the Composer, Chamber Music America, and the New York State Council on the Arts. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim and Rockefeller Foundations, and the New York Foundation for the Arts. In 2015, Zhou Long and composer/wife Chen Yi were both nominated for a 58th Grammy Award.

Zhou Long graduated from the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing in 1983 and was appointed composer-in-residence with the China Broadcasting Symphony. He traveled to the United States in 1985 under a fellowship to attend Columbia University, where he studied with Chou Wen-Chung, Mario Davidovsky, and George Edwards, receiving a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 1993. Dr. Zhou is currently Distinguished Professor of Music at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance.

Recently, he has completed *Tsingtao Overture*, awarded by the China National Arts Fund; *Beijing Rhyme - A Symphonic Suite*, commissioned by the Beijing Symphony Orchestra; a quartet co-commissioned by the Wigmore Hall and Lincoln Center; and his first piano concerto *Postures* co-commissioned by the BBC Proms and Singapore Symphony. In 2013, Zhou Long composed a whole evening symphonic epic *Nine Odes* on poems by Qu Yuan for four solo vocalists and orchestra, commissioned by the Beijing Music Festival. Zhou's music of all genres has been widely performed and recorded, and published by the Oxford University Press.

Drinking Alone with the Moon (2012)

WANG GUOWEI

For erhu, pipa and flute

Inspiration for this trio comes from Tang dynasty poet Li Bai's charming and witty poem of the same title. The music follows the flow of poetry. The erhu is the poet who at times recites, sings and dances. The pipa is his shadow, and flute the personification of the moon.

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Wang Guowei is erhu soloist and composer. He studied at the Shanghai Conservatory and was concertmaster and soloist with the Shanghai Traditional Orchestra. As Artistic Director of Music From China since 1996 and also engaging in a solo career, Wang Guowei has appeared with such artists as the Shanghai Quartet, Amelia Piano Trio, Continuum, Virginia Symphony, Post Classical Symphony, Ornette Coleman, Butch Morris, Yo-Yo Ma, and has performed at colleges, universities and music festivals across the U.S. and internationally. Writing for erhu and various instrumental combinations, Wang Guowei's works include *Percussion Quartet: Kong—Wu*; *Three Poems for Erhu* (erhu/zhonghu, pipa, xiao, percussion); *Tang Wind* (pipa, zheng, ruan & Western chamber orchestra); *Two Plus Two* (erhu, yangqin, sanxian & tape); *Lullaby* (erhu, clarinet & piano); *Songs for Huqin and Saxophone Quartet*; *Leaving Home* (erhu, piccolo & cello), *Drinking Alone with the Moon* (erhu, flute & cello); and *Kong* (erhu, flute, cello, piano). Mr. Wang is recipient of a folk arts fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts and commissioning awards from the American Composers Forum, New York State Council on the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, and Queens Council on the Arts. A dedicated teacher and educator, Wang Guowei founded and conducts the Music From China Youth Orchestra. He teaches Chinese ensemble at Westminster Choir College of Rider University and is Artist-in-Residence in Chinese Music Performance at Williams College and Director of the Williams College Chinese Ensemble.

Ling Long (2002)

XIE PENG

For jinghu, pipa, dizi, zheng, percussion quartet

"Ling Long" describes the clear, tinkling sound of jade when struck. It relates to things which are fine, elegant and splendid. Metaphorically, it represents serenity in chaos, regularity in complication, and coherence in confusion.

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Born in Xian, China, **Xie Peng** studied composition at the music school affiliate of the Xian Conservatory. He entered the Central Conservatory in Beijing in 1995 where he studied composition with Tang Jianping and received a BA degree in 2000 and MA degree in 2004. His composition *Ling Long* won the only Gold Medal at the 2002 Taiwan International Chinese Music Composition Competition. Xie Peng currently teaches at the Central Conservatory and maintains a vigorous career as composer.

Lam Mot (1991)

QU XIAO-SONG

For three percussionists

Lam Mot in the Vietnamese language means "created as one." The sounds one hears can be related to ice floating on the ocean surface, stillness to the ocean. As ice is created out of water and returns to its liquid state, sound is born of stillness and returns to stillness. Lam Mot employs the use of both Chinese and Western instruments, merging the composer's

experiences in China and New York City. The change in texture between the contrasting sets of instruments connects the listener to both traditions and shifts back and forth throughout the piece. Extended techniques such as the use of super ball mallets, bows and voices are utilized, and the piece includes a large arsenal of both pitched and non-pitched percussion instruments. The piece is in three movements, without breaks, and each movement is contrasting in its instrumentation, rhythmic content and traditional context.

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Qu Xiao-Song was sent to the countryside in southwestern China for four years during the Cultural Revolution where he worked as a farmer. He then taught himself the violin and became a violinist and violist with a Beijing opera orchestra in his home town. He graduated from the Central Conservatory in Beijing in 1983, and in 1989 was invited by Columbia University to be a visiting scholar, supported by a grant from the Cultural Council. Qu Xiao-Song currently resides in China.

Tales from the Cave (1998)
For huqin and percussion quartet

ZHOU LONG

This work commissioned by Music From China was inspired by the art of the Mogaoku grottoes in the ancient town of Dunhuang in western China. The most well known form of music indigenous to this region is the *huaer*, a kind of mountain song current among a number of nationalities. Other types of folk songs, song and dance performance, and *chantefable* (recitation with sung passages) are also popular. The frescoes of the Dunhuang grottoes preserve numerous music and dance performance scenes, including images of the postures and attitudes of performers, and of a number of musical instrument types used.

The solo instrument *huqin* is a general name for the various two stringed vertical fiddles. The two types of huqin used -- *erhu* (tuned to d1-a1) and *banhu* (d2-a2), all originated from this region. The music begins with an adagio introduction. Percussion instruments create an expanded space to enhance the range and color of the huqin. This is soon followed by a section with the banhu in fast tempo and dance rhythm. In the middle section, the erhu's playing takes on a mountain song quality, with a mystical aura in the background provided by the percussion. The last section starts with dense rhythms and tension is gradually intensified to reach a climax and finale.

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