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Mostly Music: Sounds of China, Sep. 14, 2001

Mostly Music Staff

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DISCOVER

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Mostly Music at NEIU
2001 - 2002

The Department of Music at NEIU and *Mostly Music at NEIU*

presents

Sounds of China

Betty Xiang, Erhu • Wei Yang, Pipa

Friday, September 14, 2001 • 8:00 PM

PROGRAM

Erhu & Pipa Duets

<i>Rainbow Dance</i>	Traditional
<i>Spring in the Air</i> (1994)	Fu-zai Jin (b.1942)
<i>Bourree from Suite No.3</i> (transcribed for Erhu and Pipa)	J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

Erhu Solos - with Yangqin Accompaniment

<i>Birds Singing in the Tranquil Mountains for solo Erhu</i> (1928)	Tian-hua Liu (1895-1932)
<i>Capriccio of Qing</i>	Traditional
<i>Meditation from Thais</i> (transcribed for Erhu and Yangqin)	Jules Massenet (1842-1912)

Erhu & Pipa Duet

<i>Water of Life</i> (2001)	Jian-er Zhu (b.1922)
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INTERMISSION

Pipa Solos

<i>Home on the Range</i>	American Folk Song
<i>Autumn Moon over the Han Palace</i>	Traditional
<i>Concerto of an Ancient Battlefield</i>	Traditional

Erhu & Pipa Duet

<i>Ballad Variation</i> (2001)	Lu Pei (b.1956)
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The composer dedicated this work to Betty Xiang and Wei Yang.

Program Notes

Rainbow Dance

This piece was originally an imperial dance performed in the emperor's court over 1500 years ago. Both instruments exude grace and delicacy, just like the dancers.

Spring in the Air

A beautiful ancient Chinese poem was the inspiration for this piece. The music expresses the joyful spirit when we celebrate the arrival of the spring season.

Birds Singing in the Tranquil Mountains

This piece musically paints a vivid view of singing birds in remote mountains and valleys.

Capriccio of Qing

The Capriccio of Qing is a folk tune that originated in Xi-An, the capital city of the Tang Dynasty. This town is the historic beginning of the Silk Road.

Water of Life

The flowing water is murmuring
Through hundreds of twists and turns
Sometimes it moves forward gently,
Leaving a myriad of ripples behind;
Sometimes it surges rapidly,
Forming mountains of waves ahead.
So life is like the flowing Water,
Rising and falling, with whirlpools and billows.
What will come next? Life or death?
Success or failure?
Nobody can tell. Come what may.

Autumn Moon over the Han Palace

Wong Tsao-Jun was a beautiful, intelligent girl who was an excellent pipa player in Han Dynasty. Like all other girls, who were chosen as the candidates for the Emperor's concubines, Tsao-Jun's life was filled with sorrows and sadness. Facing the passing years and her fading beauty, her mind was chilled by the autumn moonlight that made the surroundings even more lonesome and helpless.

Concerto of an Ancient Battlefield

This is a well-known and spectacular work for solo Pipa, which portrays an ancient battle in 202 BC between two ambitious generals.

Various technical demands produce some striking tones and sound effects, vividly depicting preparations for war, the encampment of the soldiers, the ambush, and the calls of drums and horns of battle. As the fight commences, neighing horses, shouting soldiers and clashing of weapons are heard. The harsh war is eventually won, and the concerto concludes with triumphal music for the victor.

Ballad Variation

This piece is based on the American folk tune "She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain", the Chinese folk song "Flower of Jasmine", and the sounds of American blue jazz. The composer is not the first to use the famous Chinese folk song, "Flower of Jasmine" in a larger work — Puccini used it in the opera, "Turandot". In composing "Ballad Variation", the composer discovered a close tonal relationship between "Flower of Jasmine" and "She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain", namely that one is the thematic retrograde of the other. This discovery has served the composer's purpose in this composition, since the structure of the one is reflected in the other, and perfectly extends the musical atmosphere across both. The composer dedicated this work to Betty Xiang and Wei Yang.

The Instruments

The Erhu is a two-stringed Chinese Violin With a history of about 1,000 years. It is played with a bow passing between the strings instead of pressing on top of them as with the western violin. Usually the strings are tuned to D and A and cover a tonal range of three octaves. The Erhu is used in solos and usually is the leading instrument in ensembles.

The Pipa is a pear-shaped lute with a history of more than 2,000 years. The modern Pipa has 24 frets and its four strings are tuned to A, D, E, a, covering a tonal range of 3-1/2 octaves. Strumming or plucking with the Right hand, usually with plectra on the fingers plays it.

The Yangqin has evolved from the dulcimer, which was imported from Persia during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.). The strings of the Yangqin are made of steel, and sounds are produced by striking them with bamboo sticks held in both hands. The tonal ranges 4-5 octaves. It is a versatile instrument because of its ability to produce simultaneous chords and rapid arpeggios.

The Musicians

Betty Xiang

Since her childhood, Ms. Betty Xiang was deeply motivated and strictly trained by her late father, Mr. Zuying Xiang, a renowned Erhu soloist and master in China and an Erhu professor at Shanghai Conservatory of Music. At age 17, Betty made her solos debut with the premiere orchestra of China, the National Shanghai Orchestra. From 1987 to 1994, she appeared as a soloist with orchestras in France, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan. She has also had solo appearances with Shanghai Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra in 1994 through 1996, she performed several solo concerts to great acclaims. Betty has won numerous awards in nationwide Chinese music competitions and she made a number of Erhu solo and concerto recordings.

Wei Yang

Mr. Yang started learning to play Chinese musical instruments at the age of six. By the age of 13, he concentrated all his efforts in mastering Pipa. He was privately tutored by several of the great Pipa masters in China, including the renowned Professor Dehai Liu, principal of the Chinese Conservatory of Music. At 18, he performed as a Pipa soloist with the National Shanghai Orchestra, one of the most important orchestras in China. He has been a featured soloist with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, Shanghai Broadcasting Symphony orchestra, the Singapore Chinese Orchestra, the National Taipei Orchestra, and the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra. In addition he has performed numerous concerts in Belgium, France, Malaysia, and Japan. Mr. Yang has also won many awards in music competitions over the years. His solo and concerto recordings have been released through major recording companies in China, Hong Kong, and Singapore. During the spring of 2001, Mr. Yang completed a world concert tour with cellist Yo-Yo Ma playing a number of works especially commissioned for them. Since immigrating to the United States in 1996, both Betty and Wei have given many concerts and demonstrations at universities and colleges in the Midwest as well as public libraries. During 1998 and 1999 they were invited to perform at The Art Institute of Chicago as well as in St. Louis, Missouri; Fort Wayne, Indiana; and New York City. From November 2000 to January 2001 they were appointed as musician-in-residence for the Art Institute's *Taoism and the arts of China* exhibit in Chicago. In June 2000, they were selected to be part of group of top international musicians performing in the *All Bach Program* at the Ravinia Music Festival in Illinois.

Besides their busy performance schedule, Mr. And Mrs. Yang teach Pipa and Erhu in their private studios in Elk Grove Village, Illinois. In recognition of their outstanding musicianship, They have recently been awarded of the IAC (Illinois Arts Council) Artist Fellowship.

Whether you live in Hyde Park, the north side of Chicago, or the suburbs, Northeastern Illinois University brings chamber music to you. Offered in your neighborhood and on campus in programs such as *Mostly Music at NEIU* and the Jewel Box Series, you will enjoy exceptional concerts all season long. Discover NEIU for chamber music today. Contact us at 773.442.4978 or visit www.neiu.edu for details.



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