Advance Program Notes
Sounds of China
Saturday, February 2, 2019, 7:30 PM

These Advance Program Notes are provided online for our patrons who like to read about performances ahead of time. Printed programs will be provided to patrons at the performances. Programs are subject to change.

Sounds of China
Ma Jiuyue, composer and director

Sushan Mountain
Walk with Singing
Love Elegy
Listening
Solo:
Mask
Huxuan Dance
Solo: Zhang Ye
Samsara
Lead: Di Yang
Drifting Sands
Solo: Zhang Ye
One Rainy Night
In a Faraway Fairyland
Rose
Song of Horse Herding
Solo: Qiao He
Spirits
Encore: Flying Bodhifattva with Pipa

Ma Jiuyue
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Wang Loubin, arr. Ma Jiuyue
Folk song of Xin Jiang, arr. Ma Jiuyue
Ma Jiuyue
Ma Jiuyue
Ma Jiuyue

This performance is supported by Arts Midwest Touring Fund: China Tour, a program of Arts Midwest that is funded by the National Endowment for the Arts.

China Arts and Entertainment Group presents Sounds of China on behalf of the Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism.
Program Notes

SHUSHAN MOUNTAIN
Ma Jiuyue

The color of the melody changes with continuous rhythm. What is important is not the melody, but the state—an attitude of pursuing a higher level of spirit. The composition is regarded as a breakthrough in terms of how Chinese traditional music is composed and pursues an effect of electronic music using Loop-like drum beats and repetitive musical phrases.

WALKING WITH SINGING
Ma Jiuyue

Scherzando dance, humorous narration, joyful steps, melodious singing... Love makes us sing. Young hearts are dancing.

LOVE ELEGY
Ma Jiuyue

This song reminisces, like an old photo, about Shanghai in the 1940s and ‘50s. Shanghai’s sensitivity, neon lights, fair ladies, cheongsams (traditional Chinese dresses) are described through the joint performance of erhu, pipa, zhongruan, and flute. Grey is the main tone, and the picture is enriched by jazz harmony.

LISTENING
Ma Jiuyue

With a small but dynamic rhythm ensemble, jazz, vocal singing, and instrumental melody come together in harmony. The whole piece has a feeling of fashion, fusion, and pop music. The guzheng is played with virtuosity, and there is a melody familiar in the western region of China.

MASK
Ma Jiuyue

The music is developed from a dialogue between flute and pipa, which takes place in a different time and space. The melody is full of complicated emotions, together with loneliness from the inner heart. Ma brings a whole new way for the audience to appreciate the music by adopting an unusual orchestration.

HUXUAN DANCE
Ma Jiuyue

Huxuan is a dance that comes to China from the western regions in the great Tang Dynasty. The distinguishing feature lies in the fast and continuous spins. Tang poems describe the beauty of the dance as falling snow, flying grass, and a whirlwind. The dancers spin so fast that the audience cannot even tell their faces from their backs. This music composition includes two clefs of erhu, which brings back this amazing dance form that is almost lost in antiquity in a musical way.

SAMSARA
Ma Jiuyue

Past and present, soul and body, and dream and reality are entangled in a sober yet chaotic stage. Like the never-ending wheel, the melody, rhythm, and interweaving of the voice make the whole piece go beyond reality, full of uncertainties.
DRIFTING SANDS
Ma Jiuyue

In Dunhuang, on the ancient Silk Road, the expansive Mingsha Mountain surrounds the Crescent Moon Spring. When the wind blows, the sand flows like water. However, due to its terrain, the lake will never be buried by the sand, making this a mysterious wonder of the desert.

ONE RAINY NIGHT
Ma Jiuyue

Soft melodic sounds represent a couple telling each other stories of their life and love on one rainy night. They talk for hours, but when the rain stops and the sun comes out, they have to leave each other and say goodbye.

IN A FARAWAY FAIRYLAND
Wang Luobin, arr. Ma Jiuyue

In a Faraway Fairyland is a beautiful and renowned Chinese folk song written by Wang Luobin, who has been called the “king of songs” in western China, using materials and elements from Qinghai folk songs. It is said that Wang came to the village for a field trip in his 20s and came across a 15-year-old girl, Zhuo Ma, the daughter of the chief of the tribe. They had feelings for each other but didn’t develop a romantic relationship. When Wang returned to the village years later, he found that Zhuo Ma had been unhappily married and died from depression. Wang’s heart was deeply broken; he locked himself in his room for a week and put all his love, sadness, and sorrow down on paper, which later became this very well-known song. Ma Jiuyue retells this touching love story with a new concept and orchestration.

ROSE
Folk song of Xin Jiang (West of China), arr. Ma Jiuyue

In this traditional love song from western China, pleasant melodies of the pipa and flute remind the listener of a young boy and girl expressing their love for each other. Their pure and sincere love and happiness move all the passersby.

SONG OF HORSE HERDING
Ma Jiuyue

Combining Chinese folk music and jazz, this is a musical conversation between the East and the West.

SPIRITS
Ma Jiuyue

This one of the composer’s favorite tunes. After completing the composition with tears in his eyes, Jiuyue felt strongly emotional, like being possessed by spirits; that’s where the name comes from.
ENCORE: FLYING BODHIFATTVA WITH PIPA
Ma Jiuyue

The music is composed for one of the Dunhuang frescoes, the painting of flying fairies with pipas played backwards, which dates back to the Tang Dynasty and is found in Mogao Grottoes, Cave 112. After refining the music scores printed in Dunhuang frescoes, this piece shows a glorious picture of the great Tang Dynasty.

The style of playing pipa backwards is the most beautiful dance in all Dunhuang arts. It contains power and stretches, moving quickly while still being harmonious. The music and dance are elegantly combined and lead the audience’s focus to the shoulders of the fairies. It is unknown whether such a talented singer really existed or if everything came out of the painters’ fantastic imaginations and creativity. No matter how the image came into being, it remains a permanent symbol for the Tang culture.
Engagement Events

Saturday, February 2, 2019
MUSIC IN THE LOBBY: SARAH XUEJIAO ZHANG, GUZHENGBefore Sounds of China, local student Sarah Xuejiao Zhang performed music on the Chinese zither. Zhang, a talented 13-year-old, has been playing the guzheng, dancing, and drawing since she was four years old. Apart from the guzheng, she is also currently learning 10 languages.

Sunday, February 3, 2019
WORKSHOP: CHINESE MUSIC AND INSTRUMENTATIONWhile visiting Blacksburg, composer and director Ma Jiuyue led a workshop presentation for Virginia Tech music students.

Special thanks to Jenny Li, Alan Weinstein, and Sarah Xuejiao Zhang

Go Beyond

Ma Jiuyue’s compositions and Sounds of China’s performance blend traditional Chinese music with elements of contemporary genres like rock and pop. What was the effect for you of hearing pieces that spanned such a wide range of time and style? How did the more contemporary musical idioms you experienced relate to the traditional ones you heard, and vice versa?
In the Galleries

ARBOREAL
Thursday, January 24-Saturday, March 23, 2019
All galleries

Majestic, sustaining, enduring, but increasingly vulnerable—these words only begin to describe one of Earth’s most critical life forms: trees. This stunning selection of works by artists from Australia, Spain, Israel, Japan, and the United States explores the imagery of trees and their symbolic resonance. Arboreal features photography, video, painting, works on paper, and ceramic, wood, and stainless steel sculpture.

JOIN US!
GALLERY TALKS
Micro to Macro—All About Trees
Join us for a series of gallery talks presented by Virginia Tech faculty that explores a broad variety of topics relating to the world of trees, from sustainability and conservation to dendrochronology and invasive species. Each talk is approximately 30 minutes each and is free and open to the public. Talks will be held in the Ruth C. Horton Gallery.

Saturday, February 16, 2019, 5:30 PM
Art Through the Eyes of an Arborist: Eric Wiseman, Ph.D.

Wednesday, March 6, 2019, 6:30 PM
Charismatic Trees: Lynn Resler

Tuesday, March 19, 2019, 6:30 PM
Invasive Species—Trees as Victim and Victor: Jacob Barney, Ph.D.

GALLERY HOURS
Monday-Friday, 10 AM-5:30 PM
Saturday, 10 AM-4 PM

To arrange a group tour or class visit, please contact Meggin Hicklin, exhibitions program manager, at megh79@vt.edu.