



Fiona Sze Lorrain
concertiste de cithare (zheng)

Programme Notes for *Guzheng* Solo Concert 2007-8

1 . Three Variations on Plum Blossom

Traditional

梅花三弄

Known as the oldest musical manuscript, this melody was originally written for the flute by Huan Yi during the Jin dynasty (265-420 AD). Later adapted to the ancient zither *qin* in the Tang dynasty, the three variations blend a forceful tempo with a strikingly meditative harmony.

2 . Tune of a Fisherman Rowing at Dusk

Cao Zheng (1938)

渔舟唱晚

Adapted by the celebrated *guzheng* master, Cao Zheng, this well-known masterpiece is based on a version composed by the folk musician, Lou Shuhua. A poetic painting of a fishing boat returning home under the brilliant evening hues, the peaceful melody also depicts the village fisherman's cheerful and contented spirit.

3 . Lofty Mountains and Flowing Waters

Traditional (Zhejiang)

高山流水

One of the most famous masterpieces from the classical repertoire, this music draws its inspiration from an ancient legend that narrates the meeting of a scholar, Yu Boya and a woodcutter, Zhong Ziqi. More than a musical description of the mountainous scenery and flowing waters, this contemplative yet rhythmic piece demands both technical virtuosity and spiritual profundity.

4 . Battle against the Typhoon

Wang Changyuan (1965)

战台风

A celebrated classic that defines the beginning of a modern *guzheng* repertoire, *Battle against the Typhoon* depicts the Shanghai harbour proletariat's dramatic fight against the forces of nature, while protecting the commoners' possessions and the Party's properties. Wang composed this piece in 1965, while living for three months in the dormitories of the Shanghai harbour and sharing her quarters with the workers.

5 . Shooting the Drums on the Fragrant Mountains

Qu Yun (1980)

香山射鼓

An award-winning composition from the 6th International Asian Music Forum in 1983, this beautiful piece was written by contemporary Chinese composer, Qu Yun (now professor at Shaanxi Normal University of Fine Arts) in 1980. Inspired by Shaanxi traditional opera, the colourful music is richly



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characteristic of the region's folk culture. Tranquille, simple yet profound and picturesque, it evokes images of commoners travelling to the fragrant mountains where they execute artful archmanship.

6 . Rushing to the Flower Carnival
 赶花会

Ye Xuran (1960)

Initially a *pipa* solo piece composed by Ye Xuran in 1960, this light-hearted and playful short piece celebrates the festive mood of all who dress up specially for their flower carnival rush. The dazzling and packed flower carnival is one of the most popular annual folk festivals in Southwestern China. Different minority people gather to buy, trade and appreciate flowers, while borrowing the occasion to discover romances, foster fraternity, and renew life.

7 . General's Orders
 将军令

Traditional

Part of the guzheng's martial repertoire, this piece is a symbolic classic considered to be one of the most challenging. Portraying the episodes of ancient war, the General issuing orders, the troops preparing for battle... the music demands from the performer sustained high tempo, clear fingerwork, as well as a mental concentration that unities both yin and yang energies.

8 . The Lapping Waves of the Silvery River
 银河碧波

Fan Shang'er (1980s)

A melodious contemporary piece, *The Lapping Waves of the Silvery River* is based on the ancient chinese myth of the two stars, Vega (the Weaving Maid) and Altair (the Cowherd Boy). Legend has it that the Weaving Maid and the Cowherd Boy are two young lovers who were separated by force from each other. Their true, sincere love eventually moved nature. With the help of sparrows who flock high in the sky to construct a bridge of themselves, both lovers thus manage to reunite annually on this bridge of sparrows. This nostalgic piece portrays the lovers' heartfelt gratitude for the sparrows (whose skybound journey is later known as the 'Silvery River'), as well as their shortlasting joy in reuniting after every painstaking year of waiting and anticipation.

Interval

9 . Mandarin Ducks Playing at the Pond in Winter
 寒鸭戏水

Traditional (Chaozhou)

Known for its grace and liveliness, this classic translates into notes the images of mandarin ducks playing in the waters during the wintery times. Subtle, detailed and rhythmically delicate, this beautiful piece is light, calm and refreshing.



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10 . Flower Blossoms of the Moonlit Spring River Traditional
 春江花月夜

A *chef d'œuvre* from *guzheng's* “literary repertoire,” this piece borrows its contents from a lyrical poem written by the Tang poet, Zhang Ruowu. Speaking and poignantly evocative, this composition is an exemplar of “word painting” in traditional Chinese music. Divided into eight sections, it depicts various sounds of nature such as the dusk falling on a citadel, drums and running river, while presenting aurally the visual colours of a dusk scenery. This ancient solo work is originally transcribed for *pipa*, the traditional Chinese lute.

11 . The Vulture Captures a Crane Traditional (Zhejiang)
 海青拿天鹤

Adapted from a solo *pipa* piece written during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), this fast-paced traditional repertoire places much emphasis on delicate fingerwork in both hands. It describes the hunting scenes of *haiqing*, a savage hunting animal reared by hunters in the cold Northern China. Very imaginative and forceful, the piece also boasts of unexpected tempo changes and tonality variations.

12 . When Spring Breaks on the Snow Mountains Fan Shang'er & Gesang Daji (1980s)
 雪山春晓

A contemporary piece originally entitled *By the Lhasa River*, this work incorporates subtly nuances of Tibetan folk art music in terms of syncopated rhythms and melodic textures. It describes the natural beauty of Tibetan mountainous regions, and portrays the joys of Tibetans living amongst their snow-capped mountains.

13 . Lin Chong Flees at Midnight Lu Xiutang & Wang Xunzhi (1962)
 林冲夜奔

Extracted directly from *The Water Margins*, one of the four great classics in Chinese literature, the story of this contemporary piece traces Lin Chong, the tragic hero's escape to Liang Mountain at midnight. The music has its materials based on *Night Escape*, an act from the Kunqu opera, *The Double-edged Sword*. It describes Lin Chong's sufferings from an evil officier, his memories of the past, and his intention to join an uprising army at Liang Mountain. Imitating the raging snowstorm which he encounters during the escape, the interpretation of this piece combines exquisitely a variety of techniques and rich emotions.

14 . Glowing Splendour of the Pearls in the Gorges Liu Weishan & Xu Nengqiang (1974)
 峡谷明珠放异彩

An award-winning solo piece at a nationwide traditional music contest in 1974, this music presents the magnificence and vastness of the Bronze Gorges in Yinchuan. Dense tonal colours mixed with a variety of left-hand techniques is an important feature of this contemporary composition, which later evolved into



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a full-scale orchestral concerto. Liu wrote it with Xu during her visit with the Central Song and Dance Ensemble of China to the construction site of the Gorges in faraway and the then impoverished province of Yinchuan.

Reprise