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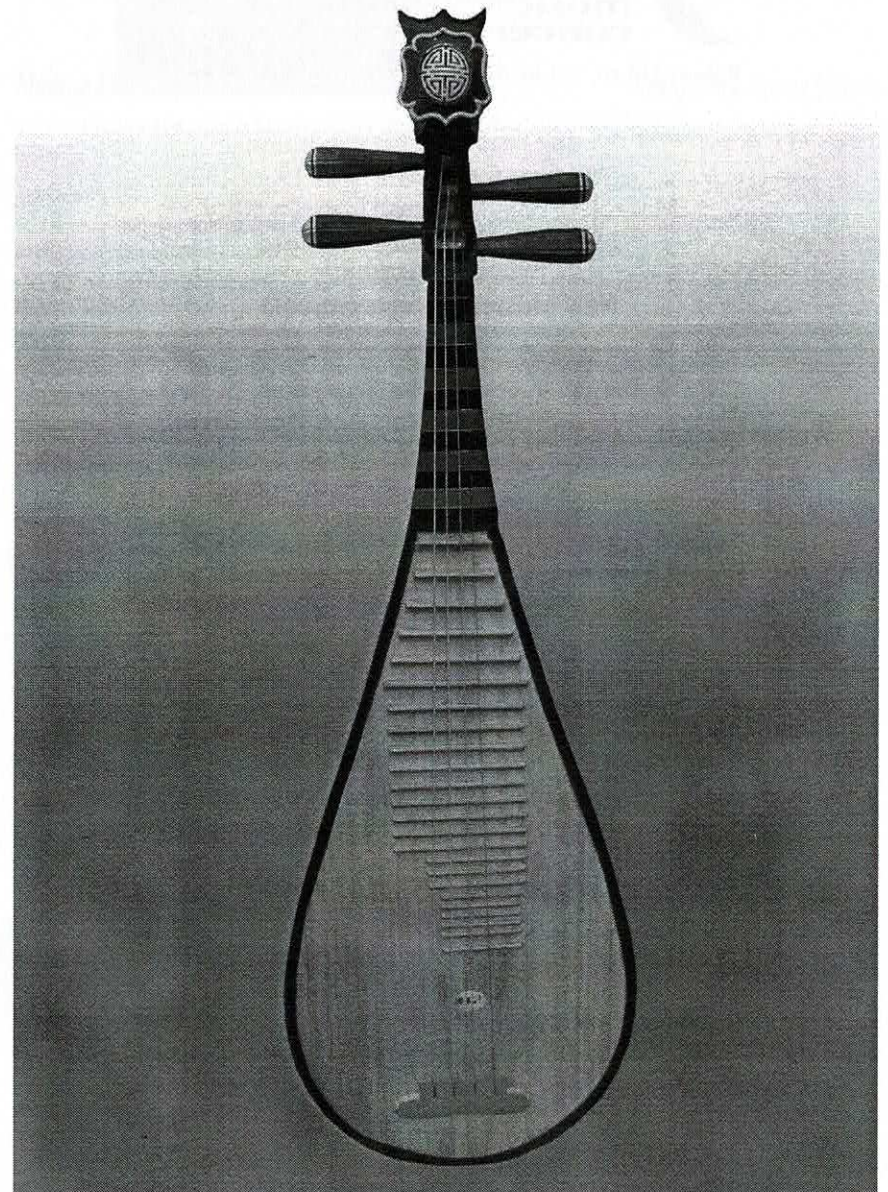
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# NEW BEIJING

Weiwei Lan pipa | New Music Concerts Ensemble | Robert Aitken direction







Robert Aitken, artistic director



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# NEW BEIJING

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*Programme:*

**CHEN Xiaoyong** (China 1955)

*Evapora* (1994)

Dianne Aitken flute Max Christie clarinet Gregory Oh piano  
Lynn Kuo violin David Hetherington cello Robert Aitken direction

### Solo works for pipa

1. *Lu Yao* 绿么 by **YANG Jieming**

2. *Farewell to My Concubine* 霸王卸甲 (traditional)

**JIA Guoping** (China 1963)

*Sparkling in the Vast* (2014)

Weiwei Lan pipa Dianne Aitken flute Max Christie clarinet Rick Sacks percussion  
Erica Goodman harp Roberto Occhipinti contrabass Robert Aitken direction  
(world premiere, RCM 21C commission)

— *Intermission* —

**CHEN Xiaoyong**

*Talking through Distance* (2014)

Robert Aitken flute Weiwei Lan pipa  
(world premiere, Roger D. Moore commission)

**QIN Wenchen** (China 1966)

*Pipa Words* 琵琶辞 (2006)

Weiwei Lan pipa

**Alexina LOUIE** (Canada 1949)

*Imaginary Opera* (2004)

Dianne Aitken flute Melissa Scott oboe Max Christie clarinet Jerry Robinson bassoon  
Rick Sacks, David Schotzko percussion Gregory Oh piano Lynn Kuo, Sonia Vizante violins  
Ivan Ivanovich viola David Hetherington cello Roberto Occhipinti contrabass  
Robert Aitken direction

**LAN Weiwei** (in Chinese 兰薇薇) was born in Sichuan, China, 1980. She has pursued the career of a pipa-player for more than 20 years, and considered to be one of the finest pipa players in China. She has won a multitude of prizes since childhood. In recent years, Lan Weiwei has been invited to guest-perform in Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Mongolia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Canada, Mexico, Vietnam, Indonesia, etc. From the very start of her artistic career she has dedicated herself to introducing the traditional and folk music of China to the Western world. In addition, she has an intense passion for playing contemporary music of many different forms – solo pieces, ensemble music, and concertos with symphony orchestra etc. She has held recitals in Beijing, Freiburg, Taipei, etc. She has co-operated with various orchestras around China such as Beijing, Shanghai, Henan, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, Hong Kong as well as in Taipei, Estonia, Freiburg and Toronto. Through her performing art pipa music has become a bridge between ancient and modern times as well as between the East and the West. Lan Weiwei teaches at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, China.



**CHEN Xiaoyong** was born in Peking on 13 May 1955, where he first studied violin and then composition from 1980 until 1985 at the Central Conservatory. He completed studies immediately afterwards with György Ligeti in 1989 at the Academy of Music and Theatre in Hamburg. Xiaoyong Chen belongs to a small group of Chinese composers who have very recently aroused great attention on an international scale. Guest professorships have constantly taken him to Taiwan, Hong Kong and China since 1997. Since 1987 he has been a lecturer at the Asia-Africa Institute of the University of Hamburg and since 2006 he has been professor for composition at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. In October 2010 Chen was appointed Guest Professor in the areas of New Music, Composition and Chinese Musical Culture at the Academy of Music and Theatre in Hamburg.

**CHEN Xiaoyong** (China 1955)

*Evapora* (1994)

The title *Evapora* comes from Latin and is of course the source of the word 'evaporate.' I have transferred this visual concept into an acoustical one: sound—echo—nothing, similar to clouds: slightly foggy—invisible. This composition is cast in three movements with differing characteristics. The sound material is used sparingly throughout the entire piece.

— Xiaoyong Chen

**CHEN Xiaoyong**

*Talking through Distance* (2014)

The composition *Talking through Distance* consists of ten consecutive movements with different characteristics. The independent movements create acoustic patterns and build up a new whole on a higher level. This principle also applies to both instruments, originating from divergent cultures, becoming one in a certain way.

Composing is a steadily progressing journey for me, and a reflection of my knowledge of observing and modeling reality afterwards. Both instruments are handled unconventionally. This particular way of structuring notes, sounds and silence gives us new impressions. *Talking through Distance* is comparable to a process from unfamiliarity to intimacy.

— Xiaoyong Chen

## Solo Works for Pipa

### 1. *Lv Yao* 绿么 by Yang Jieming

*Lv Yao* is a dance that was very well known in the royal family of the Tang dynasty 唐代. However, with the passage of time it vanished and its character now can only be imagined through references in Tang era poetry 唐诗. The composer lives in Xi'an 西安 which was formerly the capital of that great and prosperous dynasty. He adopted the structure of the Tang *Da-qu* 唐大曲 form of court music which consists of several paragraphs with gradual tempo changes: rubato-adagio-moderato-(allegro)presto-rubato 散—慢—中—快—散.

### 2. *Farewell to My Concubine* 霸王卸甲 (traditional)

The music is about a real historical event: the great battle in Gai-xia 垓下之战 in the year 202 BCE. The winner Liu Bang, King of the Han people 汉王刘邦 defeated his opponent Xiang Yu, the Conqueror of Chu 楚霸王项羽 with the most well-known tactic in Chinese history: an ambush from all sides 十面埋伏. While trapped in the tent of her lover, the Concubine Yu 虞姬 bade farewell to her Conqueror and her own life with a sword dance. King Liu Bang preserved the dignity of the valiant defeated hero by not chasing Xiang Yu down but allowing him to commit suicide by the Wu-Jiang river 乌江 where the Chu people were waiting for his triumphant return from the other side.

**JIA Guoping** was born in 1963 in Shanxi, China. He completed his music studies at the Shanxi Jin opera academy in Taiyuan in 1984 and joined the music department at the cultural center in Luliang until 1987. From 1987 to 1991 he attended the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing where he studied composition with Xiaoson Qu and Zhengmin Xu and was later appointed a lecturer in harmony and composition there. From 1994 to 1998 he studied at the Stuttgart Musikhochschule with Rolf Hempel and Helmut Lachenmann and participated in the 1996 Darmstadt festival. Since September 1998 he has been a professor for composition and analysis of new music at the Central Conservatory in Beijing. Guoping Jia has received several prizes and honors in China and in Germany for his compositions.

**JIA Guoping** (China 1963)

*Sparkling in the Vast* (2014)

*Sparkling in the Vast* features and extends particular techniques of pipa playing, blending with the plucked sound of harp playing. Pipa and harp chase each other, sparkling in the flowing atmosphere created by the wind instruments and double bass. *Vast is endless silence, setting off and absorbing every sparkling shine.*



**QIN Wenchen** was born in Erdos, Inner Mongolia, China, where he had classes in Chinese folk music at an early age. In 1987 he began his studies in composition at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. He studied under Xu Shuya and Zhu Jianer. After his graduation in 1992, he taught at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. He went to Germany on a DAAD scholarship at the Folkwang Hochschule in Essen in 1998, where he graduated with distinction in 2001. His teacher was Nicolaus A. Huber. Since his return to Beijing in 2001 Qin is back as a teacher at the Central Conservatory of Music and he composes for many international patrons.

**QIN Wenchen** (China 1966)

*Pipa Words* 琵琶辞 (2006)

This piece was written for the composer's friend, Julian Yu, and was premiered by Lan Weiwei at the Shanghai Oriental Art Center in 2008. It begins solely with harmonics, creating a kaleidoscopic sound world resembling the colourful spectrums created by the sun shining through the morning dew. The momentum of the piece then builds as the musical streams converge into the tumbling sound world of a roaring river and heading towards the sea of tranquility, concluding this highly imaginative work in one continuous, uninterrupted 'breath'. The composer has presented the pipa in a different way with this piece, rethinking the concept of sound through the exploration of its timbral possibilities and extended techniques, especially that of harmonics, utilizing them to a new height.

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Born in Canada of Chinese ancestry, **Alexina Louie** is one of Canada's most pre-eminent composers. Upon graduating from the University of California at San Diego with her Master's degree in composition, she realized that in order to find her musical voice, she felt compelled to explore her Chinese ancestry through the study of Asian legends and poetry as well as the music of Japan, China, and Indonesia. The result of the merging of Asian and Western musical elements in her compositions is a unique musical voice. One of the most in demand composers in Canada, she has written works for soloists, ensembles, orchestras, as well as music for television, dance, and film. Ms. Louie was invested as an Officer of the Order of Canada, the nation's highest civilian honour, in 2006. In addition, she is a multiple JUNO Award winner and has recently received her ninth JUNO nomination. Her expressive and personal style results in music that is powerful, communicative, and deeply human.

**Alexina LOUIE** (Canada 1949)

*Imaginary Opera* (2004)

I. *Prologue* II. *By The River* III. *Frozen Rain* IV. *Pursuing The Dragon*

These "scenes from an imaginary opera" (an imagined ghost opera) reveal my long-standing pre-occupation with an integration of Eastern and Western approaches in my music. Much of my music develops from the philosophy of (extreme) contrast and balance rooted in the Chinese principles of Yin and Yang.

More specifically, one finds the influences of Japanese instruments such as the *hichiriki* (a small double reed instrument), the *shakuhachi* (a vertical bamboo flute), and the *sho* (a multiple-piped double reed instrument), which inspire the use of such devices as bending tones, control of vibrato, and dense chord clusters.

The *Prologue* reveals many of the compositional elements which are revisited in the following movements. *By The River* alludes to an imagined dramatic event, moving to a turning point near the end - a heightened emotion after a quiet and mysterious central section. The harmonies slowly but inexorably move to a quiet unison note. *Frozen Rain* is a compact atmospheric movement which explores the most ephemeral of sounds. *Pursuing The Dragon*, a "break out" movement, is a flash of virtuosic intensity heading toward a finale comprised of a flurry of Chinese opera gongs.

When I was a university student, my weekend habit was to attend Japanese samurai films in East End Vancouver with friends. These films, full of ritual, fantastic costumes, murder and suicides (*harakiri*), heightened drama, ghosts and demons, devotion, colourful battle scenes etc. left a strong impression on me. Over time, along with other influences, these memories infused my being and eventually helped to shape my musical language. With this piece, I offer each listener the opportunity to create an opera of his or her own imagining.

*Imaginary Opera* was commissioned by Montreal New Music-Presences for Ensemble Court-Circuit through the assistance of Radio France and Radio Canada. — *Alexina Louie*



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