Recalling an Old Friend: Lost in Reverie
Ming Zhu's Guqin Senior Recital

CFA HALL, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, CT || Saturday, March 28, 2015 || 7 P.M. EST

To my guqin teacher Yao Liang, my parents, and my dear friend and lifelong mentor, Chen Hui

The guqin is an ancient Chinese seven-string plucked instrument with a history of around 3,000 years. It is deemed to be the origin of the Han Chinese music and is closely related to ancient Chinese history, politics, aesthetics and philosophies. In 2003, guqin music was proclaimed to be the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

As a Music and Economics double major at Wesleyan University, Ming Zhu has been studying and performing the guqin for more than ten years. He achieved high honors by the China Nationalities Orchestra Society in the Guqin Performing Examination 2012 and has performed with some of the most respected guqin artists in China, including his guqin teacher Yao Liang and Gong Yi, a guqin master and a professor of the guqin at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. In 2011, Ming appeared as the first student guqin soloist in the Shenzhen City Concert Hall for the 2011 Summer Universiade.

Showcasing a wide range of guqin repertoires, Ming will play pieces from guqin repertoires from 2524 BC to the 20th century. A musical time journey is intended to bring audience to travel from the starting point of the Han Chinese history, through four essential Chinese dynasties Tang (618 - 907), Song (960 - 1279), Ming (1368-1644), Qing (1644-1912), and finally landing on contemporary China. In addition to guqin solo pieces, several duet and trio pieces arranged for the guqin and the erhu, the guqin and the Western flute, the guqin and the pipa, the guqin and the percussion will also be performed.
Guqin Solo

Rhapsody on a Celestial (Shen Ren Chang) 神人暢
Composed during 2324 – 2206 BC, Published in 1525

Mythologizing report says the piece was composed by Emperor Yao, a legendary Chinese ruler born in 2324 BC. Yao composed this piece to commemorate the appearance of a celestial. This piece only uses the first five strings of the instrument and is the only piece in the entire guqin repertoire that incorporates all the harmonics available on the guqin.

Flowing Water (Liu Shui) 流水
Composed during 771 – 476 BC, Published in 1425

This most famous guqin piece was said to be composed by Yu Boya, a famous guqin player from the Spring and Autumn Period (771 – 476 BC). The music vividly depicts water flowing from small brooks to a sea, and was traditionally only played for a confidant (zhijin) of the player. In 1977, this piece was included in the Voyager Golden Record and sent into the outer space by NASA as a representative of the traditional Chinese music.

Evening Ballad of the Drunken Fisherman (Zui Yu Chang Wan) 醉漁唱晚
Composed in Tang Dynasty, Published in 1549

Two Tang dynasty poets Pi Rixiu and Lu Guimeng composed this piece together after hearing a drunken fisherman singing in the evening while they were floating in a boat on the river. The music is known for its witty melodies and is free in rhythms.

Brume Over the Xiao and Xiang Rivers (Xiao Xiang Shui Yun) 潮湘水雲
Composed in Song Dynasty, Published in 1425

One of the most praised guqin pieces composed by Guo Chuwang, it depicts a scene where the Xiao and Xiang rivers were covered by the brume. It expresses the composer’s frustration toward the Song government.

Flying Dragons (Long Xiang Cao) 龍翔操
Composed & Published in Ming Dynasty 1425

A representative composition of the school of Guangling, this philosophical piece intends to convey a feeling of solemnness and dignity.

Brook Traversing Valleys (Bi Jian Liu Quan) 碧涧流泉
Composed & Published in Qing Dynasty 1686

A guqin composition especially popular in Southern China (Ling Nan), this piece is famous for its clean melodies and delicate overall structure. The structure of the piece is often compared to an A-B-A ternary form, which is common in the Western classical music but rare in the guqin repertoire.

Melody of Loulan (Loulan San) 樸蘭散
Composed by Jin Xiang, Published in the 1980s

Loulan was an ancient Kingdom located along the Silk Road in the 2nd century BCE on the northeastern edge of the Lap Desert. Around 4th century, Loulan Kingdom mysteriously disappeared and its ruins were not found until 1900. The composer incorporated many Loulan folk tunes and organized the piece in an improvisational style. Upon its release in the 1980s, this contemporary guqin composition was deemed to be a groundbreaking and remarkable piece in guqin’s 3,000 years of history.
Collaborations

Three Variations on the Plum Blossom (*Mei Hua San Nong*) 梅花三弄
Guqin: Ming Zhu
Western Flute: Charlene (Zheyun) Ni
Composed during 265 – 420, Published in 1425
Arranged by Ming Zhu, January 2015

One of the most popular and demanded guqin pieces, this composition is especially known for its delicate structure and its repeated theme on different pitches on harmonics.

Three Variations on the Yang Pass (*Yang Guan San Die*) 葬闕三叠
Guqin: Ming Zhu
Erhu: Joy Lu
Composed in Tang Dynasty, Published in 1876
Arranged by Ming Zhu & Joy Lu, February 2015

The Yang Pass is one of the two most important mountain passes located in Dunhuang, far northwestern China as the last stop before Chinese travellers to leave China. The music is a melancholy farewell song with its lyrics written by a famous Tang Dynasty poet Wang Wei. The theme melody is played three times with minor variations.

Recalling an Old Friend (*Yi Gu Ren*) 憶故人
Guqin: Ming Zhu
Pipa: Yihan Chen
Composed Year Unknown, Published in 1937
Notated & Arranged by Ming Zhu, February 2015

Spring Breeze (*Chun Feng*) 春風
Guqin: Ming Zhu
Pipa: Yihan Chen
Percussion: Tim Gaylord
Composed & Published in 1982
Composed by Xu Guohua, Gong Yi
Arranged by Zhou Chenglong

Upon its release in 1982, this contemporary guqin composition is regarded as a groundbreaking and remarkable piece in the guqin’s 3,000-year history. The piece requires many novel and virtuosic techniques, while incorporating new arrangements of music form and various modulations in tonality.
Guest Musicians

Yihan Chen  *Pipa* Soloist

A mesmerizing master of the Pipa (an ancient four-string Chinese lute), Yihan Chen was a prizewinner at the 1995 Freedom International Chinese Instrument Competition and the 1989 Art Cup. She has performed at many major international festivals in China, USA, France, Portugal, Canada, Japan and Italy, such as Spoleto Festival USA 2012, Lincoln Center Festival, Skaneateles Festival, De Création Musicale de Radio France, Le Festival Avignon, Le Festival Musique en Scène, Encontros Acarte 98 Portugal, La Cité de la Musique, Lotus Festival, and Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra’s New Music Festival. She has appeared at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Library of Congress and other leading venues. Ms. Chen has collaborated with internationally renowned composers such as Chen Yi, Zhou Long, Chen Qigang and Bright Sheng. She was the soloist of the Hua Xia Chamber Ensemble (Beijing) and has been performing with Music From China (New York City) since 1999. After graduating from the China Conservatory of Music with a bachelor's degree in 1995, Yihan was a faculty member there teaching the Pipa at its affiliated middle school.

Joy Lu  *Erhu* Soloist & Conductor of the Wesleyan Chinese Music Ensemble

Joy Lu is a PhD candidate in ethnomusicology at Wesleyan. She received a B.F.A. in *erhu* performance and music education from National Taiwan Normal University, and an M.A. in ethnomusicology from the University of Sheffield, U.K. Joy has studied *erhu* since her childhood and was awarded several prizes in *erhu* performances in Taiwan. After graduating from the University, Joy began to direct and conduct Chinese music orchestras and ensembles. Her research includes Chinese and Taiwanese music and her dissertation analyzes the music, gender and national politics of *koo-a-hi* (Taiwanese Opera).

Tim Gaylord  Percussionist

Tim Gaylord is a Percussionist who lives in Middletown, CT. Before coming to Connecticut in 2007, Tim spent most of his life in Toledo, OH and Detroit, MI. Tim enjoys playing and teaching music in settings ranging from Chamber Music to Rock Bands. Tim also plays with and serves as section leader for various ensembles at Wesleyan University. In the Summer Tim plays with the ArtFarm Electro Acoustic Orchestral Unit (AEIOU) and the Middletown Children's Circus Band.