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Ensemble Concerts: Orchid Ensemble, March 23, 2010

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About the Artists . . .

The Orchid Ensemble blends ancient musical instruments and traditions from China and beyond, creating a beautiful new sound that is both creative and distinct. The trio of percussion, zheng and erhu creates a truly multi-cultural musical listening experience. This Vancouver-based ensemble performs regularly across North America. Recent appearances include the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; the Smithsonian Institution's Freer Gallery; and at the Vancouver International Jazz Festival. The Orchid Ensemble regularly collaborates with musicians from a wide variety of world cultures and actively commissions new works for its ensemble.

Lan Tung is Orchid Ensemble's erhu or Chinese fiddle player. She trained at Taiwan's Chinese Cultural University and went on to study with erhu virtuosi Jiebing Chen in San Francisco and Zhang Funming in Beijing. She is a member of Vancouver's world music ensemble Tandava, and has premiered numerous compositions by Canadian and US composers.

Haiqiong Deng is Orchid Ensemble's zheng and percussion player. Winner of the Outstanding Performance Prize at the Chinese National Zheng Competition in Shanghai, Haiqiong is equally versed in both traditional and contemporary music. She has performed throughout China, Japan, Singapore and the US, including her 2003 solo debut at the Carnegie Hall and guest appearances with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, the Singapore Chinese Orchestra, and Music From China.

Jonathan Bernard is Orchid Ensemble's percussionist. Jonathan regularly performs with Vancouver New Music, Fringe Group, Ensemble Symposium, and Tandava. He is the principal percussionist with the Vancouver Island Symphony. Jonathan's interest in World Music has led him to perform Chinese, Javanese, Balinese and Korean music and study traditional and contemporary Chinese percussion in Beijing, China, Arabic percussion in Cairo, Egypt, and Carnatic rhythm in South India.

For more information, or to hear samples of their work, go to www.orchidensemble.com.

Illinois State University
College of Fine Arts
School of Music

Illinois State University
New Music Festival

Orchid Ensemble

Kemp Recital Hall
March 23, 2010
Tuesday Evening
8:00 p.m.

This is the one hundred and thirty-eighth program of the 2009-2010 season.

Program

Please turn off cell phones and pagers for the duration of the concert. Thank you.

Three Variations of Plum Blossom

Huan Yi (appr. 350AD)
arranged by Lan Tung (2006)

The most famous composition for the scholarly instrument qin or 7-string zither, however, it was first played on dizi/Chinese bamboo flute during the East Jin Dynasty (317-420). The earliest known qin score is from the Miraculous Secret Qin Handbook, compiled in 1425. In Chinese philosophy, the plum blossom is personified as human nobility.

The Wind Desires the Clouds

Lan Tung (2009)

The original version for erhu and 2-3 percussionists was written as the theme song for a short film Chinatown. The simple haunting melodic line is contrasted by the polyrhythms in the zheng and percussion parts.

The wind desires the clouds; the clouds desire to fly.
When the wind starts to blow; the clouds know;
When the clouds get tired; the wind knows.

You are like the clouds, free to fly anywhere;
Your are like the winds, blow your heart out.
As long as the wind blows; the clouds will fly.

You are like the clouds, free to fly anywhere;
Your are like the winds, blow your heart out.

I have flown over thousands of rivers, to seek your beauty.

El Adon

III. Hayot Hakodesh (Celestial Beings)
IV. Al Kol Hama-asim (Over all Creation)

Moshe Denburg (2009)
Canada Council for the Arts commission

The theme is based on a mystical hymn, chanted on the Sabbath day: El Adon al Kol Hama-asim (God, Ruler over all Creation). Many mystical and kabbalistic references are found in the text. However, the variations are presented first, and only finally the original theme itself. Therefore, the movements are subtitled as they appear in the hymn, but in reverse order.

The Winged Horses of Heaven

Moshe Denburg (2001)

In 138 BC, the emperor Wudi of the Han Dynasty sent his general Zhang Qian to contact a western tribe to solicit help to fight invaders from the north. After 13 years of arduous journeys, adventures and misadventures, Zhang Qian returned with news of a stronger and faster breed of horse to help in the wars. Thought to be of celestial origin, these now extinct horses were the compelling motivation behind the opening of a permanent route to the west of China and beyond. This work was commissioned by the Orchid Ensemble through the Commissioning of Canadian Compositions program of the Canada Council for the Arts.

The Ghostly Moon

Barry Truax (2008)
BC Arts Council Commission

The Ghostly Moon is inspired by the tradition of Chinese ghost stories, many of which are centred on a female ghost who wishes to return to life. In this case, the story combines elements and poetry from many different sources from the 16th to the 18th centuries, and portrays the ghost as a wronged woman who returns for vengeance. However, the young scholar she visits is the brother of the man who betrayed her, and once she hears his voice she realizes this is her true lover. To return to life she must join with him as his wife, which is the outcome of many of the traditional Chinese tales. The disembodied theatrical effects from traditional Chinese drama suggested a contemporary treatment with electroacoustic techniques.

~ Intermission ~

Springs in the Forest

Zheng Solo

Ye Xiaogang (2001)

Erhu Improvisation

Erhu Solo

Lan Tung

Dancing Moon

Lan Tung (2009)

The fast 5/4 melody is inspired by a folk song from south west China. To contrast with its constant motion, a number of gestures for improvisation are inserted, taking inspiration from a Chinese classical poem praising the moon hanging high over the mountains. The piece ends in a fast 9 beat cycle and a series of modulations, inspired by Balkan music.

Cocoon

Mark Armanini (2007)

Composed for Orchid Ensemble's interdisciplinary show 'Triaspora', Cocoon extends the use of colourful chromatic lines, weaving harmony and melody into a swirling mass of sound. The short quick Allegro at the heart of the piece is a frantic release from the brooding, mystic atmosphere at the beginning and ending of this trio tableau.

Maqam: Prelude and Dance

Zhou Ji, Shao Guangchen and Li Mei
arranged by Mei Han

Maqam is a musical form found throughout the Middle East, Central Asia and the Xinjiang province of northwestern China. It is generally defined as a sequence of notes with rules that define its general melodic development, each maqam having a different character conveying a mood. In Xinjiang, maqams are sometimes considered "suites" defining a specific mood, or moods. Xinjiang maqams can include instrumental, vocal and dance music, often with complex rhythmic patterns and dramatic tempo changes.