



Bard College Conservatory of Music

Bard Chinese Ensemble

Presented by the US-China Music Institute

Shutong Li, *music director*

Sunday, Oct 19, 2025 at 2 pm

László Z. Bitó '60 Conservatory Building

PROGRAM

Symphonic Floras 《芬芳的交响》 (2018/2024)

Phang Kok Jun

Yun Shui (Clouds and Water) guqin concerto 《云水》 (2011)

Tang Jianping

Eric Kehan Wang, guqin

Postcards from Macao 《澳门明信片》 (2019)

Wang Chenwei

Intermission

Late Autumn pipa concerto 《晚秋》 (2014)

Li Bochan

Zoey Xiaoyan Luo, pipa

Tessa Tianxiang Ni, piano

Lyrical Variations 《抒情变奏曲》 (2003)

Liu Changyuan

All pieces in this program arranged by Shutong Li.

PROGRAM NOTES

Phang Kok Jun

Symphonic Floras 《芬芳的交响》 (2018/2024)

This work was conceptualized through a series of flora-inspired imagery, and the listener may choose to visualize the piece as such. Composed by young Singaporean composer Phang Kok Jun, some key images in the work include: an opening image of a vast, pastoral sight; flowers and leaves dancing in the wind; a sudden and unexpected tropical thunderstorm turning everything into a messy landscape; the resilient floras regrowing back to its former, elegant state.

Tang Jianping

Yun Shui (Clouds and Water) 《云水》 (2011)

Yun Shui unfolds like a meditation between heaven and earth. Tang Jianping envisions the ancient scholar before mist and stream, plucking the guqin in quiet dialogue with nature. The music drifts between form and formlessness—clouds dissolving, water flowing—echoing the timeless pursuit of spiritual freedom. Through the guqin's delicate resonance and the orchestra's luminous breath, Tang paints a soundscape of stillness and renewal, where simplicity becomes profound. *Clouds and Water* embodies the essence of Chinese philosophy: the return to purity, the harmony of all things, and the serene radiance of the soul in tune with the natural world.

Wang Chenwei

Postcards from Macao 《澳门明信片》 (2019)

Postcards from Macao celebrates the city's diverse heritage through three evocative movements: A-Ma Temple, Mount Fortress, and Senado Square. Each "postcard" blends musical motifs from Cantonese, Hokkien, and Portuguese traditions, portraying Macao's seafaring legends, its 1622 defense against the Dutch, and its enduring cultural fusion. Through vivid orchestration and cross-cultural counterpoint, Wang paints a musical portrait of Macao as a meeting place of East and West—at once historical, spiritual, and deeply nostalgic.

Li Bochan

Late Autumn 《晚秋》 (2014)

Inspired by Xin Qiji's verse “欲说还休，却道天凉好个秋” (“About to speak, but stop—ah, what a wistful autumn it is”), this pipa and piano concerto captures the bittersweet mood of late autumn—parting, reflection, and quiet strength. Structured in a three-part sonata form, the music moves from lyrical melancholy to emotional turbulence before returning with sweeping intensity. Blending traditional Chinese expression with Western techniques, Li Bochan reveals the pipa's poetic depth and dramatic power in this evocative, autumn-hued work which he composed at just twenty-two years old.

Liu Changyuan

***Lyrical Variations* 《抒情变奏曲》(2003)**

Commissioned by the China National Traditional Orchestra and awarded the Silver Prize at the 2003 National Orchestral Composition Competition, *Lyrical Variations* marks Liu Changyuan's first large-scale work for Chinese orchestra. This three-movement composition traces the full spectrum of human emotion: the first expresses longing, tenderness, and quiet melancholy; the second sparkles with joy and vitality; and the third surges with passion and lyric grandeur, interwoven with moments of humor and wit. Liu's music stands at the confluence of Chinese lyricism and symphonic drama. He views Chinese orchestral music as a "new continent" of the symphonic world—capable of both refinement and power. In *Lyrical Variations*, graceful melodies—always at the heart of his art—unfold with sincerity and depth, carried by the nuanced timbres of traditional instruments. The work exemplifies Liu's belief that true artistry lies in emotional truth and universal humanity: using the colors of national instruments to express timeless feelings shared by all.

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Shutong Li, music director and conductor

In addition to serving as the music director of the Bard Chinese Ensemble at the US-China Music Institute, Li is also the assistant conductor of the annual China Now Festival and the Bard East/West Ensemble. In 2017, Li founded an orchestra called "Musicians For Musicians" in New Mexico and organized and conducted 19 projects with 38 public concerts, which hosted over 50 young opera singers and instrumental soloists. He also served as chief conductor of the Symphony of Albuquerque and the UNM Health Sciences Centers Orchestra. Li has worked with groups such as the Chinese Music Ensemble of New York, Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra, The Orchestra Now, the Dolce Suono Chorus, New York Concert Chorale, the State Opera Stara Zagora, Teatro Mancinelli Orvieto, the Dédalo Ensemble, and the AltreVoci Ensemble.

Eric Kehan Wang, guqin

Eric Wang is a 5th year student double-majoring in Music Performance and Theater at Bard, originally from Inner Mongolia, China. He began his guqin journey at the age of 10 and has been studying under Professor Zhao Jiazhen, a renowned doctoral advisor at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. His performance practice bridges classical Chinese aesthetics and contemporary theatrical expression, exploring how sound, gesture, and silence can coexist on stage. Through his studies, Kehan aims to bring the ancient resonance of the guqin into modern performance contexts, blending Eastern musical traditions with Western stage art to create a dialogue between cultures and time.

Zoey Xiaoyan Luo, pipa

Zoey Luo is a highly acclaimed young pipa musician, co-founder of the Echos of China Ensemble, and an active member of the Bard East/West Ensemble. She is actively engaged in the New York music scene. Immersed in Chinese music for over 15 years, she entered Bard Conservatory's US-China Music Institute for a Pipa Performance and Film Production double

degree program. She has delivered outstanding performances at world-renowned venues and institutions, including Carnegie Hall and Jazz at Lincoln Center. In June 2025, during the Bard East/West Ensemble's China tour, she performed as a soloist in 11 concerts across 7 cities. In September 2025, she was admitted into the master's program, Chinese Music and Culture at the Bard Conservatory of Music.

Tessa Tianxiang Ni, piano

Pianist Tessa Tianxiang Ni discovered her passion for music through her mother's encouragement to play with heart and feeling. She began piano studies at seven and made her solo debut in Beijing at twelve. Tessa has since performed widely across China, including in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Wuhan, Hangzhou, and Taiyuan, and has appeared at festivals such as the Chautauqua Institution and the Vivace Music Festival. Passionate about chamber music, she has participated in programs including the Bowdoin International Chamber Music Festival and the Maine Chamber Music Seminar. Tessa currently studies with Prof. Rieko Aizawa and German studies at Bard College and the Bard Conservatory of Music. She entered the Central Conservatory of Music affiliated middle school in Beijing at the age of nine and studied there through high school under the guidance of Prof. Mai Su, Prof. Hongbo Quan and Prof. Xinning Zhang.

BARD CHINESE ENSEMBLE

Shutong Li, conductor and arranger

Dizi Minghui (Mia) Wu	Kendall Griffith Yingren Zhao	Violin Isabel Chin Garita Chuanning Wang Puyu Shan Fiona Secor
Flute Anna White Feiyu Chen	Zhongruan Yuling Nan	Viola Michael Holbrook
Clarinet James McCourt	Guzheng Yixin Wang	Cello Mo Chen Xinshuang Liang
Sheng Hengjian Zhang Yi Zhang	Percussion Yixin Wang Danni Chen Qizhi An Kehan (Eric) Wang Luca Esposito	Bass Moises Chirinos
Suona Hiu Man Chan	Konghou Kexilin Ke Jiayi Sun	Piano Tianxiang Ni

ABOUT THE BARD CHINESE ENSEMBLE

The Bard Chinese Ensemble (BCE) brings together the vibrant timbres of Chinese instruments with the expressive richness of Western orchestral forces, focusing primarily on contemporary Chinese orchestral works. Many of these pieces are by living composers and are presented as U.S. premieres. Although BCE is still in its early stages of development, the ensemble achieves the scope of a full-size orchestra by thoughtfully re-arranging each full-scale composition for its unique East-and-West mixed setting.

Founded on the principles of cultural exchange and artistic collaboration, BCE is dedicated to fostering cross-cultural understanding, delivering transformative music-making and listening experiences, and inspiring the creation of innovative works that transcend traditional musical boundaries.

ABOUT THE US-CHINA MUSIC INSTITUTE

The US-China Music Institute was founded in 2017 by conductor Jindong Cai and Robert Martin, founding director of the Bard College Conservatory of Music, with the mission to promote the study, performance, and appreciation of music from contemporary China and to support musical exchange between the United States and China. In partnership with the prestigious Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, the Institute has embarked on several groundbreaking projects including the first degree-granting programs in Chinese instrument performance in a U.S. conservatory, the annual China Now Music Festival focusing on music from contemporary China, annual scholarly conferences, and public Chinese music education programs. barduschinamusic.org

Jindong Cai, Director
Kathryn Wright, Managing Director
Hsiao-Fang Lin, Director of Music Programming
Shutong Li, Music Director of Bard Chinese Ensemble
Wenrui Shi, Recruitment Coordinator
Beitong Liu, Scheduling Coordinator
Weiber Consulting: Wei Zhou and Yu Cao, PR and Marketing

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