



Shutong Li 李梳瞳 '21 Memorial Concert

Presented by the US-China Music Institute

Bard Chinese Ensemble
Jindong Cai, conductor

Monday, March 9, 2026 at 7 pm
László Z. Bitó '60 Conservatory Building

PROGRAM

The Moon Reflected on Erquan Pond 《二泉映月》 (1949) Abing 阿炳

Beitong Liu, erhu

Camel Bells Along the Silk Road concerto for ruan and orchestra Ning Yong 宁勇

《丝路驼铃》中阮协奏曲 (1981) arr. Zhou Yuguo 周煜国/Shutong Li 李梳瞳

Yuling Nan, ruan

Echoes from the Maritime Silk Road concerto for konghou Liu Xijin 刘锡津

《丝海流音》箏篋协奏曲 (2018) arr. Shutong Li 李梳瞳

Kexilin Ke and Jiayi Sun, konghou

Intermission

Four Seasons in Lingering Garden symphonic poem Wang Danhong 王丹红

《四季留园》(2019) arr. Shutong Li 李梳瞳

The Unanswered Question (1908, rev. 1930-35) Charles Ives

PROGRAM NOTES

This concert is dedicated to the memory of our beloved friend and colleague, Shutong Li. Bard's Chinese Ensemble developed under Shutong's direction for a number of years. The inspired series of concerts he produced twice a semester, like clockwork, had become part of the fabric of the Conservatory. Thanks to Shutong's persistence and vision, many Conservatory students had the rare chance to perform bold new works by Chinese composers, and to collaborate in a mixed ensemble with both Chinese and Western instruments.

Today's program features two concertos for Chinese instruments that Shutong had specially arranged in preparation for this concert before his life was tragically cut short. The three additional works are offered by the US-China Music Institute in honor of his memory.

The program begins with a solo work on erhu by Beitong Liu, both a former student and a colleague of Shutong's. Delicate and contemplative, *The Moon Reflected on Erquan Pond* is the most famous work by the blind musician Abing.

The next two pieces highlight the technical and artistic skills of students Yuling Nan on ruan and Kexilin Ke and Jiayi Sun on konghou. *Camel Bells Along the Silk Road* is a major piece in the contemporary ruan repertoire and draws on Xinjiang folk music to evoke a camel caravan travelling along the famous trade route. *Echoes from the Maritime Silk Road* brings us out of the desert and onto the sea, with the dramatic tones of the konghou calling to mind the rolling waves and calm waters of a long oceanic journey.

Four Seasons in Lingering Garden is one of many works by Wang Danhong, a leading female composer in China, that Shutong arranged for the Bard Chinese Ensemble. In 2025, the Bard East/West Ensemble performed his re-arrangement of this homage to the famous garden in Suzhou during a two-week tour of China, and again at Jazz at Lincoln Center for the China Now Music Festival. This work will always remind us of Shutong's bright spirit and dedication to music.

Finally, we present Charles Ives' enigmatic *The Unanswered Question*. In his preface to the original score, Ives notes that the instrumentation is flexible. Here, the trumpet part has been exchanged for the guanzi, which asks "The Perennial Question of Existence." Other instruments in the ensemble attempt to offer an "Invisible Answer," but the question remains.

Shutong, you left too soon. We will miss you.

REMEMBERING SHUTONG LI – A LIFE IN MUSIC

1990 – 2026



Shutong Li was born on November 18, 1990 in Ordos, Inner Mongolia, China. A devoted musician and conductor, he dedicated his life to building musical bridges between cultures and communities. He served as Music Director of the Chinese Ensemble at the US-China Music Institute of the Bard Conservatory of Music, and as Assistant Conductor of the China Now Music Festival and the Bard East-West Ensemble, where he championed dialogue between Eastern and Western musical traditions.

After earning an undergraduate degree in Industrial Engineering from Dalian Minzu University, Li followed his lifelong passion for music to the United States, receiving a Bachelor of Music from the University of New Mexico. There, he founded *Musicians For Musicians* (2017–2019), organizing 19 projects and 38 concerts that created meaningful opportunities for more than fifty young artists. In 2021, he earned a Master’s degree in Conducting from the Bard College Conservatory of Music. He joined the US-China Music Institute at Bard as a conductor the following year. Li believed deeply in music’s power to connect people, and his kindness, vision, and artistry will live on in the music and the lives he touched.

“Shutong was an essential member of the Conservatory—a wonderful musician, a dedicated teacher, a loving husband and father, and a good friend. Through his musicianship, his enormous energy, and his unflagging dedication, he truly transformed the Chinese Ensemble and raised its profile in the local community. We know he took special pride in the accomplishments of his students. I take equal pride in Shutong’s contributions to the art of music and to deepening the artistic ties between the US and China. I know that his students, and all of us, will work to celebrate and build upon the substantial legacy that this remarkable young man left us in the Conservatory.” – Frank Corliss, Director, Bard Conservatory

“Shutong was a conductor, composer, arranger, and producer—each role needing his imagination. He had a great gift for discovering powerful works, shaping them to our needs, preparing parts and scores, promoting concerts tirelessly, and speaking directly to audiences with sincerity. He did not simply organize performances; he created experiences. His loss is immeasurable. It is difficult to imagine finding another person with his combination of artistry, dedication, generosity, and vision.” – Jindong Cai, Director, US-China Music Institute

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Beitong Liu holds a Bachelor's degree in erhu performance and an MA in Chinese music and culture from Bard Conservatory's US-China Music Institute. She is known for her cross-genre versatility, spanning traditional Chinese music, jazz, contemporary works, and improvisation. A 2023–24 Bespoken Fellow, she won First Prize in the 2024 Singapore Star Erhu Competition and the 2025 Music International Grand Prix in the World Music category. She is also the co-founder of Bright Moon and Echos of China, and actively promotes cultural exchange through music education.



Yuling Nan is an emerging music scholar and ruan performer dedicated to musical arts and cross-cultural research. She is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Chinese music and culture at the Bard College Conservatory of Music. She earned a dual Bachelor's degree from Bard College, majoring in ruan performance and Asian studies, and studied ruan under Professor Xu Yang of the Central Conservatory of Music. Her research focuses on musical iconography in Dunhuang, Silk Road music culture, and Sino-Western musical exchange. She is a Gold Award recipient of the Nanyang International Music Competition.



Kexilin Ke began studying the Konghou at an early age and has been a student of Professor Cui Junzhi ever since. She performed alongside Cui at the State Council's Spring Festival Gathering, where they played for President Xi Jinping and other national leaders. She also performed as a soloist with the Bard East/West Ensemble during their tour of China in 2025. Ke is in her third year majoring in konghou performance at the US-China Music Institute.



Jiayi Sun is in her 3rd year at Bard pursuing a dual degree in konghou performance and economics. She began her formal musical training at the age of ten with classical piano, developing a strong foundation in music theory, technical proficiency, and interpretive performance. At sixteen, she shifted her primary focus to the konghou, a traditional Chinese harp, and has since dedicated herself to advancing its artistic and expressive possibilities. She currently studies under Professor Junzhi Cui, engaging with both traditional repertoire and contemporary works that expand the instrument's modern concert presence. Sun is the recipient of the Gold Prize at the 2024 Asian International Arts Festival.

BARD CHINESE ENSEMBLE

Jindong Cai, conductor

Dizi

Minghui Mia Wu

Suona/Guanzi

Hiu Man Andrew Chan

Sheng

Hengjian Zhang

Yi Zhang

Pipa

Kendall Griffith

Wenjun Jessy Lu

Xiaoyan Luo

Shiyao Zhang

Yingren Zhao

Ruan

Yuling Nan

Konghou

Kexilin Ke

Jiayi Sun

Percussion

Danni Chen

Jaelyn Quilizapa

Kehan Wang

Dennis O'Keefe

Piano

Joaquin Pachano

Erhu

Beitong Liu

Violin I

Elizabeth Chernyak

Lap Yin Lee

Violin II

Katherine Chernyak

Greta Hong

Viola

Mason Haskett

Cello

Schuyler Dijk

Bass

Njya Lubang

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

Wenrui Shi, Recruitment Coordinator

Beitong Liu, Scheduling and Graduate Program Coordinator

Weiber Consulting: Wei Zhou and Yu Cao, PR and Marketing

ABOUT THE BARD CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

Recognized as one of the finest conservatories in the United States, the Bard College Conservatory of Music is guided by the principle that young musicians should be broadly educated in the liberal arts and sciences to achieve their greatest potential. The mission of the Conservatory is to provide the best possible preparation for a person dedicated to a life immersed in the creation and performance of music. The five-year, double-degree program, founded in 2005 by cellist and philosopher Robert Martin, combines rigorous conservatory training with a challenging and comprehensive liberal arts program. All Conservatory students pursue a double degree in a thoroughly integrated program and supportive educational community. Graduating students receive a bachelor of music and a bachelor of arts in a field other than music. At the Bard Conservatory the serious study of music goes hand in hand with the education of the whole person.

Tan Dun, Dean

Frank Corliss, Director

Marka Gustavsson, Chamber Music Director

Katrine Ottosen, Manager of Event Production



US-CHINA MUSIC INSTITUTE

Bard College Conservatory of Music

巴德美中音乐研习院