



China NCPA Orchestra

Lü Jia

Conductor

Wu Man / Pipa

Tuesday Evening, November 7, 2017 at 7:30
Hill Auditorium
Ann Arbor

18th Performance of the 139th Annual Season
139th Annual Choral Union Series
Traditions & Crosscurrents

This evening's performance is supported by the Ilene Forsyth Choral Union Endowment Fund, which supports an annual UMS Choral Union performance in perpetuity.

Media partnership provided by WGTE 91.3 FM.

The Steinway piano used in this evening's performance is made possible by William and Mary Palmer.

Special thanks to Tom Thompson of Tom Thompson Flowers, Ann Arbor, for his generous contribution of lobby floral art for this evening's performance.

The China NCPA Orchestra appears by arrangement with Askonas Holt.

In consideration of the artists and the audience, please refrain from the use of electronic devices during the performance.

The photography, sound recording, or videotaping of this performance is prohibited.

PROGRAM

Qigang Chen
Luan Tan

Lou Harrison

Concerto for Pipa and String Orchestra

Allegro

Bits & Pieces: Troika — Three Sharing — Wind and Plum — Neapolitan

Threnody for Richard Locke

Estampie

Wu Man

Intermission

Johannes Brahms

Symphony No. 4 in e minor, Op. 98

Allegro non troppo

Andante moderato

Allegro giocoso

Allegro energico e passionato

LUAN TAN (2014–15)

Qigang Chen

Born August 28, 1951 in Shanghai, China

UMS premiere: This piece has never been performed on a UMS concert.

Snapshots of History...In 2015:

- The World Health Organization declares that rubella has been eradicated from the Americas
- Ireland legalizes same-sex marriage by popular vote
- FIFA President Sepp Blatter resigns amidst an FBI-led corruption investigation

Luan Tan was a musical style in Chinese drama that originated in the 1600s, around the time of the dynastic succession from Ming to Qing. Compared with the established traditions of Kun opera (Kunqu) at the time, the music in the Luan Tan style was remarkably bolder, blunter, and tended to be more virtuosic. Various musical traditions now well-known to the Chinese audience, such as Qin Qiang, Hebei Bangzi, Henan Bangzi, or even earliest forms of the now-prominent Peking opera, could all be categorized under the Luan Tan style. If, for Chinese connoisseurs, Kunqu opera symbolizes elegance and refinement, then Luan Tan would stylistically be its opposite, very much rooted in folk traditions.

Somehow, my music has frequently been described as “melancholic,” “sentimental,” and “refined” over the years. Therefore, I wanted to set a challenge for myself this time, to see if I might enjoy producing something that could be quite a departure from my usual musical territory. In this way, the process of composing *Luan Tan* was almost a battle with myself. Elements that usually appear in my works, such as long melismatic

lines, attractive melodic themes, or imposing harmonies are almost completely absent, replaced by ceaseless rhythmic pattern, leaps of tiny motifs, and gradually accumulated force through repetitions.

Since the stylistic inspiration was from the traditional form of Luan Tan, timbres and characters from traditional Chinese musical drama make an inevitable appearance in the work, for instance, among other things, in the shape of the important role played by the temple block, with the almost cacophonous counterpoint of the Chinese cymbals. I started to work on the piece in 2010, but the composing process was interrupted a number of times by major events that have occurred in my personal life in the intervening years, including the passing of my son Yuli, after which I could not write any music for 12 months. The double bar was finally set on paper in January 2015, and I would hereby like to thank the work’s joint commissioners, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, for their patience and understanding.

Program note by Qigang Chen.

CONCERTO FOR PIPA AND STRING ORCHESTRA (1997)

Lou Harrison

Born May 14, 1917 in Portland, Oregon

Died February 2, 2003 in Lafayette, Indiana

UMS premiere: This piece has never been performed on a UMS concert.

Snapshots of History...In 1997:

- Lloyd Carr's Michigan Wolverines win the national championship title
- Steve Jobs returns to Apple Computer as CEO
- Diana, Princess of Wales, is killed in a car accident in Paris

Like Charles Ives, Henry Cowell, and John Cage, with all of whom he was associated, Lou Harrison was what one often calls an “American maverick.” There is no question that Harrison, who was born 100 years ago, always marched to his own drummer, and never courted success but rather waited until success came to him — which it eventually did, in a big way. The composer's later years brought one major commission after another, and Harrison died, at age 85, en route to a four-day festival devoted to his music at Ohio State University.

One of these late commissions was the *Concerto for Pipa and String Orchestra*, written for the Chinese virtuoso Wu Man, who premiered it in Berkeley, California during Harrison's 80th birthday year. It was Harrison's last completed work for orchestra, and also the last of many compositions in which he brought together Eastern and Western instruments. Harrison had been immersed in Asian art and music since his childhood on the West coast, and the synthesis of Asian and European traditions was a lifelong artistic goal.

The pipa, or four-string pear-shaped lute, has been documented in China for more than 2,000 years. It is an extremely versatile instrument that can play lyrical melodies, rapid tremolos (repeated notes), sonorous bass pitches, and even produce special percussive effects. All of these qualities are on display in Harrison's concerto, but the composer combines Chinese pentatonicism (the black keys of the piano) with Western diatonicism (white keys) and chromaticism (all keys) in ways that are apt to confuse the listener who wonders whether this is Chinese or Western music. Wu Man put it best when she simply said: “It is Lou Harrison music.”

The concerto is in four movements, the second of which breaks down to four separate sections. In the first movement, the Western strings take over some of the idiomatic pipa figures, producing a completely new sound quality. The “mini-suite” that makes up the concerto's second movement takes the pipa on a journey around the world, as it were. The individual sections evoke, in

turn, a Russian *balalaika* (“Troika”), the avant-garde percussion music Harrison and Cage used to write when they were young (“Three Sharing,” for a trio of pipa, cello, and double bass), China itself (“Wind and Plum”), and Naples (“Neapolitan,” with suggestions of a mandolin). This is followed by an intensely emotional and melodious slow movement — a “Threnody” for Richard Locke, a well-known AIDS activist in San Francisco who died of the disease in 1996. Harrison, who had also made an in-depth study of Western medieval music, gave his last movement the title “Estampie,” after the earliest European dance form to survive in written form. Estampies are characterized by the constant presence of their defining rhythmic figure, and that is the force that drives Harrison’s music forward, with only a brief interruption for a meditative cadenza in a slower tempo. Ancient China meets medieval France, and the result, once again, is pure “Lou Harrison music.”

Program note by Peter Laki.

SYMPHONY NO. 4 IN E MINOR, OP. 98 (1885)

Johannes Brahms

Born May 7, 1833 in Hamburg, Germany

Died April 3, 1897 in Vienna

UMS premiere: Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frederick Stock;
May 1912 in University Hall.

Snapshots of History...In 1885:

- Grover Cleveland assumes the Presidency of the United States
- Mark Twain publishes *Huckleberry Finn*
- Louis Pasteur tests his vaccine for rabies

The day before the first performance of Brahms's Fourth Symphony, on October 24, 1885, the 21-year-old assistant conductor of the Meiningen Orchestra, which was about to play the premiere, wrote a letter to his father, also a musician:

Beyond all question a gigantic work, with a grandeur in its conception and invention, genius in its treatment of forms, periodic structure, of outstanding vigor and strength, new and original and yet authentic Brahms from A to Z, in a word it enriches our music — it's hard to put into words all the magnificent things this work contains, you can only listen to it over and over again with reverence and admiration.

The young man, whose name, by the way, was Richard Strauss, seemed to be more receptive to the beauties of the new work than were some of Brahms's own closest friends, who were not quite sure what to make of it. Even Eduard Hanslick, Brahms's greatest champion among music critics, was somewhat guarded this time while trying to sound polite:

"The work will not yield its rich treasures, it will not reveal its chaste beauty at first hearing: its charms are not democratic in nature." Yet repeated hearings did eventually lead to enthusiastic acceptance. Only a decade later, when Hans Richter, who had conducted the first Viennese performance, led the work again in 1897, critics as well as listeners loved the work: each movement was greeted with a storm of applause. Brahms, already seriously ill, was in attendance, and at the end, the audience seemed absolutely to refuse to let him go. According to an eyewitness, Brahms stood there in the balcony, tears running down his cheeks, and "through the audience there was a feeling as of a stifled sob, for each knew that they were saying farewell." The composer passed away only a few weeks later.

In fact, Brahms had said farewell to symphony writing 12 years earlier, since, after finishing the Fourth, he never wrote another symphony. (He did write one more work for orchestra: the *Double Concerto in a minor* for violin and cello.) In the Fourth, he

had achieved a perfect synthesis of styles, where old church modes and Baroque variation techniques formed an indissoluble whole with Classical sonata form and Romantic expressivity. Every structural detail was organized into a miracle of coherence and economy. The symphony was clearly intended as a summation and Brahms's final word in the genre.

After stating the opening melody, which is essentially a series of falling thirds, Brahms contrasts it with a second theme that is more rhythmical in character. These two ideas dominate the entire movement. The development section enlarges upon the contrasts of the exposition: the rhythmical idea becomes passionately dramatic, while the lyrical melody turns into a lament. At the beginning of the recapitulation, Brahms elongates the first few notes and adds a few special harmonies, infusing the music with a quality of deep mystery that is surely one of the Seven Wonders of Western music. The recapitulation then resumes its normal course, but there is a coda in which the lyrical first theme acquires the energy and dynamism of the second. Therefore, the passionate outburst that ends the movement seems to be a synthesis of everything that has gone before.

The second movement, like the first, is built upon the contrast between

primarily melodic and primarily rhythmical motifs. It seems to evoke a distant world of fairytales where we move between different imaginary worlds by way of frequent, subtle changes of key.

The third movement is the only real scherzo in all of Brahms's symphonies (the third movements of the other three symphonies are better described as lyrical intermezzos.) It is also the only one of his symphony movements to use a triangle. Two other instruments, not heard in the first two movements, also join the orchestra here: the piccolo and the contrabassoon.

The heart-piece of the symphony is its magnificent and unique finale, written in the Baroque variation form variously known as *chaconne* or *passacaglia*.^{*} It seems that the idea of writing a symphony movement in this form predated the actual composition by years. In his memoirs, composer and choir director Siegfried Ochs, a member of Brahms's circle of friends, recalled a meeting that must have taken place in January 1882, two years before Brahms began work on the symphony.

As we sat together one day after dining — namely, Bülow, Brahms, Hermann Wolff, and I — Brahms fell upon Hans von Bülow with the reproach that he played much too little Bach, moreover was not concerned enough with him and

^{*} *The Harvard Dictionary of Music* defines these two terms as "two closely related forms of Baroque music, each a kind of continuous variation in moderately slow triple meter and with a slow harmonic rhythm, changing generally with the measure." It states that "attempts...to make a clear distinction between them [have been] futile." J. S. Bach used the terms almost interchangeably; Brahms did not use either term explicitly in the Fourth Symphony.

knew next to nothing of, as an example of the best of his creations, the church cantatas. Bülow defended himself and claimed to know at least seven or eight cantatas well. "That proves that you know none of them, for there are more than 200," said Brahms. In due course of the conversation, he then began to speak of the final movement of a certain cantata, and in order to demonstrate what a work of art this piece was, he went to the piano and played part of it. It was, as I have only now determined, the ciacona that forms the high point and the conclusion of Cantata 150. Brahms at first played only the bass, over which the entire piece is constructed... Then he performed the chaconne. Bülow listened with cool admiration and made the objection that the great intensification [*Steigerung*], which was intellectually inherent in the movement, was scarcely brought out in desired mass by voices. "That has also occurred to me," said Brahms. "What would you think about a symphony movement written on this theme some time? But it is too clumsy, too straightforward. One must alter it chromatically in some way." I immediately made a note of this conversation, and one should compare the finale of the e-minor symphony with that of the mentioned cantata.

enormous *crescendo* involving the entire orchestra. After the climax, there is a gradual *decrescendo* leading to the three central variations where, as the meter changes from 3/4 to 3/2, the notes of the bass theme begin to move twice as slowly as before. The slower variations include a haunting flute solo, another one with prominent clarinet and oboe parts, and finally a magnificent variation for three trombones, in E Major. This is immediately followed by the recall of the movement's beginning, and the energetic — and tragic — ending. Even the falling thirds of the first movement's opening theme turn up again, masterfully combined with the passacaglia theme and giving the entire symphony a sense of Classical balance and structural unity.

Program note by Peter Laki.

We should indeed: the two themes are nearly identical, with the exception of the single chromatic alteration Brahms spoke about after dinner.

The first half of Brahms's finale is like a single rising line: first we hear the bass theme alone, then the same theme with a single pedal note added. Next, a delicate counterpoint appears, followed by a more impassioned violin melody, which in turn gives rise to an





ARTISTS

China NCPA Orchestra is the resident orchestra of the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), Beijing. Established in March 2010, the Orchestra performs in more than a dozen opera productions presented by its home venue every year as well as in regular orchestral concerts in its own season.

Artists associated with the Orchestra include Zubin Mehta, Valery Gergiev, Myung-Whun Chung, Christoph Eschenbach, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Fabio Luisi, Lang Lang, Stephen Kovacevich, Leo Nucci, and Yuja Wang. Lorin Maazel worked closely with the Orchestra before his passing and praised the musicians for their “amazing professionalism and great passion in music.”

The Orchestra has gained critical acclaim for its performances in NCPA’s opera productions of not only classical repertoire works such as *Tosca*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Lohengrin*, *Aida*, and *Nabucco*, but also newly commissioned works like *The Chinese Orphan* and *The Rickshaw Boy*. In its own orchestral concert season, it has consistently presented creative and diverse programs. Its performance of the mammoth *Ring without Words* with its creator, Lorin Maazel, was released on Sony Classics worldwide, the only recording the great maestro ever made with a Chinese orchestra. The Orchestra has also explored contemporary music extensively. It gave the Chinese premieres of works by Toru Takemitsu and Giya Kancheli, and the world premieres of many works by Michael Gordon and Augusta Read Thomas.

The NCPA Orchestra has flexed its wings on the international stage, receiving widespread international praise for its performances at the Kissingen Summer Music Festival, the Schleswig-Holstein

Musik Festival, and concerts in many cities in Germany, as well as in Sydney, Singapore, Seoul, Daegu, Abu Dhabi, Taipei, and Macau. During the 2014–15 season, the Orchestra undertook its first North American tour, where it performed in seven major cities in the US and Canada, under the baton of Lǔ Jia. *Musical America* praised its “joyful confidence and youthful strength.” *Concerto Net* described it “a polished, first rate ensemble.”

Lǔ Jia (*conductor*) is artistic director of music of the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), music director and chief conductor of China NCPA Orchestra, and music director and chief conductor of the Macao Orchestra, prior to which he acted as music director of the Verona Opera House in Italy and artistic director of the Santa Cruz De Tenerife Symphony Orchestra in Spain.

Lǔ Jia has conducted nearly 2,000 orchestral concerts and opera performances in Europe and the US. He has worked with such renowned opera houses and symphony orchestras including La Scala, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra dell’Accademia di Santa Cecilia, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and Lyon National Orchestra.

A highly acclaimed opera conductor, Lǔ Jia has led over 50 productions internationally. As the first Asian conductor appointed as music director in an important opera house in Italy, he has been praised by critics as “a conductor who has a deeper understanding of Italian operas than the Italians themselves do.” In 1989,

he was awarded both the First Prize and Jury's Prize at the Antonio Pedicelli International Conducting Competition in Trento, Italy. In 2007, the Italian President bestowed the "President's Prize" on him for his exceptional contribution to Italian culture. That same year, the production of *La gazza ladra* that he conducted at the Rossini Opera Festival, held in Pesaro, the composer's hometown, was voted "Opera Production of the Year" in Europe.

Wu Man (*pipa*) is a Chinese pipa player and composer. Trained in Pudong-style pipa performance at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, she is known for playing in a broad range of musical styles and introducing the pipa and its Chinese heritage into Western genres. She has performed and recorded extensively with Kronos Quartet and Silk Road Ensemble, and has premiered works by Philip Glass, Lou Harrison, Terry Riley, Bright Sheng, Tan Dun, Jiping Zhao, and Long Zhou. She has recorded and appeared on over 40 albums, five of which have been nominated for Grammy Awards. In 2013, she was named "Instrumentalist of the Year" by *Musical America*, becoming the first performer of a non-Western instrument to receive this award. She is the first artist from China to perform at the White House and she also received the United States Artist Fellowship in 2008. Born in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, Wu Man is a master of pipa performance who studied Pudong-style under Lin Shicheng, Kuang Yuzhong, Chen Zemin, and Liu Deha.

CHINA NCPA ORCHESTRA

Lü Jia / *Music Director*
Zuohuang Chen / *Conductor Laureate*
YUAN Ding / *Assistant Conductor*
Li Zhe / *Concertmaster*
YANG Xiaoyu / *Concertmaster*

First Violin

CHEN Shu***
 MA Weijia***
 ZHAO Jingjing
 LI Le
 JIANG Jun
 LIU Song
 SUN Qian
 LEE Chia-Ying
 MAO Xueyang
 ZHANG Yanyan
 ZHANG Chaochen
 PU Xiaojing
 Hyun Ji Kim
 GUO Yingxin

Second Violin

LIU Xian*
 YANG Rui***
 FAN Yue***
 YUAN Fangfang
 Aleksandra Denga
 JI Wenyu
 WU Meng
 LIN Boyu
 TSAI Chiung-Hua
 LIU Zhaohui
 LI Wendan
 GAO Jiayao
 LI Xingya
 ZHENG Yan

Viola

ZHUANG Ran*
 HAO Xuejia***
 HE Jing***
 LIU Sha
 QIU Yini
 QIN Yu
 TANG Renzhu
 CONG Yanyi
 XU Su
 ZHANG Yiwen
 SHANG Yiyu
 Kangrok Nam

Cello

LIANG Xiao***
 GAO Shenghan***
 Kyuri Kim
 SONG Tao
 AN Rui
 YIN Long
 WANG Yu
 LI Mengqi
 WANG Haoyu
 WANG Danna
 Rosalind Zhang

Double Bass

LIU Yimei**
 KANG Ning***
 LIU Xiangquan
 FAN Yiming
 ZHOU Yuanlong
 ZHANG Guangyuan
 LAI Wenjun
 WANG Mengxi

Flute

YIN Yi***
 LU Yaoyao
 LIU Qian
 CHEN Huan-Hsi

Oboe

ZHOU Yang**
 CHANG Chia-Fang***
 KOU Yijian

Clarinet

Jaime Sanchis*
 CHEN Sijun***
 Min Na Lee***
 ZHANG Tianyu

Bassoon

JI Jingjing*
 SHI Guangyuan
 QIU Shihan
 LIU Atao

Horn

LIU Xiaoxin**
 TAN Chai Suang
 WANG Zi
 Danbie KIM
 LÜ Ran

Trumpet

WANG Yubing**
 Helene Hautle***
 LI Rui
 HE Kai

Trombone

LIU Shuang*
 Jonathan Watkins***
 WEI Zhiying
 YUAN Boxuan

Tuba

Radek JISA***

Timpani

LIU Gang*

Percussion

LIU Heng**
 MA Yuan
 SU Shu
 Chulmin Lee
 CHEN Wanning

Harp

ZHANG Xiaoyin

Keyboard

SUI Borui

**Principal*

***Acting Principal*

****Associate Principal*

CHEN Ge / *Chairwoman*

REN Xiaolong / *Managing Director*

ZHANG Lin / *Deputy Managing Director*

Performance Management & Administration

ZHOU Jing
 LUO Enyan
 SUN Yafei
 LI Xiaogeng
 YANG Zhe

Artistic Planning & Marketing

TANG Ning
 TANG Jia
 WANG Zhen
 LIU Xun

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YIN Mudi
 DU Fei
 MANG Yiqun

Askonas Holt Ltd / International

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 Sergio Porto Bargiela / *Head of Tours & Projects*
 Suzanne Doyle / *Senior Project Manager*
 Robert Kearns / *Project Administrator*

China NCPA Orchestra's 2017 USA Tour is proudly supported by the China National Arts Fund. International Flights Sponsor: Hainan Airlines

UMS ARCHIVES

UMS welcomes **Lü Jia** and the **China NCPA Orchestra** as they make their UMS debuts this evening. **Wu Man** makes her fifth UMS appearance this evening, following her UMS debut in March 2000 at the Michigan Theater in a performance of *Forgiveness* directed by Chen Shi-Zheng. She most recently appeared in March 2009 at Hill Auditorium with Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble.

TONIGHT'S VICTOR FOR UMS:



Ilene Forsyth Choral Union Endowment Fund

Supporter of this evening's performance by the China NCPA Orchestra.

MAY WE ALSO RECOMMEND...

11/12	The Knights
11/17-19	New York Philharmonic
12/8	Bach Collegium Japan

Tickets available at www.ums.org.

ON THE EDUCATION HORIZON...

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 11/12 | EXCEL Brunch with The Knights: Crossing Boundaries to Compelling Programming
(EXCEL Lab, 1279 Moore Building, 1100 Baits Drive, 11:00 am) |
| 11/18 | UMS 101: New York Philharmonic Young People's Concert
(Pioneer High School, 601 W. Stadium Boulevard, 12 noon)
<i>Paid registration required; please visit bit.ly/UMSClasses to register.</i> |
| 12/2 | Pre-Show Talk: Musical Text Painting in Handel's <i>Messiah</i>
(Michigan League Henderson Room, 911 N. University Avenue, 6:00 pm) |

Educational events are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.