

Minnesota Orchestra

Junping Qian, conductor

Roz Tsai, host | Rui Du, violin

Zhengang Xie, jing hu | Mei Hu, yue qin

Fei Xie, artistic consultant | Asian Media Access, artistic partner

Sunday, February 6, 2022, 2 pm | Orchestra Hall

Li Huanzhi	<i>Spring Festival Overture</i>	ca. 6'
Choi Sunghwan	<i>Arirang Fantasy</i>	ca. 8'
Chen Gang/He Zhanhao	Selections from <i>The Butterfly Lovers</i> Violin Concerto Lagrimoso Presto risoluto <i>Rui Du, violin</i>	ca. 6'
Wu Hua	<i>In the Dark Night</i> for Jing Hu and Orchestra <i>Zhengang Xie, jing hu Mei Hu, yue qin</i>	ca. 7'
Kelly Tang	<i>Sketches of Singapore</i>	ca. 9'
Trinh Cong Son/ arr. Jaakko Kuusisto	<i>Circle of Unity</i>	ca. 3'

Profiles of today's artists and artistic partner, along with program notes of works in the order they are performed on February 5, begin on page 20.



Junping Qian, conductor

Conductor Junping Qian recently completed his second year as assistant conductor of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. He also serves as a visiting faculty member at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. His recent engagements include conducting the COVID-19 recovery rehearsal camp of Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra; a tour of China with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Teatro del Giglio Lucca; a South American debut with Orchestra SODRE in Montevideo, Uruguay; a North American professional debut with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra; an open-air summer concert at the Summer Classics Festival Sibiu; and re-invitations with the Toronto, Macau, Kunming, Xi'An, Bucharest, Iasi and Tirus Mures orchestras. From 2018 to 2020 he served as the strategic advisor and residential artist of the Shanghai and Royal College of Music London Joint Institute. He is also an accomplished violist, having won many prizes and scholarships including second place at the Johansen International Competition in Washington D.C., as well as first place at both the China National Viola Competition and the Morningside Music Bridge Chamber Music Competition. More: junpingqian.com.



Roz Tsai, host

Dr. Benhong Rosaline Tsai is Vice President, Talent, Learning, and Org Effectiveness at Thrivent, a Fortune 500 financial services firm based in Minneapolis. Previously, she served as vice president of HR and chief learning officer at Ecolab, leading performance management, career development, leadership and enterprise learning initiatives for its 49,000-member global workforce. She has also held transformative leadership roles in Honeywell, Lawson Software (now Infor) and Northern States Power Company (now Xcel Energy). Tsai is a long-time community volunteer for youth development and arts and culture organizations, most recently completing her term as board chair for Minnesota non-profit BestPrep. A native of Tianjin, China, Tsai completed her undergraduate studies at Nankai University and obtained her Master of Science degree at St. Cloud State University. She holds a doctorate degree from University of Minnesota, where she currently serves as adjunct faculty for the Carlson School of Management.



Rui Du, violin

Rui Du has been the Minnesota Orchestra's assistant concertmaster since 2015, has been featured in numerous chamber music concerts at Orchestra Hall, and was the soloist in Alyssa Weinberg's *in somnis* at the 2019 Future Classics concert that concluded that year's Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute. He was previously a member of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, concertmaster of the Annapolis Symphony, associate concertmaster of the Aspen Music Festival Orchestra and concertmaster of the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra. In addition, he has served as guest concertmaster of the Qingdao and Hebei symphony orchestras in China. Born and raised in Heifei in China's Anhui Province, Du began violin studies at age 6. He studied initially with Zhou Bin-you at the Shanghai Conservatory, then with Qian Zhou at the National University of Singapore's Yong Siew Toh Conservatory, where he won the artistic achievement award. He emigrated to the U.S. in 2008 and studied with Victor Danchenko and Herbert Greenberg at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, earning a master's degree and graduate performance diploma. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.



Gao Hong, pipa

Chinese performer and composer Gao Hong is a master of the pear-shaped lute, the pipa. She began her career as a professional musician at age 12, and later graduated from China's premier music school, the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. Gao has received numerous top awards and honors, including first prize in the Hebei Professional Young Music Performers Competition; an International Art Cup in Beijing; the prestigious Bush Artist Fellowship; five McKnight Artist Fellowships for Performing Musicians; numerous grants and fellowships from the Minnesota State Arts Board; and a Sally Award. Gao has performed throughout Europe, Australia, Argentina, Japan, Hong Kong, China and the U.S. in solo concerts, and with orchestras, jazz musicians and performers from many cultures. She is a guest professor at the Central Conservatory of Music, China Conservatory of Music, Tianjin Conservatory of Music and Hebei Vocational Arts College. She teaches Chinese Musical Instruments and is director of the Chinese Music Ensemble and Global Music Ensemble at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. Gao's most recent recording of live compositions and improvisations with oudist Issam Rafea, *From Our World to Yours*, was released in 2020 and was awarded Gold Medals in two categories by the Global Music Awards. More: chinesepipa.com.



Zhengang Xie, jing hu
Mei Hu, yue qin

Jing hu master Mr. Zhengang Xie and yue qin master Ms. Mei Hu, a husband-and-wife team, are listed as members of the elite group among the musicians in the Directory of Current Chinese Artists of 1998, which Ms. Hu participated in editing. While in China, as the top "Cheng" style Peking Opera fiddlers, Mr. Xie and Ms. Hu performed and recorded as solo jing hu and yue qin players with many top Beijing Opera houses, including the Beijing Opera House and National Opera House. In addition to performing traditional Peking Opera repertoire, Xie has participated in many new opera productions, such as the Peking Opera TV show *Cao Xueqin* and the new opera *The Legend of The White Snake*. Xie has also performed in the Great Hall of People in Beijing during a Lunar New Year celebration, and was greeted by the Chairman Jiang Zemin, among other top Chinese government officials.

Since moving to the U.S. in 1999, the couple has brought Chinese music, particularly Peking Opera, to their community. While living in Cincinnati from 2000 to 2020, Xie and Hu performed in concert halls, schools, and universities around the region. In collaborations with the University of Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, they performed concertos such as *In the*

Dark Night, The Qiao Family Compound and *The God of Mountain*. Xie and Hu currently reside in Plymouth, Minnesota, near their son, Minnesota Orchestra Principal Bassoon Fei Xie, and his family.



Fei Xie, artistic consultant

Fei Xie joined the Minnesota Orchestra as principal bassoon in the 2017 season after serving as principal bassoon of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, an ensemble he first joined as second bassoon in 2008. When he won the principal role in 2012, Xie became the first Chinese-born bassoonist to hold such a position in a major American symphony orchestra. An avid educator, Xie has taught masterclasses at conservatories and festivals throughout the U.S., China and Brazil. He has recently served on the faculty at the University of Maryland and was the bassoon coach for the inaugural season of the National Youth Orchestra of China. He was recently appointed to the faculty of the School of Music at the University of Minnesota. A native of China, Xie comes from a musical family; his parents, Zhengang Xie and Mei Hu, and his uncle are renowned Peking Opera musicians. His parents are performing as soloists in the Minnesota Orchestra's Lunar New Year concerts this week. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.



Asian Media Access

Asian Media Access,
artistic partner

Incorporated in 1992, Asian Media Access, Inc. (AMA) is a multimedia arts agency whose mission is to “Connect the Disconnected” by using multimedia arts and technology as tools for social betterment. AMA recognizes that multimedia and technology are essential for advocacy, communication and education, and by effectively utilizing these different mediums, AMA creates as well as presents programs that educate, enrich the communities, and empower all of us with critical thinking and promote good citizenship—placing special importance on preparing young people to be tomorrow’s leaders. AMA’s thought-provoking multimedia education, productions, exhibitions, stage performances, resourceful educational products and youth afterschool programs encourage deep reflection, challenge previous assumptions, provide solace, and allow participants to develop their own way of connection in timeless works of creation, communication and community building. More: amamedia.org.



William Eddins, broadcast host

For the concert on Saturday, February 5, William Eddins serves as host and writer of the Twin Cities PBS broadcast and online livestream, *This Is Minnesota Orchestra*. Eddins is the music director emeritus of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and a frequent guest conductor of major orchestras throughout the world. He is a former associate conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra and last conducted the ensemble in November 2020. His engagements in the U.S. have included concerts with the New York Philharmonic, St. Louis Symphony and Philadelphia Orchestra; the symphony orchestras of Boston, Cincinnati, Atlanta, Detroit, Dallas, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Milwaukee and Houston; and the Los Angeles and Buffalo philharmonics. Internationally, he was principal guest conductor of the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra (Ireland), and has led numerous major orchestras around the world. Eddins is an accomplished pianist and chamber musician, and next July he will perform in a Grand Piano Spectacular concert at the Minnesota Orchestra’s 2022 Summer at Orchestra Hall series, sharing the stage with fellow pianists Jon Kimura Parker, Scott Cuellar and Andrew Staupé. He is the co-founder of MetroNOME Brewery LLC, a socially-missioned brewery established in the wake of public unrest in the summer of 2019 with the objective of nurturing outstanding music education in the Twin Cities metro. More: williameddins.com.

Choi Sunghwan *Arirang Fantasy*

The Korean folk song *Arirang*, an expression of nostalgia in the face of separation, is popular throughout the divided peninsula, serving as an unofficial national anthem. It is heard at this concert in a version written in the 1970s by North Korean composer Choi Sunghwan that was notably performed by the New York Philharmonic on its 2008 tour to North Korea and South Korea. Featuring lush Romantic harmonies and key solo moments for harp and flute, *Arirang Fantasy* opens with the lyrical *Arirang* melody, which is varied freely in the opening section, gradually increasing in speed. After a plaintive digression into minor harmonies, the music returns to a happier major key, grows faster and triumphant, then dials back to a slow, calm close.

Arirang is a song of great flexibility: its lyrics and melody have been modified over the years to such an extent that musicologists have identified about 60 principal versions and at least 3,600 variants. Its malleability has led to a variety of uses in the North and South, from protest to solidarity to sporting events. At the Opening Ceremonies of the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, athletes from South Korea and North Korea marched together in unity as the song's most common version, *Jeongseon Arirang*, was played.

Chen Gang/He Zhanhao *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*

The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto is credited jointly to two composers—Chen Gang (b. 1935) and He Zhanhao (b. 1933), who collaborated on its composition in 1959 while they were students at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Cast in one long movement and subdivided into seven sections, the concerto is a musical representation of the Chinese legend of the Butterfly Lovers, with the solo violin representing the protagonist Zhu Yingtai, and the cello part symbolic of her lover Liang Shanbo. Chen was responsible for the majority of the concerto's scoring, while He's primary contribution was the work's famous opening theme.

The concerto is scored for a standard-sized Western orchestra, and utilizes a variety of traditional Chinese techniques and styles to create a sound world suitable for its story. Among them are the use of a five-pitch pentatonic scale and a number of melodies from Chinese folk songs and from a well-known Chinese opera version of the Butterfly Lovers story. Across the concerto we follow Zhu and Liang as they meet in childhood, attend school and grow closer. The tale turns tragic as Zhu is betrothed to another man, Liang becomes ill and dies, and Zhu throws herself into Liang's grave. In closing, the lovers' spirits emerge as butterflies.

The Butterfly Lovers, which premiered in 1959, is often used in figure skating routines, memorably for Chen Lu's free skate performance at the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan, at which she became the first Chinese athlete to win a medal in figure skating.

Trinh Cong Son/arr. Jaakko Kuusisto *Circle of Unity*

The first of this concert's two world premieres is Finnish composer Jaakko Kuusisto's arrangement of *Circle of Unity* by Vietnamese composer, performer and artist Trinh Cong Son (1939-2001). Kuusisto's arrangement, based on the version by Vietnamese musician Hô Quang Hiêu, is energetic and fast-paced, with effects including muted brass, strings sliding from one pitch to the next, shouting from the musicians, and a percussion part that imitates the sound of a high-frequency EDM-style snare.

Son, one of the great figures in 20th-century Vietnamese music and art, wrote more than 500 songs and poems, many relating to love and the hope for a peaceful Vietnam. *Circle of Unity* dates from 1968, in the midst of the Vietnam War, with lyrics outlining the dream of reconciliation between North and South Vietnam. In 1975, as the war was coming to an end, Son accepted an invitation to perform *Circle of Unity* on a radio broadcast from Saigon, urging all Vietnamese people to join hands and unite.

Wu Hua *In the Dark Night for Jing Hu and Orchestra*

For *In the Dark Night* by Chinese composer Wu Hua (1943-2020), the Minnesota Orchestra welcomes jing hu master Mr. Zhengang Xie and yue qin master Ms. Mei Hu, a husband-and-wife team who are the parents of the Orchestra's Principal Bassoon Fei Xie. Wu's composition, heard here in an orchestration by Ma Jun and Han Guang, has its origins in a famous melody from the Peking Opera and showcases the jing hu—a bowed instrument with two strings—as well as the yue qin, a four-stringed lute with a distinctive round, hollow wooden body.

In the Dark Night comes from a suite by Wu describing the ill-fated story of Xiang Yu, a rebel leader during the fall of the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.), and his concubine Yuji. The music begins with a low-pitched flute solo and continues with a Chinese drum passage, over which the orchestra crescendos and stops, leading to the entrance of the jing hu and yue qin. Those two featured instruments play continuously in free-flowing melodies for the rest of the piece, through varying textures, tempos and meters until the final measures, marked *fff* with trills and tremolos abounding.

Kelly Tang

Sketches of Singapore

Contemporary Singaporean composer Kelly Tang (b. 1961), who writes in genres ranging from classical and jazz to symphonic and popular music, composed the colorful *Sketches of Singapore* in 2008 on a commission from the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. The score bears the following note:

“*Sketches of Singapore* utilizes the broad musical palette of the symphony orchestra to unlock expressive possibilities lying latent within four popular Singaporean melodies. The simple elegance of these tunes provides the ideal foundation upon which to weave elaborate textural layers, lively rhythmic elaborations, colorful tonal shading and flavorful harmonic tapestries. The development and transformation of fragments derived from these tunes generates fresh dramatic dimensions that unfold upon a symphonic canvas...The work begins with the triumphant energy of *Stand Up for Singapore*. Next, the folk tune *Rasa Sayang* is presented in the comic style of a scherzo. Cast in a passionate yet elegant orchestral glow, the deep Romantic essence of the third tune, *Where I Belong*, is fully unveiled. In the grand finale, the venerable *Di Tanjong Katong* is symphonically expanded to radiate all its innate glory.”

Gao Hong

Guangxi Impression, Concerto for Pipa and Orchestra

In the second of this week’s two world premiere performances, both commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra, the composer herself, Gao Hong, takes the stage as the soloist in her *Guangxi Impression, Concerto for Pipa and Orchestra*. A full profile of Gao appears on page 21. The composer-soloist has provided the following comments on her work:

“Guangxi is a province in southern China that sports a rich diverse population that includes 48 different ethnic groups. This piece is in three movements: *Dance of Tiaodan*, *Summer Cicadas* and *Celebrating the Harvest*.

Dance of Tiaodan. “The first movement depicts Tiaodan people as they carry goods on their shoulders with bamboo sticks. The music describes the people as they work happily in the field. People one-by-one come from far away with the bamboo sticks on their shoulders, creating ‘biandan’ up and down movements which simulates dancing.

Summer Cicadas. “In Guangxi, the weather is very hot and the cicadas are very noisy. But in the Dong minority, the most famous song is inspired by the sounds of the cicadas. The music describes a hot summer day, with young men and women looking for lovers during work breaks in the field.

Celebrating the Harvest. “A plentiful harvest is cause to celebrate in Guangxi, and I depict this celebration with sounds of percussion bands and celebratory words near the movement’s end.”

Li Huanzhi

Spring Festival Overture

Spring Festival Overture is the most famous composition of Chinese composer Li Huanzhi (1919-2000)—music so beloved that it was among a small number of musical works launched into space in 2007 on China’s first lunar probe, Chang’e 1.

The overture is the first and best-known movement of Li’s four-part *Spring Festival Suite*, composed in 1955 and 1956. It depicts a scene in the Shanbei region of revelers celebrating the Lunar New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, and the music’s themes come from that region’s folk music. In the overture we hear sounds reminiscent of fireworks and parades, along with a gentler inner passage that is built on a traditional melody conveying greetings for the New Year as well as prayers for peace and good fortune.

Program notes by Carl Schroeder.