Wu Man, *pipa*
Hsin-Yun Huang, *viola*

**ROCKPORT FESTIVAL STRING QUARTET**

Strings of Souls: Folk Inspiration in Singing and Dancing

*Pipa solos*

**DANCE OF THE YI PEOPLE** (彝族舞曲) (1960)
Wang Huiran (b. 1936)

**SONG OF KAZAKH**
Trad. arr. Wu Man (b. 1963)

*Viola solos*

**HORA LUNGÅ** (1994) FROM SONATA FOR SOLO VIOLA
György Ligeti (1923–2006)

**NINE FINGERS** [VIOLA SPACES NO. 4] (2004-7)
Garth Knox (b. 1956)

*Pipa solos*

**BIG WAVE WASHES THE SAND** (大浪淘沙)
Trad. arr. Abing (aka Hua Yanjun 1893-1950)

**LEAVES FLYING IN AUTUMN** (杨花九月飞) (2000)
Wu Man (b. 1963)

*Program continues on the next page*
A classic pipa composition that is widely known in China, Dance of the Yi People, has become a model for many pipa compositions. It combines the spirit and, some sources say, the letter of folk music, with expert writing for the four-string pipa by a composer who was himself a soloist in several musical ensembles during his early career. Over half of the Yi minority live in Yunnan province, often in mountainous areas. Dance of the Yi People is in nine sections descriptive of village life, with the last three sections recapitulating the opening three. A favorite of Wu Han since she played it at her Beijing Conservatory audition in 1978, it is said to be the first pipa composition to adopt Western chords and guitar techniques and showcase virtuoso pipa techniques such as tremolos, strumming, sliding notes and harmonics.

Hungarian György Ligeti was a giant among composers. A fiercely independent thinker throughout his life, his music delights in connections between other cultures, other art forms and past centuries. While composing Hora lungă from Sonata for Solo Viola, Ligeti pictured a Romani violinist playing a slow, dance-like piece, not an exact folk tune, but more of a folk-inspired, sung melody, nostalgic and melancholy, richly ornamented. By using only the lower C-string and imagining an even lower F-string on the viola, Ligeti plays with the resulting shimmer of overtones, producing a modal scale similar to that of the Maramures region of Romania in the northern Carpathians. He describes the scale as ‘mysteriously alien’ as it progresses through a series of seven variations which, in their own way, evoke the very soul of the viola.

Kazakhstan shares a long border with western China and nomadic Kazakhs have long represented an ethnic minority in China’s Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region. In Xinjiang, Kazakhs speak their own language and maintain their own musical traditions. Wu Man has frequently described how the pipa is believed to have entered China long ago through contact between Chinese civilization and the peoples that ancient Chinese sources described as ‘northern barbarians,’ which is to say, nomads. By performing this virtuosic nomadic melody on the pipa, Wu Man brings her instrument full circle, back to its Central Asian origins. Her Song of Kazakh is a vigorous, rhythmically driven dance that builds and builds to an exuberant, whirling climax and a surprisingly gentle conclusion.

Viola solos
ADAGIO AND ALLEGRETTO FROM PARTITA FOR SOLO VIOLA, OP. 31 (1995)
Ahmed Adnan Saygun (1907-1991), arr. Hsin-Yun Huang

THE 3 GS (2005)
Kenji Bunch (b. 1973)

Intersection of history
MOTHER’S SONGS 春江花月夜, FOR VIOLA AND PIPA (2020)
Lei Liang (b. 1972)
World Premiere (Commissioned by Rockport Music)

CONCERTO IN D MINOR FOR VIOLA, PIPA AND STRINGS, RV 540 (1740)
Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)
Allegro
Largo
Allegro

This concert, and commissioning of Lei Liang’s work Mother’s Songs, are generously sponsored by Robert Amory.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

WHAT IS THE PIPA?
The pipa is a lute-like instrument with a history of more than two thousand years. During the Qin and Han Dynasties (221 B.C. - 220 A.D.), instruments with long, straight-necks and round resonators with snakeskin or wooden sound boards were played with a forward and backward plucking motion that sounded like ‘pi’ and ‘pa’ to fanciful ears. Hence, all plucked instruments in ancient times were called ‘pipa.’ During the Tang dynasty, by way of Central Asia, the introduction of a crooked neck lute with a pear-shaped body contributed to the pipa’s evolution. Today’s instrument consists of 26 frets and six ledges arranged as stops and its four strings are tuned respectively to A,D,E,A. The pipa’s many left- and right-hand fingering techniques, rich tonal qualities and resonant timbre bring music expressiveness and beauty that are lasting and endearing.

DANCE OF THE YI PEOPLE (彝族舞曲)
Wang Huiruan (b. Shanghai, China, 1936)
Composed 1960; 8 minutes

A classic pipa composition that is widely known in China, Dance of the Yi People, has become a model for many pipa compositions. It combines the spirit and, some sources say, the letter of folk music, with expert writing for the four-string pipa by a composer who was himself a soloist in several musical ensembles during his early career. Over half of the Yi minority live in Yunnan province, often in mountainous areas. Dance of the Yi People is in nine sections descriptive of village life, with the last three sections recapitulating the opening three. A favorite of Wu Han since she played it at her Beijing Conservatory audition in 1978, it is said to be the first pipa composition to adopt Western chords and guitar techniques and showcase virtuoso pipa techniques such as tremolos, strumming, sliding notes and harmonics.

SONG OF KAZAKH
Trad. arr. Wu Man (b. Hangzhou, Zhejiang, January 2, 1963)
4 minutes

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HORA LUNGA FROM SONATA FOR SOLO VIOLA
György Ligeti (b. Dicsőszentmárton [Diciosânmartin, now Tîrnaţveni], Transylvania, May 28, 1923; d. Vienna, Austria, June 12, 2006)
Composed 1994; 6 minutes

Hungarian György Ligeti was a giant among composers. A fiercely independent thinker throughout his life, his music delights in connections between other cultures, other art forms and past centuries. While composing Hora lungă (Slow dance), Ligeti pictured a Romani violinist playing a slow, dance-like piece, not an exact folk tune, but more of a folk-inspired, sung melody, nostalgic and melancholy, richly ornamented. By using only the lower C-string and imagining an even lower F-string on the viola, Ligeti plays with the resulting shimmer of overtones, producing a modal scale similar to that of the Maramures region of Romania in the northern Carpathians. He describes the scale as ‘mysteriously alien’ as it progresses through a series of seven variations which, in their own way, evoke the very soul of the viola.
Ahmet Adnan Saygun (1907-1991)

Ahmet Adnan Saygun (b. Izmir, Turkey, September 7, 1907; d. Istanbul, January 6, 1991), arr. Hsin-Yun Huang

ADAGIO AND ALLEGRETTO FROM PARTITA FOR SOLO VIOLA, OP. 31
Ahmet Adnan Saygun (b. Izmir, Turkey, September 7, 1907; d. Istanbul, January 6, 1991), arr. Hsin-Yun Huang

Composed 1955; 11 minutes

Growing up in the twilight years of Ottoman Turkey and the early years of Kemal Atatürk’s reforms, the young Ahmed Adnan Saygun studied both oud and piano from an early age. He was among the first of his generation to pursue advanced music studies in the West. Composition studies in Paris under Eugène Borrel at the Conservatoire and Vincent d’Indy at the Schola Cantorum gave him the necessary technique. On his return, Saygun began to build a substantial catalog of works embracing European genres, including operas, oratorios, concertos, symphonies and string quartets.

His work researching Turkish folk song led to collaboration with Bartók and the Hungarian composer’s field trip to Anatolia in 1936. Saygun continued his work in ethnomusicology for many years. In his creative work he declared in a 1947 interview: “My entire aim was to get across the kind of synthesis one can create by using motives based on our national folksongs in Western compositional techniques.” The Partita for solo cello, to be heard today in an arrangement for viola by the performer, came from a commission by the German Consulate marking the 150th anniversary of the death of German poet and playwright Friedrich Schiller.

THE 3 Gs
Kenji Bunch (b. Portland, OR, July 27, 1973)

Composed 2005; 4 minutes

This concert etude marries demanding bow and pizzicato techniques from the classical world with what Kenji Bunch refers to as ‘tricks’ from bluegrass. One of those is the ‘chop’ where the bow makes a brusque, unpitched stopped sound close to the bridge. It’s all difficult to write down, Bunch admits, and even more difficult to read from the page and still maintain what’s important – the ‘groove’ – all while coping with some fearsome technical challenges. Bunch first composed the piece and kept it in his head, performing it from memory without worrying how it looked on the page. But then came the hard work – writing it down!

MOTHER’S SONGS | FOR VIOLA AND PIPA
Lei Liang (b. Tianjin, China, November 28, 1972)

World Première (Commissioned by Rockport Music)

Composed 2020; c12 minutes

Lei Liang

Both Eastern and Western cultures have influenced Lei Liang’s many compositions. He continues to make a deep study of Chinese traditions and draw from them in his creative work. Yet, Liang also retains artistic independence, finding similar value in musical traditions from all cultures, often fusing them in a probing, philosophically driven way. “Chinese culture is my source of inspiration but does not define me as a ‘Chinese’ composer,” Liang says. “I remain an individual and a composer from China.”
2011-12 Elliott Carter Rome Prize
Follows the family tradition of musicology: research, field recordings, remastering of historical recordings, preserving traditional music from Asia.
Publishes 30+ articles about his research in China, South Korea and the USA.
Edits or co-edits 5 books.
Catalog of 100+ original compositions is published internationally by Schott.

2013-16 Composer-in-Residence at the Qualcomm Institute, more recently Artist-in-Residence, preserving and reimagining culture through his multimedia works.

2015 Saxophone concerto Xiaoxiang named a finalist for the 2015 Pulitzer Prize

2018 Senior positions at Xinghai Conservatory of Music in Guangzhou

2020 Biography and essays about Lei Liang published by Shanghai University

2021 Receives the prestigious Grawemeyer Award for his orchestral work A Thousand Mountains, a Million Streams. Lei Liang’s recent works address issues of sex trafficking across the US-Mexican border (Cuatro Corridos), America’s complex relationship with gun and violence (Inheritance), and environmental awareness through the sonification of coral reefs.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

WU MAN, pipa
Recognized as the world’s premier pipa virtuoso and a leading ambassador of Chinese music, Wu Man has carved out a career as a soloist, educator and composer. Through numerous concert tours, she has premiered hundreds of new works for the pipa, while also spearheading multimedia projects to both preserve and create awareness of China’s ancient musical traditions. Her efforts were recognized when she was named Musical America’s 2013 “Instrumentalist of the Year,” marking the first time this award has been bestowed on a player of a non-Western instrument, and, in 2021, she received an honorary Doctorate of Music from the New England Conservatory of Music. Wu Man is a Visiting Professor at her alma mater the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing and a Distinguished Professor at the Zhejiang and the Xi’an Conservatories.

Recognized as a world-class musician, she has premiered and championed new works written for the pipa. Wu Man has worked extensively with renowned contemporary composers. With her virtuoso abilities and creative spirit, Wu Man has created an original voice where Chinese traditional music and contemporary Western music styles have met.

She has commissioned compositions from Steven Mackey, Jörg Widmann, Shih-Hui Chen and Poul Ruders. Ms. Huang regularly appears at festivals, including Marlboro, Spoleto, Ravinia and Music@Menlo, among many others. Huang first came to international attention as the gold medalist in the 1988 Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition. In 1993, she was the top-prize winner in the ARD International Competition. In 1988, she was named Musical America’s “2013 Instrumentalist of the Year,” marking the first time this award has been bestowed on a player of a non-Western instrument, and, in 2021, she received an honorary Doctorate of Music from the New England Conservatory of Music. Wu Man is a Visiting Professor at her alma mater the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing and a Distinguished Professor at the Zhejiang and the Xi’an Conservatories.

She has also served as Artistic Director of the Xi’an Silk Road Music Festival at the Xi’an Conservatory. As a principal, founding musician in Yo-Yo Ma’s Silkroad project, Ms. Wu has performed throughout the world with the Silkroad Ensemble. Another of her high profile collaborations is with the world-renowned Kronos Quartet.

HSIN-YUN HUANG, viola
Violist Hsin-Yun Huang has forged a career by performing on international concert stages, commissioning and recording new works and nurturing young musicians. She was the first solo violinist to be presented in the National Performance Center of the Arts in Beijing and was featured as a faculty member with Yo-Yo Ma and his new initiative in Guangzhou. She has commissioned compositions from Steven Mackey, Shih-Hui Chen and Poul Ruders. Ms. Huang regularly appears at festivals, including Marlboro, Spoleto, Ravinia and Music@Menlo, among many others. Huang first came to international attention as the gold medalist in the 1988 Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition. In 1993, she was the top-prize winner in the ARD International Competition. In 1988, she was named Musical America’s “2013 Instrumentalist of the Year,” marking the first time this award has been bestowed on a player of a non-Western instrument, and, in 2021, she received an honorary Doctorate of Music from the New England Conservatory of Music. Wu Man is a Visiting Professor at her alma mater the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing and a Distinguished Professor at the Zhejiang and the Xi’an Conservatories.

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A Thousand Mountains, a Million Streams. is inspired by a landscape painting by the Chinese ink-brush master Huang Binhong (1865-1955).

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**CONCERTO IN D MINOR FOR VIOLA, PIPA AND STRINGS, RV 540**

Antonio Vivaldi (b. Venice, March 4, 1678; d. Vienna, Austria, July 27/28, 1741)

Composed 1740; 12 minutes

Setting aside bagpipes, alhorn and serpent, Vivaldi wrote concertos for just about every instrument that was played in his day. Throughout much of the 18th century, composers were expected to compose quickly. Patrons and audiences looked forward to new compositions and premières; concerts were put on to showcase the new rather than to reinterpret the old. Still, Vivaldi’s contemporaries recognized his fluency and skill in composition as something extraordinary. He wrote over 60 concertos and eight of them are known to be for viola d’amore.

Although there is no standard size, the viola d’amore is about the size of a viola but with certain characteristics associated with the viol. There are no frets and it was played under the chin, with six or seven playing strings and the same number of sympathetic (resonating) strings, which run under the fingerboard into separate tuning pegs. Vivaldi originally scored his D minor double concerto for viola d’amore and lute; today’s arrangement is for viola and pipa. It is one of his final works, written for a concert given in Venice March 21, 1740, in honor of the visiting Prince-Elector of Saxony, Friedrich Christian. Lightly accompanied, the two solo instruments are elegantly contrasted and compared throughout, giving each an opportunity to be heard to their best advantage.

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The piece meditates on the loss of landscapes of cultural and spiritual dimensions,” Liang says. “The work implies an intention to preserve and resurrect parallel landscapes—both spiritual and physical—and sustain a place where we and our children can belong.”

“Mother’s Songs are of a traveler’s longing for home and a daughter’s desire to be reunited with her mother. At age 83, my teacher is the only one in Inner Mongolia who still remembers these ancient melodies, and he sang them with great emotion.”

“I, too, am away from home. My teacher’s singing evoked a strong sense of longing even as it offered profound solace. In this piece, I hope to share with the audience, the gift of these moving songs.”

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Mother’s Songs – Note from the composer:

Mother’s Songs for viola and pipa was written in response to the songs sung by my teacher, the eminent Mongolian scholar Wulalji, who taught me since my childhood. During my visits to China in 2019, Professor Wulalji sang several songs that his mother, Jiijig (1912-2005), the great singer from the Horchin Prairie, had taught him when he was a child. ”

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Lei Liang

Comments welcomed: khnotes@sympatico.ca

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