

Sweet Music Journey

CHAO TIAN AND HER CHINESE DULCIMER

Chao Tian,

A leading performer on the Chinese dulcimer, board member of Beijing Association of China Traditional Music, and leader of “Always Folk” ensemble, an Artist in Residence 2017-2018 at Strathmore Music Center, Chao Tian has established a career as a soloist, educator, advocate, and composer in both traditional Chinese music and other genres.

As a lecturer at Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU) and a former member of the world-renowned Twelve Girls Band, she worked many years in the discipline of musical and cultural exchange. Her musical journey began at the age of 5 and at age 12 she gained entrance to the Affiliated Middle School of China Conservatory with a major in dulcimer, as well as a minor in piano. Later she was recommended for immediate admission to China Conservatory, where she obtained the Master Degree of Arts in Musical Performance in 2010, as well as minors in piano and percussion. She studied cimbalom with Hungarian virtuoso Victoria Herencsar, which broadened her understanding of western classical and religious music.

As an ambassador of art and culture, she had performed in over 30 different countries and regions across the globe, of many she also organized. Over the years, with identities as a university instructor, arts administrator, and professional musician, has paid her many opportunities, likewise made her pondering the relationship between music and artistic exchange. From 2017, she has collaborated with numerous acclaimed musicians from the DMV area. (DC, Maryland, and Virginia) performed in many concert series and events organized by Strathmore Music Center such as the Osher Concert, Fresh AIR Concert, and Strathmore AIR Concert series. She has contributed to local Chinese community’s cultural awareness and she was invited to perform at Chinese New Year Festival Gala 2018.

As a Chinese musician, she dedicated to the inheritance and promotion of Chinese traditional and ethnic music and she concentrates on the preservation and development of Chinese traditional music. In 2008, she led other 13 exceptional Chinese musicians and formed the “Always Folk Ensemble, dedicated to the heritage and development of traditional Chinese music, and was well received by music critics and peers and dubbed the “most vibrant young music group in recent years”. To this day, under her leadership, “Always Folk Ensemble” still frequently performs throughout China and is getting more popularity than ever before.

Meanwhile, she is intrigued by various cultures and music from other parts of the world, which have given her more challenges and ideas. Her music reflects her role as a leader of younger generation Chinese musicians, and her understanding of traditional and contemporary music, from the east to the west. The instrument played by Chao Tian, has a unique cultural background with a special purpose. It is of foreign origin and yet it became an undisputed component of Chinese music. She strives to not only affectionate her listeners, she also wants them to be able to understand the deeper message her instrument



Chinese Dulcimer

The hammered dulcimer is a percussion-stringed instrument. It is originated from Europe by the century 16th. Then it was introduced to Southern coastal China through trading with the Middle East and it was well adopted by Chinese. The word dulcimer derived from the Latin word ‘Dulcis’ (sweet) and the Greek word ‘Melos’ (song). The Chinese dulcimer is also called Yang Qin (pronounced “yahng-cheen”). The most common model consists of 147 steel strings and its hammered are made of flexible bamboo with a thin layer of rubber on the head.

Program Offerings



The Chinese Dulcimer - A Solo Journey

Chao's solo concert takes the audience on a tour of Classical Chinese music with her virtuosic performance on the Chinese dulcimer. Her concert presents to the audience with a neo-Chinese impression by taking them from ancient China into modern times with original Chinese inspired compositions. In addition, Chao's unique academic background and experience as a traditional Chinese musician enabled her effortlessly transit between classic music and traditional Chinese music. Her experience collaborating with musician cross genres and her deep academic understanding of music led to her often fuses elements across time and region in her music in branding them with her own unique interpretation.

Concert Preview



Workshop

Chao enjoys working with presenters to lead workshops. As a Chinese traditional musician and an inheritor that lives in the USA, she felt she has a duty to let more people in the USA have a more round and systematic understanding of Chinese traditional music and its beauty. She hopes that everyone who attends this workshop can have a glimpse of the vastly rich Chinese culture and philosophy through learning about the Chinese dulcimer and Chinese traditional music, and she also wishes to ignite belongingness and proudness of their heritage and culture among Chinese immigrants and Chinese descendants.

Suggested topics include: Experience Chinese Traditional Music, Explore Chinese dulcimer, Chinese Folk Song, Chinese music on the world stage and more.

Always Folk Ensemble

"Always Folk", a music ensemble and a studio initiated by Chao and her musician friends in Beijing. She is the founder and current director of the studio and the leader of ensemble musicians. "Always Folk" was created on the purpose to recreate, research and to further propagate traditional Chinese folk music and promoting the ancient and mysterious oriental phonology, using China's outstanding traditional music as an instrument, and through modern forms of artistic heritage. Meanwhile, "Always Folk" also focus on performing Chinese traditional music pieces with bold innovation and exploration with contemporary qualities additives and diversification.

Concert Preview





Collaborations Available for Tour

In each of these collaborations, Chao and her colleagues are happy to offer concerts, workshops and master classes.

东·西- Dong Xi Duo

Chao Tian & Tom Teasley, Chinese Dulcimer and World Music Percussion

Dong Xi Duo's band name derives from the identities and the background of its composing musicians. Also, it represents an element of surprises from the Chinese idiom "feint to the east but attack in the west". This is one of their signatures in their music and represents their unique and interesting ways to create music dialogue for their music. They use the subtleties of Chinese dulcimer to blend seamlessly with the world music percussion to create an elaborate and amazing duo improvisation.

Concert Preview

Chao Tian's China to American Roots Tour

Chao's Chinese dulcimer easily mixes with American roots sounds by GRAMMY Award winners Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer. Enter the five-string banjo, cello-banjo, swing and jazz guitar, mandolin, penny whistle and ukulele. Add stellar vocals, yodeling and an entertaining banter that bridges old world Asia to Appalachia, New

Chao Tian and Her Friends

Chao collaborates with different musicians in an unprecedented project that explores connections between the musical worlds of China and the others.

Concert Preview