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CONDUCTED BY TAN DUN



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Bard College Conservatory of Music

Tan Dun, *Dean*Frank Corliss, *Director*

Presents

BARD CONSERVATORY ORCHESTRA

Tan Dun, Conductor

Zhang Meng, sheng Han Yan, five-string pipa Wenwen Liu, bili Bowen Yang, chiba Yunqi Zhu, xiqin

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) Fireworks, Op. 4

Tan Dun Concerto for Five

INTERMISSION

Igor Stravinsky Le Chant du Rossignol

(The Song of the Nightingale)

Tan Dun Passacaglia: Secret of Wind and Birds

This concert has been made possible in part by the generous support of Re Foundation Inc.

Sosnoff Theater Fisher Center for the Performing Arts Bard College Saturday, May 11, 2024 7 pm

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Fireworks, Op. 4 (1908) Song of the Nightingale (1917)

Igor Stravinsky Born in Oranienbaum, Russia, 1882 Died in New York, New York, 1971

Igor Stravinsky started his composing career under the tutelage of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, who was the single most important influence during the younger man's formative years. Stravinsky's early works show how he processed and eventually outgrew that influence.

Fireworks definitely marks a pivotal moment in Stravinsky's stylistic evolution. It was his "Opus 4"—his fourth acknowledged work after a fairly conventional Symphony in E-flat Major, a song cycle based on two poems by Alexander Pushkin (*The Faun and the Shepherdess*), and the brilliant *Scherzo fantastique*. (He would soon discontinue the practice of giving his works opus numbers.) It was intended as a wedding gift for Rimsky-Korsakov's daughter, Nadezhda, who married another Rimsky-Korsakov student, Maximilian Steinberg. Steinberg later went on to inherit his father-in-law's position as professor of composition at the St. Petersburg Conservatory.

Stravinsky and Steinberg were not friends, to say the least; Stravinsky never got over his feelings of professional jealousy for his now-obscure colleague—not even after the latter's death, as we can see from Robert Craft's *Conversations with Igor Stravinsky*. The dedication must have been more of a gesture to the bride's father than an actual wedding present. As it turned out, however, Rimsky-Korsakov never saw the work. He passed away unexpectedly on June 21, 1908, just days after his daughter's wedding. Stravinsky later claimed that the package containing the score of *Fireworks* was returned to him with the notice that it was "not delivered on account of death of addressee," though recent scholarship has raised serious doubts as to the truthfulness of this story. Be that as it may, *Fireworks* represents a major step forward in Stravinsky's work; Rimsky-Korsakov's influence is less conspicuous in *Fireworks* than it is in *Scherzo fantastique*, and Stravinsky's own musical personality thus begins to emerge.

Fireworks calls for a rather large orchestra, yet it projects a relatively light sound. In the first section, the rapid figures in the woodwinds and strings evoke associations of flickering fire, while the brass instruments interject a rhythmic motif that gradually grows and finally takes over the entire orchestra. Before that happens, however, we settle into a brief middle section with a slower tempo. The flutes and upper strings play a simple but intensely chromatic melody that alludes to the opening of Paul Dukas's Sorcerer's Apprentice, but the harmonies here are more daring—stretching the concept of traditional tonality almost to a breaking point. The final section is based on a triumphant theme in a conventional E major that is orchestrated with great originality.

The private concert at which *Fireworks* was first performed turned out to have historic significance in Stravinsky's life. In the audience was Serge Diaghilev, the powerful director of the Russian Ballet, and his attention was immediately drawn to Stravinsky's music. Diaghilev lost no time in hiring the young composer to orchestrate two piano works by Chopin for the ballet *Les Sylphides*. Soon afterward, he commissioned the original score of *The Firebird* that skyrocketed Stravinsky to international fame. What even Diaghilev could not foresee was that, within a few short years, his protégé would produce *The Rite of Spring*. Yet without this brilliant impresario, Stravinsky's great Russian ballets, which changed the course of music history, would never have been written.

In less than five years, Stravinsky transformed from a faithful disciple of Rimsky-Korsakov into one of the world's leading modernist composers, a revolutionary who sent some listeners into high raptures and infuriated others with his completely novel approach to rhythm and harmony. To appreciate the extent of these changes, one need look no further than *The Nightingale*—an opera whose first act was written mostly in 1908, and its second and third in 1914. The interruption was due to the beginning of Stravinsky's collaboration with Diaghilev's dance company, Ballets Russes, resulting in *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, and *The Rite of Spring*. By the time Stravinsky returned to *The Nightingale* after a five-year hiatus, he was a different composer than he had been when he first started it.

Stravinsky's 1908 choice of the Hans Christian Andersen story was inspired by Rimsky-Korsakov's then-recent *The Golden Cockerel* (1906–7), another opera about a magical bird brought to an emperor's court. Although divided into three acts, *The Nightingale* lasts only 45 minutes and is, for all intents and purposes, a one-act opera in three scenes. Its brevity and the stylistic break midstream have prevented *The Nightingale* from entering the standard operatic repertoire. Conscious of this fact, Stravinsky welcomed the opportunity, offered by Diaghilev, to write a shorter ballet version of the opera. The symphonic poem *Le Chant du Rossignol* (*The Song of the Nightingale*), which derives most of its material from the opera's more advanced second and third acts, has proven highly effective both as a concert piece and as a ballet score.

Stravinsky himself likened the clangorous opening of the symphonic poem to the rings of the early telephones in St. Petersburg around 1904. The cheerful and rhythmically active music that follows represents the festivities at the Emperor's court, which the Nightingale is called upon to grace with its song (a flute solo in a slower tempo). The Emperor makes his entrance to the sound of the "Chinese March," introduced by the strokes of the tam-tam, an austere *ostinato* (stubbornly repeated figure) in the violins, and short flourishes in the bass. The march melody features the Chinese pentatonic scale, while the rhythmic development and the orchestration are strongly reminiscent of *The Rite of Spring*.

The Nightingale's unaccompanied flute cadenza is followed by a slow passage in which a solo violin plays the mournful melody that the bird sings to Death in act 3.

Then the festivities resume. Soon, the artificial nightingale—a present from the emperor of Japan—is brought in, with the oboe as its orchestral representative. The repetitious music of the mechanical contraption is interrupted by an angry passage: the Emperor has just realized that, while everyone was listening to the fake nightingale, the real bird has escaped. Pianissimo, the solo trumpet intones the peaceful song of the Fisherman that opens and closes the opera.

In the next passage, the Emperor lies ill in bed. The specters of his past deeds are evoked by a somber march theme played by the bassoons, the bass trombone, and the tuba. The frightful atmosphere is dispelled by the return of the Nightingale (solo violin, solo flute), which then proceeds to heal the Emperor with its magic song. The entrance of the tam-tam suggests a funeral march, and the courtiers mistakenly believe that the Emperor is dead. Then, having demonstrated the superiority of nature to artifice, the Nightingale returns home and rejoins the Fisherman whose song, played again by the solo trumpet, concludes the symphonic poem.

-Peter Laki, *Visiting Associate Professor of Music* March 2024

Concerto for Five (2022) Passacaglia: Secret of Wind and Birds (2015)

Tan Dun Born in Hunan, China

Concerto for Five, which first premiered in Hong Kong in 2022, was inspired by the powerful history of spiritual and cultural exchange around China's Mogao Caves as well as the groundbreaking musical history discovered in the 4th- to 14th-century Dunhuang murals. Tan Dun spent 10 years locating, visiting, researching, and documenting the lost musical manuscripts of the Library Cave and the more than 40 different instrument illustrations found on its walls. The instruments depicted in such paintings tell the story of a neglected part of music history that is not well known to the outside world. With his research and unique musical reconstruction, Tan Dun seeks to redefine the history of music and offer audiences the opportunity to hear the sound of Dunhuang from more than 1,000 years ago. He has spent years researching and replicating the instruments found on the cave walls, as well as transcribing the ancient musical manuscripts found in the Library Cave.

Tan Dun's fascination combined with the countless hours of research he spent unearthing "the ancient sounds of Dunhuang" culminated in the creation of his *Concerto for Five*. Today, the featured artists will share musical stories that have lived in the hearts and minds of the Eastern World for thousands of years and are only now, finally, able to be heard.

FROM THE COMPOSER Passacaglia: Secret of Wind and Birds

What is the secret of nature? Maybe only the wind and the birds know . . .

When Carnegie Hall and the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America asked me to write a new piece, I immediately thought to create and share the wonder of nature and a dream of the future. In the beginning, when human beings were first inventing music, we always looked for a way to talk to nature, to communicate with the birds and the wind.

In looking at examples of ancient Chinese music, one can see that there are so many compositions imitating the sounds of nature and, specifically, birds. With this in mind, I decided to start by using six ancient Chinese instruments—the guqin, suona, erhu, pipa, dizi, and sheng—to record bird sounds that I had composed. I formatted the recording to be playable on cell phones, turning the devices into instruments and creating a poetic forest of digital birds. The symphony orchestra frequently expands with the inclusion of new instruments; I thought that the cell phone, carrying my digital bird sounds, might be a wonderful new instrument to reflect our lives and the cultural spirit of today. Decoding the countless patterns of the sounds and colors found in nature has always been a burning passion of mine.

Leonardo da Vinci once said, "In order to arrive at knowledge of the motions of birds in the air, it is first necessary to acquire knowledge of the winds, which we will prove by the motions of water."

I decided to take this idea of waves and water as a mirror to discover the motions of wind and birds. In fact, the way birds fly, the way wind blows, the way waves ripple . . . everything in nature provides answers. With melody, rhythm, and color, I structured the sounds in a passacaglia. A passacaglia is, to me, made of complex variations and hidden repetitions. In this piece, I play with structure, color, harmony, melody, and texture through orchestration in eight-bar patterns. Thus, the piece begins with the sounds of ancient Chinese instruments played on modern-day devices, creating that chorus of digital birds and thereby moving tradition into the future.

Through nine evolving repetitions of eight-bar patterns, the piece builds to a climax that is suddenly interrupted by the orchestra members chanting. This chanting reflects ancient myth and the beauty of nature. As it builds, it weaves finger snapping, whistling, and foot stomping into a powerful, orchestral hip-hop energy. By the end, the woodwinds, strings, brass, and percussion cry out together as one giant bird. To me, this last sound is that of the phoenix—the dream of a future world.

-Tan Dun, Dean, Bard College Conservatory of Music March 2024

BIOGRAPHIES

World-renowned conductor, composer, and UNESCO Global Goodwill Ambassador **Tan Dun** has made an indelible mark on the world's music scene with a creative repertoire that spans the boundaries of classical music, multimedia performance, and Eastern and Western traditions. Often programmed by the world's leading orchestras, opera houses, festivals, and broadcasters, Tan Dun's music has been played by the likes of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, China National Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and many more. Also a regular guest conductor of the world's leading orchestras, Tan Dun's 2023–24 season includes appearances with the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra, as well as at the George Enescu Festival, Beijing Music Festival, and his personally curated WE-Festival in Hong Kong.

Recent seasons have seen Tan Dun conduct the world premiere of his *Requiem for Nature* with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra; the UK premiere of his *Buddha Passion* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra; and various programs with the Munich Philharmonic, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, Seattle Symphony Orchestra, and National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra, among others; as well as open the Edinburgh International Festival with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and tour with the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra and NHK Symphony Orchestra.

As a composer, Tan Dun's individuality has struck a chord with audiences far and wide. His *Internet Symphony*, commissioned by Google LLC, reached tens of millions of online listeners. His Organic Music Trilogy of concertos—*Water*, *Paper*, and *Earth*—have frequented major concert venues since their conception; *Paper Concerto*, in particular, was premiered by the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the opening of Walt Disney Hall. Other works, including *The Map* and *Orchestral Theatre IV: The Gate*, have been premiered by prestigious orchestras such as the Boston Symphony Orchestra and NHK Symphony Orchestra.

With his penchant for artistic curation, Tan Dun is in high international demand. He currently serves as dean of Bard College Conservatory of Music, honorary artistic director of the China National Symphony Orchestra, principal guest conductor of Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra, honorary artistic director and chief guest conductor of Xi'an Symphony Orchestra, and artistic ambassador of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

In 2023, Tan Dun signed with Decca Records, who released the world-premiere recording of *Buddha Passion*. Previously, Tan Dun recorded for Sony Classical, Deutsche Grammophon, EMI, Opus Arte, BIS, and Naxos. His discography has received regular acclaim from critics and audiences alike, including the 2001 Grammy Award for Best Score Soundtrack (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*).

Tan Dun's other awards include the 2001 Academy Award for Best Original Score, 2001 BAFTA Award for Best Film Music, 1998 Grawemeyer Award for Music

Composition, 2011 Bach Prize of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, 2012 D. D. Shostakovich Award, Venice Biennale's Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement, and, most recently, Istanbul Music Festival's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Tan Dun was born in Hunan, China, and studied at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. In 1986, he became a doctoral student at Columbia University. His music is published by G. Schirmer, Inc., and represented worldwide by Wise Music Group.

Zhang Meng (sheng) is a composer and soloist who integrates neoclassical, traditional Chinese folk, rock, and avant-garde music. As a performer, Zhang Meng focuses on sheng and xun, and has collaborated with many composers, conductors, and professional orchestras in China and abroad. A frequent collaborator with Tan Dun, he has performed both his *Earth Concerto* (xun) and *Five Muses* (sheng) around the world. Additionally, he has performed Zhao Lin's *A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains* (sheng) on tour with the China Philharmonic Orchestra. Zhang Meng is also active in the field of progressive rock.

Han Yan (five-string pipa) is a pipa soloist and professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. She is active on the Chinese and international music stages as a soloist and chamber musician, performing in Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere. In the past year, she participated as a soloist in the opening ceremony of the Abu Dhabi International Music Festival. She was also soloist in the premiere of a new composition by Tan Dun, *Requiem for Nature*, with the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam, and she performed three concerts as a soloist with the Santa Cecilia Orchestra in Rome.

Wenwen Liu (bili) currently serves as a professor in the Ethnic Music Department at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Liu has won many awards for folk music both in China and abroad. Representing a new generation of suona performers in China, she upholds tradition while interpreting it from a modern perspective. She has collaborated with well-known conductors Xia Feiyun, Wang Yongji, Tan Dun, Yan Huichang, Daniel Kafka, and others. Liu has performed and collaborated with the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra, Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra of Norway, and Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, among others.

Bowen Yang (chiba) is a soloist and ethnic music artist of the chiba, also known as the shakuhachi. He graduated from the Central Conservatory of Music. In 2021, he won Japan's Tanabe International Shakuhachi (Chiba) Competition. Additionally, he was awarded by the Yamashiro Society in Japan in 2022. Since 2018, his works have been selected for the Kumamoto Festival in Japan for three consecutive years. Yang has participated in various televised and online music programs in China.

Yunqi Zhu (xiqin) is currently a master's student at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. She was a finalist in the national erhu competition, Golden Bell Award of Chinese Music, in both 2019 and 2023. Ms. Zhu also serves as principal of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music's National Orchestra during the academic year.

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¹ Stravinsky, *Fireworks*

² Tan Dun, Concerto for Five

³ Stravinsky, *The Song of the Nightingale*

⁴ Tan Dun, Passacaglia: Secret of Wind and Birds

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Mark Primoff, Associate Vice President of Communications Amy Murray, Videographer

Publications

Mary Smith, Director Jenna Obrizok, Production Manager Rachel Crittenden, Editor Kevin Trabucco, Designer

Production

Jared Goldstein, Director of Production Dávid Bánóczi-Ruof '22, Production Administrator

Audio

Lex Morton, Audio Supervisor

costumes

Moe Schell, Costume Supervisor Sara Sa, Assistant Costume Shop Manager

Lighting

Josh Foreman, Lighting Supervisor Nick Hawrylko, Head Electrician

Orchestra

Stephen Dean, Orchestra Production Manager Grace Anne, Orchestra Stage Manager Lydia McCaw, Orchestra Stage Manager Nora Rubenstone '11, Associate Orchestra Production Manager

Scenic

Rick Reiser, Technical Director Eric Leary, Assistant Technical Director Sam Dickson '19, Carpenter Maggie McFarland '21, Props Coordinator Duane Olson, Carpenter

Video

Kat Pagsolingan, Video Supervisor

Theater & Performance and Dance Programs

Jennifer Lown, Program Administrator Sabrina Sa, Artistic and Administrative Assistant

BARD MUSIC FESTIVAL Executive Director

Irene Zedlacher

Artistic Directors

Leon Botstein Christopher H. Gibbs

Associate Director

Raissa St. Pierre '87

Scholars in Residence 2024

Francesca Brittan Sarah Hibberd

Program Committee 2024

Byron Adams Leon Botstein Francesca Brittan Christopher H. Gibbs Sarah Hibberd Richard Wilson Irene Zedlacher

Director of Choruses

James Bagwell

Vocal Casting

Joshua Winograde

BARD COLLEGE

Founded in 1860, Bard College is a four-year residential college of the liberal arts and sciences located 90 miles north of New York City. With the addition of the Montgomery Place and Massena properties, Bard's campus consists of more than 1,200 parklike acres in the Hudson River Valley. The College offers bachelor of arts, bachelor of science, and bachelor of music degrees, with majors in nearly 40 academic programs; advanced degrees through 13 graduate programs; nine early colleges; and numerous dual-degree programs nationally and internationally. Building on its 164-year history as a competitive and innovative undergraduate college, Bard has expanded its mission as a private institution acting in the public interest across the country and around the world to meet broader student needs and increase access to liberal education. The undergraduate program at the main campus in upstate New York has a reputation for scholarly excellence, a focus on the arts, and civic engagement. Bard is committed to enriching culture, public life, and democratic discourse by training tomorrow's thought leaders. For more information about Bard College, visit bard.edu.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT FOR BARD COLLEGE IN ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON Developed in Cooperation with the Stockbridge-Munsee Community

In the spirit of truth and equity, it is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are gathered on the sacred homelands of the Munsee and Muhheaconneok people, who are the original stewards of this land. Today, due to forced removal, the community resides in Northeast Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We honor and pay respect to their ancestors, past and present, as well as to future generations, and we recognize their continuing presence in their homelands. We understand that our acknowledgment requires those of us who are settlers to recognize our own place in and responsibilities towards addressing inequity and that this ongoing and challenging work requires that we commit to real engagement with the Munsee and Mohican communities to build an inclusive and equitable space for all. For more information about the Stockbridge-Munsee Community, please visit mohican.com.

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BARD SUMMERS CAPE 2024

THEATER
ELEVATOR REPAIR SERVICE
ULYSSES
JUNE 20 – JULY 14

DANCE URBAN BUSH WOMEN

SCAT! THE COMPLEX LIVES OF AL & DOT, DOT & AL ZOLLAR

JUNE 28-30

OPERA

LE PROPHÈTE

JULY 26 – AUGUST 4

BARD MUSIC FESTIVAL

BERLIOZ AND HIS WORLD

AUGUST 9-11

REVOLUTIONARY SPECTACLE AND ROMANTIC PASSION

AUGUST 15-18

MUSIC AND THE LITERARY IMAGINATION

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