



University of North Texas
College of Music

Ensemble Concert | Wednesday, March 26, 2025 | 6:30 p.m. | Recital Hall

Chinese Ensemble
with special guests

Alexander Strader 斯特拉德, 亚历山大, sheng 笙 *

Eldred Marshall 埃尔德雷马歇尔博士, piano 钢琴 ^

Music of the Chinese Sheng

Time Immemorial (2021) * Roydon Tse
(b. 1991)

虹, Rainbow, Concerto for Sheng (2006) * ^ 刘文金, Liu Wenjin
(1937–2013)

一. 生命, Life

二. 风雨, Wind and Rain

三. 彩虹, Rainbow

天天黑, The Darkening Sky (arr. 2014) * ^ Fujian Folk Song
arr. 刁鹏, Diao Peng
(b. 1988)

塔吉克舞曲, Tajik Dance (1985/2019) * 王惠然, Wang Huiran
(1936–2023)
arr. Yuxin Mei

Yuxin Mei, pipa 琵琶

Alexander Moreno, zhongruan 中阮

Joshua Landin, percussion 打击乐器

Program five hundred thirty-one of the 2024–2025 season
Photography and videography are prohibited

Program Notes

Time Immemorial (2021) | Roydon Tse (b. 1991)

The first written records of the sheng can be traced back to the Yin Dynasty between 1401-1122 BC on oracle bones. With over three-thousand years of history the sheng evolved alongside China's culture changing names and forms as time progressed. Roydon Tse has taken the sheng in its modern state and created a piece that demonstrates both of the instrument's roles as an ancient accompanist and contemporary soloist. Tse presents these notes to the performer upon observing the piece:

"The title *Time Immemorial* refers to "a point of time in the past that was so long ago that people have no knowledge or memory of it. (Oxford Languages)," and was chosen to reflect the ancient lineage of the instrument and the imaginary narrative that governs the work. The piece begins with a gesture that is repeated several times throughout while sustained pedal tones anchor it harmonically, giving each gesture context. A faster section displays the virtuosic capabilities of the sheng as it navigates through various chords that were composed with the instrument's unique design in mind. The piece closes with the same gestures from the beginning, returning to a stillness that harkens back to *Time Immemorial*."

虹, Rainbow, Concerto for Sheng (2006) | 刘文金, Liu Wenjin (1937–2013)

Liu Wenjin created a cornerstone of modern sheng repertoire by utilizing the sheng's unique chordal and polyphonic abilities. *Rainbow* assisted in popularizing thirty-six key sheng solo performances by blending traditional musical styles with Western playing techniques and composition structure.

Thematically, Wenjin uses the movements of *Rainbow* to celebrate life in nature as well as the human experience. Through enduring hardships we come to realize our potential to stand tall in this world. The first movement, *Life*, introduces us both musically and thematically to the immense vitality of nature. Afterwards, nerves of the world's fauna are tested by *Wind and Rain* represented by dissonant chords and chromatic scales over a fast bassline. However, clear skies and the *Rainbow* must come after the storm. Creatures big and small dance in celebration that calls back the ode of vitality of the first movement.

天天黑, The Darkening Sky (arr. 2014) | Fujian Folk Song
arr. 刁鹏, Diao Peng (b. 1988)

天黑黑 (*Tian Hei Hei*) or 天乌乌 (*Ti Or Or*) in the Minnan dialect, is a folk song for children that follows an old man digging for taro underneath a sky about to burst with rain. Instead of finding the intended root the old man unearths an eel. Perplexed but humored he takes the aquatic creature home to his wife to cook dinner. While he prefers the dish well seasoned his partner would like it bland. Their bickering then leads to them breaking the seasoning pot, and then laughing about it afterwards.

Diao Peng utilizes this song from his childhood to go into different directions melodically. He changed the name of the piece to 天天黑 (*Tian Tian Hei*) to reflect his creative variations both musically and thematically. He claims these changes mirror those found in the weather as well as life:

"Sometimes it is still raining but the sun shows its face, or maybe you think it will clear up later, but then a heavy thunderstorm breaks out that makes you unprepared. Many setbacks, many ups and downs, the dark clouds disperse, but in the end what is left is always good."

塔吉克舞曲, Tajik Dance (1985/2019) | 王惠然, Wang Huiran (1936-2023)
arr. Yuxin Mei

Being one of the minority groups from the Xinjiang region of northwest China, the Tajik people are descendants of Eastern Iranian Sogdians and Bactrians. Geographically, Xinjiang borders multiple countries such as Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan which results in the Tajik's music having a strong Central Asian influence. Originally composed as a solo for *Liuqin*, *Tajik Dance* displays a lively celebration of Tajik culture. Wang Huiran adapted this work from the Tajik Eagle Dance, which shows the freedom an eagle has while gliding throughout its mountainous habitat.

Biographies

A musician fancying himself an astronomer, **Alexander Strader** creates new solar systems of sounds that provide the people of earth experiences that are out of this world. By peering through his musical telescope and observing different types of world music he is able to combine elements from all corners of the globe in his playing.

Utilizing the clarinet, bass clarinet, and *sheng*, a mouth organ made of bamboo, Alexander is a freelancer for audiences big and small. He has appeared in festivals such as Music in the Mountains and has performed with the American Wind Symphony Orchestra. On weekends, he plays the clarinet and sheng to deepen worshippers' liturgical experiences at multiple churches throughout Dallas. He holds the position of bass clarinetist with the Mansfield Philharmonic and has appeared with Toccare Winds. He recorded with the University of North Texas Wind Symphony appearing on the album *Taylor Made*.

On the *sheng*, Alexander has appeared as a featured soloist in the SoundWaves music festival at Texas A&M Corpus Christi. In addition to performing abroad in China at Shanghai Conservatory of Music and Huaqiao University, he has had the honor of presenting solos to government officials of the Chinese Embassy. He is the founder and *sheng* player of the Huo Feng Trio which plays Chinese Orchestral music arranged for *sheng*, *pipa*, and *zhongruan*. The group has made live appearances at venues throughout Dallas such as the Dallas Arboretum, Nasher Sculpture Center, and Greyson College. Recently, he has recorded his sheng playing on the *The Dragon Dream* project set to release in 2025.

Alexander has helped students discover their enthusiasm for music in Texas public schools for eight years and counting. His students have gone on to obtain high placements in the TMEA All-State auditions, UIL solo and Ensemble, college entrance examinations, and regional military band auditions. As an adjudicator for both TMEA and UIL and a recipient of the John Phillip Sousa award in 2013, he knows how to guide student's progress for success. Additionally, he has brought his clarinet internationally to El Salvador through the Musaid program where he led individual lessons and masterclasses. He has recently been appointed as the first ever clarinet instructor for Royal Music Academy of Plano.

A Master of Music from the University of North Texas Alexander's primary clarinet teachers are Stephen Girko, John Scott, and Philip Paglialonga. His sheng teachers include Dr. Yuxin Mei, Hua Yifei, and Hu Jianbing.

The Press Enterprise (Riverside, CA) hailed his "dazzling technique" and his "clean, tidy approach." Music critic Laurence Vitte described him as an "illumination in music," and said of his all-Beethoven recital: "Marshall presented a recital so full of musical thrills and beauties, and so in identification with the composer's own persona, that, for a few hours, it was as if he were communing across the centuries to conjure up a rare and magical musical spectrum." The Telegraf Online Constanta (Romania) reported that Marshall "captivated the audience" in Mozart's Piano Concerto no. 20, which he conducted from the Piano.

Eldred Marshall began studying the piano at age six and played in public by age seven. His prodigious and inquisitive mind allowed him to master large swaths of the piano repertoire quickly as well as consistently win top prizes at the competitions he entered as a child. By 16, he debuted with orchestra, playing Brahms's Piano Concerto no. 2 in B-flat Major with the Victor Valley Symphony Orchestra. Before entering into Yale University, where he graduated with honors with a B.A. in Political Science, he had already performed all over the United States.

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The critically-acclaimed pianist has performed in Spain, Italy, the Republic of San Marino, Belgium, Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, the Ukraine, the People's Republic of China, and Canada. He has performed the entire cycle of 32 Piano Sonatas of Beethoven in public, from memory, as a concentrated series, twice. Other notable tour projects include all-Bach piano recital programs including the Goldberg Variations, the Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1, and Beethoven's Diabelli Variations. Recently, he was a featured artist of the 2024 Basically Beethoven Festival in Dallas, TX, and the guest artist of the 2024 Lied Center Piano Academy in Lincoln, Nebraska.

As an orchestral conductor, Marshall has led the Ukrainian State Academic Orchestra (Kiev, Ukraine), the Kharkiv Youth Symphony (Kharkiv, Ukraine), the Pleven Philharmonic Orchestra (Pleven, Bulgaria), the Vidin Philharmonic Orchestra (Vidin, Bulgaria), the Filharmonica Oltenia di Craiova (Craiova, Romania), and the Constanta "Black Sea" Philharmonic Orchestra (Constanta, Romania). Additionally, he has led several opera productions, such as Mozart's Bastien und Bastienne, Le Nozze di Figaro, Die Zauberflöte, as well as Debussy's Pelléas et Mélisande.

Marshall earned his Doctor of Musical Arts in Piano Performance degree from the University of North Texas (UNT) in 2018. Additionally, he earned three Master of Music degrees from Southern Methodist University (SMU): piano (2011), organ (2012) and orchestral conducting (2013). Institutions at which he has taught and lectured include Grambling State University, the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, Texas A&M Commerce, UNT, SMU, and North

Texas Central College. His doctoral dissertation topic was on the art of conducting piano concerti from the piano – performance practice, discipline and whether or not it is "real conducting."

Presently, Marshall serves as the Artistic Director/Conductor of the Mansfield Philharmonic Orchestra. Additionally, he serves as Associate Director of Music at Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church in Rockwall, TX. He is also the founding Artistic Director/Conductor of the Lucas Chorale, and the Organist/Music Director of Grace Fellowship Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lucas, TX.

Upcoming performances in the 2024-2025 season include appearances with the Rosedale Symphony Orchestra in Toronto (Schumann Piano Concerto), the Mesquite Symphony Orchestra (Beethoven Triple Concerto), and the Symphony Orchestras of Arlington, Garland, and Las Colinas (world premiere; Llano Estacado by Mike Capps).

The UNT Chinese Ensemble is the first of its kind to be established at a Texas university. Directed by founding director Dr. Yuxin Mei, the ensemble plays in the traditional Silk and Bamboo style. They have played at many events on campus and throughout the DFW, including the Society for Ethnomusicology Southern Plains 2016, 2020, and 2024 Conferences, the Celebration of Chinese New Year at the Crow Collection of Asian Art Museum in Dallas, and the AT&T Performance Center Volunteer Award Party. They also performed at the Denver Chinese New Year Celebration at the invitation of the Denver Confucius Institute in February 2018.