



University of North Texas
College of Music

Faculty Recital | Friday, April 3, 2026 | 8:00pm | Paul Voertman Concert Hall

Yuxin Mei, pipa
Zhaohan Wang, piano
Clouds and Flowers Fantasy

平沙落雁 Wild Geese Descending on the Sandbank (n.d.)Traditional
arr. Hua Qiuping

瀛洲古调：后小银枪
Ancient Melodies of Yingzhou: The Little Silver Spear (n.d.)Traditional

天鹅 The Swan (1984)Liu Dehai
(1937–2020)

霸王卸甲 "The Emperor of Chu Shedding Off His Armor" (n.d.)Traditional
Liu Dehai Performance Version

Pipa Concerto: 云想花想 Clouds and Flowers Fantasy (2012) ..Wang Danhong
(b. 1981)

Program five hundred thirty-seven of the 2025–2026 season
Photography and videography are prohibited

Program Notes

Clouds and Flowers Fantasy: Dr. Yuxin Mei Pipa Recital

文 Wen and 武 Wu styles of the Pipa Music

Wen and Wu Styles of Pipa Music

The Wen and Wu styles in pipa music represent two distinct performance approaches.

Wen (civil or literary) emphasizes emotional expression and subtlety. It embodies Chinese artistic aesthetics through the principle of 借景抒情, 借物咏志—expressing emotions through depictions of nature and conveying spiritual aspirations through physical objects. For instance, the changing phases of the moon may reflect the vicissitudes of life, while falling autumn leaves can evoke the sorrow of parting.

Wu (martial), in contrast, is highly narrative and often focuses on storytelling. This style features virtuosic techniques, powerful strokes, rapid notes, and percussive sounds. The most representative Wu piece is *Ambush from All Sides*, which vividly depicts the Battle of Gaixia in 202 BCE through intricate musical imagery.

However, Wen and Wu are not mutually exclusive; rather, they coexist and complement each other. The Wen style demands considerable technical skill, requiring refined and nuanced tone production. Conversely, the Wu style is not merely a display of virtuosity—it also conveys delicate emotions through dazzling techniques.

平沙落雁 Wild Geese Descending on the Sandbank | Traditional

The pipa piece was first documented in the *Pipa Score (Pipa Pu)* compiled by Hua Qiuping in 1818, the earliest formally published collection of pipa music in China.

The composition depicts the scene of migratory birds soaring across the sky during seasonal migration. In the second section, “*Geese Calling in a Frosty Sky*,” the left-hand technique employs string bending alongside an open-string drone as a sustained accompanying tone, demonstrating an innovative and distinctive approach. Within the repertoire of the Pinghu School, this piece is notable for its subtle expressiveness—finding the extraordinary within simplicity, and balancing stillness with motion—creating a profound and evocative artistic atmosphere.

The present performance is based on the performance edition of the distinguished pipa master Yang Dajun, a representative inheritor of the Pinghu School. In his playing, Yang often interprets traditionally martial pieces with a lyrical approach, emphasizing expressivity, refinement, and depth of artistic conception. This aesthetic is a defining characteristic of the Pinghu School.

瀛洲古调：后小银枪 Ancient Melodies of Yingzhou: The Little Silver Spear | Traditional

The character *ying* (瀛) refers to the sea, and in legend, the mythical island of immortals is known as *Yingzhou* (瀛洲). In later usage, Chongming Island at the mouth of the Yangtze River has also been referred to as *Yingzhou*. The term *Yingzhou Gudiao* ("Ancient Melodies of Yingzhou") thus denotes a body of traditional pieces that have circulated on Chongming Island. Over time, these melodies were transmitted, adapted, and developed into solo works for the pipa. Their original composers and exact origins, however, can no longer be determined.

Yingzhou Gudiao comprises forty-five pieces in total, including sections in slow tempo (*manban*), fast tempo (*kuaiban*), lyrical style (*wenban*), and martial suites (*wutao*). Each piece may be performed independently or combined in sequence. For this concert, the fifth piece from the *manban* (slow-tempo) section has been selected.

后小银枪 (The Little Silver Spear)

Today often referred to as "*The Mischievous Child*," this piece depicts children in rural villages playfully brandishing small silver spears during harvest festivities. The music is lively and animated, expressing both playful mischief and a sense of spirited determination.

天鹅 The Swan (1984) | Liu Dehai (1937–2020)

"*The Swan*," composed in 1984 by the renowned pipa virtuoso Liu Dehai, is a representative work from his "*Life*" Suite, inspired by themes of human experience. Its principal melody draws upon the Mongolian folk song "*Pastoral Song*."

Centered on the image of the swan, the work evokes the bird's elegance and fluid vitality through a rich palette of pipa techniques. The swan becomes a poetic symbol of integrity and inner nobility, embodying a longing for freedom and an aspirational vision of a brighter future.

While rooted in traditional practice, the piece expands the expressive possibilities of the instrument through innovative techniques—such as *fan zheng tan* (reverse plucking)—and a subtle integration of Chinese and Western musical elements. Widely regarded as a landmark in the modern pipa repertoire, "*The Swan*" stands as an exemplary work of the Wen style.

霸王卸甲 “The Emperor of Chu Shedding Off His Armor” | Traditional, Liu Dehai Performance version

This piece is one of the representative works of the *wu* (martial) suite in the pipa repertoire. It depicts the heroic tragedy of the Chu–Han contention in 202 BCE, when Xiang Yu, the Hegemon-King of Western Chu, was defeated at Gaixia. Accordingly, the opening is marked by a vigorous and heroic character, while the section depicting the “Songs of Chu” (*Chuge*) adopts a sorrowful and desolate tone.

Liu Dehai's interpretation of “*The Emperor of Chu Shedding Off His Armor*” is based on the transmission of Li Tingsong of the Wang School, which he further developed through new artistic treatment. Employing what he described as “new wine in an old bottle,” Liu reinterprets the work by centering the entire narrative on the figure of the fallen hero Xiang Yu. Emphasis is placed on the act of “shedding off” the armor, portraying the tragic and dignified conclusion of a heroic life.

In terms of performance technique, the piece begins with an unconventional and fragmented use of the *xia chu lun* (downward rolling) technique, suggesting the ominous onset of a great tragedy. Subsequently, sections such as “*Arranging the Camps*” and “*Forming the Troops*” are transformed into an extended variation that becomes the “solo dance” of the king. Forceful pushing and pulling techniques, along with strong *banlun* (half-rolls), are employed to convey Xiang Yu's masculine strength and heroic character.

The original section “*The Army Returns Home*” is omitted, and the sounds of drums and horns following “*Farewell to My Concubine*” are reinterpreted as the “*Wu River*” section. The imagery of galloping horses and battle horns serves as a sonic backdrop, ensuring that the musical narrative consistently reflects the psychological state of Xiang Yu.

The work also incorporates a combination of extremely slow tremolos, delicate rolling techniques, and rapid vibrato to express the tenderness of Xiang Yu in the “*Farewell to My Concubine*” scene. This lyrical moment forms a striking contrast with the surrounding martial passages, rendering the character of Xiang Yu more vivid and human.

In the later sections, the continuous use of *xia chu lun* and descending scalar motion produces a loosely vibrating, sand-like timbre on the outer strings (achieved by loosening the tuning peg until the pitch becomes indeterminate). This is rendered with extremely soft dynamics to convey the emotional climax of the tragedy, employing the principle of “*fan tan*” (contrasting or inverse articulation) to heighten its expressive impact.

The piece concludes with a final dissonant harmonic sweep, symbolizing Xiang Yu's suicide and the sound of his sword falling to the ground.

**Pipa Concerto: 云想花想 Clouds and Flowers Fantasy (2012) |
Wang Danhong (b. 1981)**

Composed in 2012 by Wang Danhong on commission from the China National Traditional Orchestra, *Clouds and Flowers Fantasy* draws its inspiration from a line in Li Bai's Tang dynasty poem *Qingping Diao*: "Clouds think of her garments; flowers think of her face."

Through an expressive dialogue between the pipa and piano, the work transforms the poetic imagery of the Tang era into a vivid musical landscape. It preserves the lyrical elegance of traditional Chinese melodies while incorporating modern compositional techniques, creating a rich synthesis of refinement and brilliance. The music moves fluidly between delicacy and virtuosity, reflecting both the graceful qualities of *wenqu* (lyrical style) and the dynamic energy of *wuqu* (martial style).

Inspired by the structural principles of Tang dynasty *daqu* (grand suite forms), the concerto reimagines historical aesthetics within a contemporary musical language. Widely regarded as a landmark in the modern pipa repertoire, *Clouds and Flowers Fantasy* stands as a compelling example of the instrument's evolving expressive possibilities.

Biographies

Dr. Yuxin Mei is a renowned pipa virtuoso, educator, and the founding director of the University of North Texas Chinese Music Ensemble. She earned a Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology from the University of North Texas (UNT) and was awarded the Silver Award at the 2024 Global Music Awards and First Place in Traditional Chinese Instrument Performance at the Zhuhai International Music Festival.

Dr. Mei's research fields include gender studies, East Asian music, Chinese music, global music history, and immigrant music and culture. Her scholarly work explores how music articulates identity, memory, and transformation across cultural boundaries, with particular attention to women's voices and transnational performance practices.

She was the recipient of the Presser Graduate Music Award (2018) and won the Vida Chenoweth Student Paper Prize (2016) from the Society for Ethnomusicology Southern Plains Chapter. In 2020, she became the first Chinese artist to receive the Texas Folklife Apprenticeship Mentor Award, among other grants recognizing her contributions as both a performer and scholar.

Dr. Mei received her B.A. and M.A. degrees in Pipa Performance and Education from the China Conservatory of Music in Beijing and the Xinghai Conservatory of Music in Guangzhou. From 2006 to 2012, she served on the faculty at the Xinghai Conservatory of Music. Prior to this, she was the Artistic Director and soloist for the Zhuhai Chinese Music Chamber Orchestra. She has performed extensively in China, Portugal, Norway, Singapore, France, and Germany, and has taught masterclasses at the Macau Art School and the Chong Hong Chinese Music Association in Macau and Texas A&M Corpus Christi.

From 2012 to 2016, she was invited to Norway as part of the cultural exchange project "Spoor" hosted by The Cultural Rucksack in Akershus. In 1998, she released the album *Spring of Zhu Hai*, marking the early recognition of her artistic career.

Chinese pianist **Zhaohan Wang** (b. 1997) is a DMA candidate in Piano Performance at the University of North Texas, where he studies under Dr. Liudmila Georgievskaya and former piano faculty Mr. Gustavo Romero. Also, he serves as a teaching fellow in the Keyboard Studies division. Educated on two continents, he completed his bachelor's degree in Piano Performance at the New England Conservatory in Boston, studying with Randall Hodgkinson. He then earned his master's degree in Piano Performance at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville under the guidance of Dr. Chih-Long Hu, with additional studies in piano pedagogy with Dr. David Brunell. His pre-college training took place at the Shenyang Conservatory of Music Middle and High School in China.

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Mr. Wang's artistry has been shaped by lessons and masterclasses with distinguished artists including Ernest Barretta, Matti Raekallio, Ignat Solzhenitsyn, Bruce Brubaker, and Gary Graffman, and by appearances at major festivals such as the Beijing International Piano Festival, the Texas State International Piano Festival, and the Mazowszu Piano Festival in Zhangjiakou, China. He has performed extensively in China and the United States, with appearances at the New England Conservatory, the University of North Texas, Texas Woman's University, and various concert venues and community organizations throughout Texas, Beijing, Nanning, and beyond. His recent doctoral recitals have featured cornerstone works by L.V. Beethoven, F. Chopin, S. Prokofiev, P. I. Tchaikovsky, and others, reflecting a particular affinity for the Romantic and early twentieth-century repertoire.

A prizewinner in both national and international competitions, Wang received third prize at the Nanning Piano Competition in 2018 and third prize at the 2021 MTNA Piano Competition, where he was also awarded an Honorable Mention. He has been a member of MTNA and has served as a jury member for the 33rd Międzynarodowy Festival "Chopinowskie na Mazowszu" Sochaczew in Zhangjiakou, Hebei Province, China.

Equally dedicated to teaching, Mr. Wang has worked with students at all levels—from beginners to advanced pre-professionals. He has held teaching assistant and teaching fellow positions at the New England Conservatory, the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, and the University of North Texas, and has taught privately in China, drawing on his international training to support young pianists' technical and musical development. He also serves as an instructor for the TMTA Theory Test, further reflecting his commitment to comprehensive musicianship.