



# WU MAN

SOLO RECITAL

CHINA/USA



PHOTOGRAPH: JAY BLAKESBURY

# AUCKLAND ARTS FESTIVAL

FREE PROGRAMME

POST-CONCERT TALK

6.10PM, CONCERT CHAMBER

# WU MAN THE JOURNEY OF CHINESE PIPA: ANCIENT TIES FOR MODERN SOUND

SOLO RECITAL

CHINA/USA

CONCERT CHAMBER, AUCKLAND TOWN HALL

Sunday 10 March, 5.00pm

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## **Xi Yang Xiao Gu (Flute and Drum Music at Sunset)**

**Classical, (Civil)**

The Sound of Bells and Drums from a Distant Temple along the River

Moon on the Eastern Mountain

Breeze over the Quiet Water

Shadows of Flowers

Clouds and Water Far Away Become as One

A Fishman's Song in the Evening

Waves Lapping at the Shore

The Returning Boat

## **Shi Mian Mai Fu (Ambush Laid on Ten Sides)**

**Classical (Martial)**

## **Xu Lai (Meditation)**

**LIU TIANHUA**

## **Kazakh küi**

**Traditional arr. WU MAN**

## **Dance of the Yi People**

**WANG HURIAN (b.1935)**

## **San Liu (Three Six )**

**Traditional**

## **Night Thoughts**

**WU MAN**

## **Leaves Flying in Autumn**

**WU MAN**

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Grammy Award-nominated artist Wu Man is recognized as both a virtuoso and ambassador of the pipa, or Chinese lute, which has a history of over two thousand years. Her creativity and curiosity has led to collaborations with some of the leading contemporary composers such as Tan Dun, Philip Glass, the late Lou Harrison, Terry Riley, Bright Sheng, Chen

Yi and many others. She also frequently performs as a member of the Silk Road Ensemble with cellist Yo-Yo Ma, and with the Kronos Quartet.

Wu Man has spent the majority of her career tracing the history of her instrument throughout her native China and into Central Asia.

While documenting hundreds of journeys and adventures to little-known regions of Asia, Wu Man unearthed ancient musical traditions that have influenced both the pipa's repertoire and Wu Man's own technique. In this program including selections from her 2010 recording *Immeasurable Light* and her most recent album *Borderlands*, Wu Man takes the audience on an illuminating and deeply personal journey of how the pipa's story has shaped her own.

## PROGRAMME NOTES

### **Xi Yang Xiao Gu (Flute and Drum Music at Sunset)** Classical (Civil)

A hand-written score for this pipa piece first appeared in 1875 as a piece with seven untitled sections. It was later discovered with subtitles among Chen Zijing's hand-written collection of pipa music in 1898. The present score, having eight sections with subtitles, is taken from Li Fangyuan's New Collections, 1895. This composition is of the "civil" style of pipa music.

### **Shi Mian Mai Fu (Ambush Laid on Ten Sides)**

Classical (Martial)

Perhaps the best known of all traditional Pipa works. It is a grand opus of the "martial" school of pipa music. A hand-written score for pipa solo first appeared in 1875. Structured in traditional story telling form, *Shi Mian Mai Fu* portrays the epic battle between the kingdoms of Han (Liu Bang) and the warlord of Chu (Xiang Yu) in 202 B.C. The Han army ambushed the Chu army on ten sides and finally defeated the powerful Chu.

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(Xiang Yu committed suicide), leading to the establishment of the Han Dynasty. The music describes how the armies set up camp, effected the ambush and fought fiercely. In it can be heard the war drums, booming guns, soldiers and horses, and the shouting of soldiers at the massacre. The victors return to camp in triumph at the end of a tiring battle. Variations on a theme make use of tonal colors and timbres created by various fingering techniques to evoke a range of moods, heroism, stoicism, despair, and tragedy.

#### **Xu Lai (Meditation) (1929)** Liu Tianhua

Liu Tianhua was a twentieth century intellectual, composer, and musician who tried to formalise and modernise the study and performance of traditional Chinese music, sometimes with ideas borrowed from the West. In this work, the music conjures up the image of a person seated by a window, in the emptiness and stillness of the night, lost in meditation.

#### **Kazakh kûi** Traditional, arr. Wu Man

Wu Man made this arrangement for pipa of a Kazakh folk tune that she heard performed on the *dombýra*, the two-stringed plucked lute that is widely regarded as a cultural symbol of the Kazakhs. 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. 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.

#### **Dance of the Yi People (1960)** Wang Huiran (b.1935)

This is one of the signature pieces in the repertoire of Wu Man. Wang arranged this wonderful piece in 1960 based on folk tunes of the Yi minority people, who live in southwestern China. However the piece did not gain popularity during the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976) because the music evokes intoxicating nights on a mountainside and the joyous gathering of young people with lively dancing, and has nothing to do with the "Red Revolution," which was necessary to be approved by censors at the time. Wu Man selected this piece for her audition to enter the Conservatory in Beijing in 1978 and won first place. Her performance of the piece was recorded and broadcast throughout the nation. Since then, it has become one of the most popular pieces in the pipa repertoire. This is the first pipa composition to incorporate the Western A-B-A structure, adopt Western chords and guitar techniques, and display virtuoso pipa techniques such as tremolos, strumming, sliding notes, and harmonics.

#### **San Liu (Three Six )** Traditional

This is a popular folk tune from the Shanghai area, often played with a small ensemble at a tea house.

#### **Night Thoughts (2005)** Wu Man

The piece was inspired by a 9th-Century Buddhist pipa tune and represented for Wu Man a chance to rediscover the pipa's native, regional language. The piece particularly drawn to its ancient-tune scale, which is very different from today's mostly pentatonic pipa music, and to the peaceful, meditative sound of the pipa in the low register.

#### **Leaves Flying in Autumn (2000)** Wu Man

Wu Man composed this improvisational collage a few years ago with inspiration from the classical martial style of pipa works and a nod to rock n'roll.

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