



Bard College Conservatory of Music

20 Years of Music, Vision, and Excellence

Degree Recital

Qizhi An (Coco), *guqin*

Sunday, December 14, 2025, 1:00 PM

László Z. Bitó '60 Conservatory Building, Performance Space

“Xiao Xiang Shui Yun” (*Clouds over the Xiao and Xiang Rivers*) 《潇湘水云》

Guo Mian

“Chun Feng” (*Spring Wind*) 《春风》 (1982)

Gong Yi & Guohua Xu
arr. Coco An & Danni Chen

Danni Chen, *guqin*
Qianling Liu, *percussion*

“Li Sao” (*Lament for the Parting of Soul*) 《离骚》

“Shen Qi Mi Pu” (*The Mysterious
and Marvelous Tablature*)

– **Intermission** –

“Qiu Lan Xi Ci” (*Ode to the Autumn Orchid*) 《秋兰兮辞》(2023)

Wen Huang

Ella Nagy, *piano*

“Mei Hua San Nong” (*Three Variations on the Plum Blossom*) 《梅花三弄》
Kexilin Ke, *konghou*

“Shen Qi Mi Pu”

Hengjian Zhang, *sheng*

“Guang Ling San” (*The Piece of Guangling*) 《广陵散》

“Shen Qi Mi Pu”

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Qizhi An (Coco), *guqin*

Qizhi An (Coco), a member of the Chinese Guqin Society, is currently studying at the Bard College Conservatory of Music in the US-China Music Institute, pursuing a double-major BA/BM in guqin performance and psychology. She played guqin for 7 years. She studied with Dai Xiaolian, a guqin professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, for one year in high school. Through Bard's collaboration with the Central Conservatory of Music, she studied guqin under the guidance of Professor Zhao Jiazhen. At the Bard Conservatory, Qizhi An has been especially motivated to improve thanks to supportive faculty, a strong student community, and intensive academic programs. She held a midway concert in her third year of college.

Danni Chen, *guqin*

Danni Chen, a member of the Chinese Guqin Society, graduated from Kedron State High School in Brisbane, Australia, and is currently a senior majoring in Guqin and Photography at Bard College Conservatory of Music. She studies guqin with Professor Zhao Jiazhen, President of the Chinese Qin Association and PhD supervisor at China's Central Conservatory of Music. In 2022, she was awarded two gold medals in the 3rd "Hong Qin Cup" Guqin Competition. In 2024, she won the bronze medal in the guqin professional youth group A of the 2nd "Guoyun Cup" Chinese instruments competition.

Kexilin Ke, *konghou*

Kexilin Ke developed a lifelong passion for music through her family's influence. At age nine, she began studying the guzheng under Professor Wang Caizhen, and later encountered Professor Cui Junzhi, with whom she continues her konghou studies to this day. Kexilin Ke's performances have graced major Chinese cultural venues, including the New Year Concert at the Great Hall of the People and the Spring Festival Gathering hosted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council. She has also showcased the kunghou's charm at prestigious events such as the West Lake International Music Festival and the Wuyishan National Park Landscape Music Concert. As a young konghou inheritor, she actively promotes contemporary expressions of this ancient instrument. In 2023, she held a graduation charity concert featuring konghou performances at Xiamen Wuyuan Concert Hall, and in 2024, she was awarded the Special Gold Prize at the Asian Arts Festival. She was admitted to the Konghou program at the Affiliated Middle School of the Central Conservatory of Music in 2017, achieving outstanding results, and entered the Konghou program at the Bard College Conservatory of Music in the United States in 2023.

QianLing Liu, *percussion*

Qianling Liu entered Zhejiang Conservatory of Music in 2020. She is currently a first-year student in GCP at Bard College Conservatory of Music. During her undergraduate studies, she served as a percussionist in the marching band, gaining extensive performance experience. She has performed with the ensemble in numerous elementary school outreach concerts and in opening ceremonies for major events.

Hengjian Zhang, *sheng*

Hengjian Zhang is a musician from Shandong, China. He has studied sheng performance under well-known musicians and professors, including Pei Dazheng, Dong Qing, Chen Shuo, and Wang Lei. He is a member of the Echos of China Ensemble and an active participant in the Bard East-West Ensemble. He has performed at various concert halls, including the Tianjin Grand Theatre, Central Conservatory of Music Opera Hall, Tsinghua University, Tongji University, Shandong University, Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall. In 2024, he graduated from Tianjin Conservatory of Music with a bachelor's degree and is currently a second-year graduate student at Bard Conservatory of Music.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Ella Nagy, piano

Ella Nagy is an award-winning Irish–Hungarian pianist whose distinctions include winning the Maura Dowdall Concerto Competition, the Royal Irish Academy of Music Chamber Festival Dublin Prize, and the prestigious Blackwater Valley Opera Festival | John Pollard Bursary, becoming the first instrumentalist ever to receive the award. Following these achievements, she performed at the Blackwater Valley Opera Festival in 2023, 2024, and 2025. Holding both Bachelor's and Master's degrees in solo piano performance from the Royal Irish Academy of Music, Ella is a versatile musician, enjoying both solo and collaborative playing. She recently joined the Collaborative Piano Fellowship at Bard College Conservatory, having previously served as the répétiteur with the Irish National Opera Studio program. During her time with INO, she participated in masterclasses, performances, and full opera productions as assistant rehearsal pianist, and performed continuo fortepiano on a national tour of Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* under the baton of Erina Yashima. Ella has performed on many of Ireland's leading stages, including the National Concert Hall, where she received a standing ovation for her performance of Chopin's Second Piano Concerto with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra. Internationally, she has been invited to perform at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest, as well as in venues across the UK, Denmark, Portugal, New York City, and Florida. Her performances have been broadcast on RTÉ Lyric FM, Dublin South FM, and BBC Radio Ulster. Ella features on Jonathan Nangle's album *Surface Patterns*, recording the title track for solo piano and the song cycle *Snáth* with American soprano Abigail LaDuke.

ART DIRECTOR PROFESSOR

Jiazhen Zhao

Zhao Jiazhen is an eminent contemporary Guqin performer and educator, serving as a professor and doctoral supervisor at the Central Conservatory of Music, President of the Guqin Professional Committee of the Chinese Nationalities Orchestra Society, and a representative inheritor of China's national-level intangible cultural heritage in the art of the Guqin. She also serves as a member of the Art Committee of the Shanghai Jiukeshu Future Art Center. Among her numerous honors, she was awarded the "Beijing Outstanding Teacher" title in 1986 and, in 2018, became the only Guqin performer ever to receive the Seventh Huayue Forum & "Xinyi Cup" Outstanding Chinese Folk Music Performer Award. Her album *Qin* won the 2019 American Independent Music Award, while *Sounds of Heaven and Earth* earned the Third CMA Music Award for Best Folk Instrumental Album—marking the first time a Guqin album received such a prestigious accolade. In 2024, she was honored by UNESCO with the "World Cultural Exemplar" title. Notably, during the 70th Anniversary Celebration of the People's Republic of China, Zhao Jiazhen represented the finest of traditional Chinese culture, performing on a parade float in tribute to the Party and the people.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

1. “Xiao Xiang Shui Yun” (Clouds over the Xiao and Xiang Rivers) 《潇湘水云》

The piece is attributed to Guo Chuan (郭沔), a renowned guqin master. He lived during a tumultuous period when northern China was invaded and occupied by the Jin dynasty, forcing the Song court to retreat south.

The inspiration for the piece came from Guo Chuan's life in exile near the scenic confluence of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers in modern-day Hunan Province. Gazing upon the majestic landscape often shrouded in mist and clouds, he was moved not only by its natural beauty but also by a profound sense of loss. The clouds obscuring the mountains and rivers became a powerful metaphor for the political "clouds" of invasion that had obscured the heartland of his nation. Thus, the piece expresses his deep sorrow for his occupied homeland and his unyielding patriotic spirit.

2. “Chun Feng” (Spring Wind) 《春风》

"Chun Feng" is a celebrated and distinctive piece in the modern guqin repertoire. Composed in 1982 by the renowned contemporary guqin masters Gong Yi (龚一) and Xu Guohua (许国华), it represents a deliberate and innovative departure from the instrument's ancient tradition. Unlike the introspective, often melancholic historical pieces, "Chun Feng" is vibrant, lyrical, and of the Xinjiang style, overflowing with a sense of joy, perfectly capturing the revitalizing spirit of its namesake, the spring breeze.

3. “Li Sao” (Lament for the Parting of Soul) 《离骚》

The guqin piece "Li Sao" is one of the most powerful and monumental works in the entire qin repertoire. It is not merely a piece of music but a profound musical interpretation of one of the greatest poems in Chinese literature, sharing the same name. The piece channels the towering spirit, political anguish, and ultimate desolation of the poem's author, the legendary poet-patriot Qu Yuan (c. 340–278 BCE).

The composition is deeply rooted in the Chu Ci (Songs of Chu) anthology, and specifically the poem "Li Sao." This epic poem was written by Qu Yuan, a nobleman and loyal minister of the state of Chu during the Warring States period. Falsely accused and exiled by a corrupt court, he poured his grief, his unwavering loyalty to his king, and his disillusionment with the world into this magnum opus. The title "Li Sao" is often translated as "Encountering Sorrow" or "Lament for the Parting of Soul," reflecting a deep inner turmoil.

4. “Qiu Lan Xi Ci” (Ode to the Autumn Orchid) 《秋兰兮辞》

The patriotic poet Qu Yuan used the orchid as a metaphor for himself, writing in Li Sao: "I threaded the autumn orchids to wear as adornment," and "I have cultivated acres of orchids in nine fields, and planted a hundred acres of fragrant herbs as well." These lines highlight his noble character, moral integrity, and his refusal to follow the crowd, embodying the sentiment that "while all others are muddy, I alone am clear." He infused his patriotic feelings into the imagery of the orchid, establishing the symbolic tradition of "aromatic herbs and virtuous beauties," and was later honored as the "Orchid Flower Deity."

A few stems of autumn orchids, with their slender yet resilient leaves and elegantly blooming flowers, exude a sense of pure and refined beauty. In this composition, the composer utilizes the guqin's unique tonal qualities—both balanced and serene, as well as resonant and impassioned—along with diverse musical techniques to depict the sharp and vigorous strokes of autumn orchids in bloom. The music resembles ink-wash painting, where ink and color blend seamlessly, creating a profoundly aesthetic and evocative ambiance.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

5. “Mei Hua San Nong” (Three Variations on the Plum Blossom)《梅花三弄》

Mei Hua San Nong" is one of the most beloved and iconic pieces in the guqin repertoire. Its title translates directly to "Three Variations on the Plum Blossom," which perfectly describes its musical structure and its subject: the revered plum blossom. The piece is a musical celebration of the plum flower's symbolic virtues—resilience, purity, integrity, and inner strength. The earliest printed version of the score we have today is found in the monumental Ming Dynasty anthology, 《Shen Qi Mi Pu》 (The Mysterious and Marvelous Tablature, 1425).

The "Three Variations" in the title refers to the core musical structure:

1. A Clear, Iconic Theme: The piece is built around a distinctive, elegant melody that represents the plum blossom itself—delicate, beautiful, and pure.
2. Three Variations and Repetitions: This main theme is played three times, each in a different register of the guqin (high, low, and high again), with decorative and rhythmic changes surrounding it. Each "variation" depicts the plum blossom from a different perspective, showcasing its beauty under various conditions.
3. Contrasting Sections: Between the statements of the main theme are more fluid and free-flowing sections. These are often interpreted as depicting the harshness of the winter—the cold wind (su feng 肃风) and the lingering snow.

6. “Guang Ling San” (The Piece of Guangling) 《广陵散》

Guangling San" is one of the most ancient, monumental, and legendary pieces in the entire guqin repertoire. Unlike the serene, meditative, or nature-inspired themes common to many qin pieces, "Guangling San" is a fierce and dramatic musical narrative of betrayal, revenge, and righteous fury. It is renowned for its powerful emotions, technical complexity, and its unique place as a "martial" epic on an instrument typically associated with scholarly peace. The most famous figure associated with "Guangling San" is Ji Kang, one of the legendary "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove." A renowned philosopher, poet, and qin master, Ji Kang was a staunch critic of the corrupt regime. When he was unjustly condemned to death, his final act was to perform "Guangling San" before his execution, famously declaring, "《广陵散》于今绝矣!" ("The Music of Guangling is lost from this world forever!").

The piece moves through a wide range of powerful emotions—from the somber, plotting opening, through sections of building tension and rage, to the furious, percussive climax depicting the assassination. While most Qin music is considered "civil" or "literary" (文曲 Wénqǔ), "Guangling San" is the prime example of a "martial" piece. It uses aggressive techniques, such as forceful plucking, rapid repeated notes, and dramatic glissandos, to create a sense of conflict and violence. The music is highly programmatic, with sections believed to represent specific parts of the story: Nie Zheng's lament, his resolve, the journey, the courtly performance, the sudden attack, and the final heroic sacrifice.