



Bard College Conservatory of Music

20 Years of Music, Vision, and Excellence

Undergraduate Degree Recital

Xiaoyan Luo, *pipa*

Friday, April 17, 2026 at 1:00 pm
Bitó Conservatory Building, Performance Space

Dragon Boat 龙船

Traditional Folk Music
Notated by Zhang BuChan (1868-1935)
arr. Lin Shicheng (1922-2005)

Contemplation on Tanyao Caves 昙曜五相 (2021)*
(arr. for *pipa* and *piano*)

Yao Chen (b. 1976)

Ella Nagy, *piano*

Yingzhou Ancient Tunes (Six Lyrical tunes) 瀛洲古调 (文曲六板)

“The Moon Ascending High 小月儿高”

“Fish at Play in Water 鱼儿嬉水”

“Sparrows Returning to The Nest 雀欲回巢”

“Dragonflies Skimming the Water 蜻蜓点水”

“Magpies Contending for Plum Blossoms in Winter 寒鹊争梅”

“The Playful Child 顽童”

Traditional Music
Notated by Fan Boyan (1912-2001)
arr. Liu Dehai (1937-2020)

SPROUT 芽 (1989)
for *Erhu* and *Pipa*

Hu Jianbing (c. 1970)

Beitong Liu, *erhu*

Sleeve Dagger and Warriors 袖剑与铜甲金戈 (2016)

Chen Danbu (b. 1955)

*U.S. Premiere

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Dragon Boat 龙船

Dragon Boat is a traditional pipa piece widely circulated in the Jiangnan area of China since the Qing dynasty. The piece is structured as an alternation between four percussion sections and four melodic sections, with each pairing representing a dragon boat, a traditional festive activity in which people race and celebrate on the water. The work depicts four dragon boats in total, and the melodies are derived from folk songs that have long been popular among local communities and street performances. By adapting and integrating these melodies, the composer transforms the four original pieces into a cohesive solo pipa work, evoking the drums, singing, and lively atmosphere of the dragon boat festival.

Contemplation on Tanyao Caves 昙曜五相 (2021)

It is composer Yao Chen's musical meditation on the Five Tanyao Caves in Datong, a major center for Buddhism in China. As the earliest and most monumental group within the Yungang Grottoes, these caves are renowned for their grand scale, exquisite carvings, and majestic Buddhist sculptures. They also stand as a testament to the vision and spiritual legacy of the monk Tanyao, who played a key role in the revival of Buddhism during the Northern Wei dynasty. This piece is structured in five movements, each evoking the imagery of an individual cave while reflecting on Tanyao's extraordinary creativity and devotion:

I. Compassion, contemplation, serenity; II. Majesty, austerity, strength; III. Mystery, depth, fluidity; IV. Benevolence, decorum, composure; V. Solemnity, reverence, inclusiveness.

Yingzhou Ancient Tunes (Six Lyrical tunes) 瀛洲古调 (文曲六板)

"The Moon Ascending High 小月几高"; "Fish at Play in Water 鱼儿嬉水";

"Sparrows Returning to The Nest 雀欲回巢"; "Dragonflies Skimming the Water 蜻蜓点水";

"Magpies Contending for Plum Blossoms in Winter 寒鹊争梅"; "The Playful Child 顽童"

Yingzhou Ancient Tunes is a representative collection of scores from *Chongming pai* 崇明派, one of the five major traditional pipa sects in China, dating from the Qing Dynasty. *Chongming pai* integrates the elegance and lyricism of southern China pipa tradition with the strength and grandeur of the northern China style, forming an aesthetic characterized by simplicity, antiquity and refinement. According to the *Title Music* as the traditional format of Chinese music, these short pieces portray a wide range of subjects, including flowers and birds, seasonal landscapes and folklore. They evoke vivid imagery and poetic imagination, while reflecting unique regional characteristics and deep cultural heritage.

SPROUT 芽 (1989)

"At the beginning of life, there is purity, innocence, and fearless determination." Composer Hu Jianbing uses the erhu's pure tone to demonstrate the sincerity of life, while the pipa's character evokes the impulse of new life striving to break through the earth. Through a modern compositional approach with tonality shifting, combined with the interweaving dialogue of the erhu and pipa—lines and points interacting—the work creates a dynamic balance between motion and stillness. It portrays both the struggle and joy of life emerging into the world, expressing a deep reverence for nature and a reflection on the original goodness of the human spirit.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Sleeve Dagger and Warriors 袖剑与铜甲金戈 (2016)

It is an orchestral work adapted by Chen Danbu, originally composed in the 1990s for a dance of the same title, and later arranged as a pipa solo. The piece is based on the tragic story of Jing Ke, the chivalrous assassin of the Warring States period, who sacrificed his life to overthrow tyranny. It depicts the farewell scene by the Yi River, where Crown Prince Dan of Yan and his warriors send him off, singing:

“Hsiao-hsiao soughs the wind,

Cold the waters of the Yi.

The knight who leaves you now,

You shall nevermore see.”

“风萧萧兮易水寒，壮士一去兮不复还”

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Xiaoyan Zoey Luo is a pipa musician whose work bridges traditional Chinese music and contemporary performance contexts. She studies with Zhang Qiang, renowned pipa virtuoso and professor at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, and is currently pursuing dual degrees in Chinese Instrumental Performance and Film Production at Bard Conservatory and Bard College, with graduation expected in May 2026. She is the co-founder of the Echos of China Ensemble and an active member of the Bard East-West Ensemble. Luo has performed at major international venues and institutions, including Carnegie Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Consulate General of China in New York and Washington, D.C., the United Nations Headquarters, China Institute in America, The Juilliard School, Skidmore College, Vassar College, and Rutgers University. In 2023, she was a winner of the Bard Conservatory Concerto Competition and later toured Washington, D.C. with the Bard East-West Ensemble. In June 2025, she appeared as a soloist in 11 concerts across seven cities during the ensemble's China tour, and participated in artistic and academic exchanges with leading institutions including Tsinghua University and Tongji University. In December 2025, she was awarded the Gold Prize at both the Dunhuang Cup Chinese Instrumental Performance Competition (North America Division) and the Stanford Baipu International Music Competition. In February 2026, she performed as a pipa soloist with The Orchestra Now in the Sound of Spring concert at Jazz at Lincoln Center and the Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, both sold-out performances.