



MEI HAN

NEW MUSIC FOR ZHENG

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Bio

The Zheng Master” - Montreal Gazette

Mei Han is a groundbreaking virtuoso propelling the Chinese zheng into radical new dimensions of musical expression. Presenting music deeply rooted in over two thousand years of Chinese culture, Han is transforming this stately instrument into a powerful tool for the contemporary international concert stage. She is a consummate performer, appeared with leading artists around the world in a multitude of musical genres from symphonic, chamber and New Music to traditional and World music, or from Creative Improvisation to electronic.

Han studied with China's top zheng masters Zhang Yan and Gao Zicheng, and performed as a featured soloist for over ten years with the prestigious Beijing Zhan You Ensemble, the premiere ensemble of its type in China. Han went on to become a rare blend of performer and scholar with two Master's degrees in ethnomusicology, from the Musical Research Institute of the Chinese Arts Academy in Beijing (1995), considered internationally the most prestigious institute for Chinese music studies, and from the University of British Columbia (2000). Han wrote the zheng entry for the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, the premiere music reference book, and has published articles in numerous music journals in both English and Chinese. Han is the director of the Chinese Music Ensemble at the University of British Columbia, founded the Chinese Ensemble at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and has lectured on Chinese music in many universities and music institutes around the world.



A dynamic performer and innovator, Han has been exploring new directions for solo zheng and unique combinations of zheng with other instruments in a contemporary experimental aesthetic. Works written for, and premiered by, Han include the world's first work for zheng and harpsichord by Janet Danielson performed at the Open Ears Festival 2005; the first work for zheng and string quartet by John Oliver, premiered at the Vancouver Chamber Music Festival 2004 with the Borealis String Quartet; and the first original zheng concerto by Dr. John Sharpley, performed with the China Philharmonic Orchestra in Beijing, 2003. A commanding virtuoso, Han regularly performs challenging new works by contemporary international composers including compositions by Minoru Miki, Yuji Takahashi, and Barry Truax amongst others.

Han's career spans Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe, and North America. Her performance highlights include the Kennedy Centre and the Smithsonian Institutions (with Orchid Ensemble). Together with Raine-Reusch, they toured to prestigious venues in Australia (WOMAD), China, Czech Republic, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore (WOMAD), and South Africa. As an accomplished improviser, Han has performed at major international jazz and experimental music festivals, including the Vancouver International Jazz Festival, Atlantic Jazz Festival, International Festival de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville and the Vancouver New Music Festival.

Han's first solo CD, Outside the Wall of traditional and contemporary works, received critical acclaim, with airplay on CBC (Canada), BBC (Great Britain), and ABC (Australia). Her collaboration with composer and multi-instrumentalist Randy Raine-Reusch on Distant Wind for zheng duet, and Road to Kashgar with the Orchid Ensemble were nominated for Juno Awards (Best Global). Han's latest album Ume with piano luminary Paul Plimley creates a rich and original musical language in contemporary jazz aesthetic.

With passion and vigor, Han's stunning presentations of contemporary music constantly challenge the conservatism of Chinese music, and redefine the zheng as a powerful vehicle of innovation and expression.





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Highlights

Upcoming

Tour to China and Korea with Mei Han Art Ensemble

Previous

2006

Tour to Washington and Oregon with Randy Raine-Reusch

Tour to Quebec New Music Festivals in Victoriaville and Jonquiere with Mei Han Ensemble

Vancouver New Music Concert Series with Li Pui Ming

2005

Tour to US: Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Freer Gallery of Art, with Orchid Ensemble

Tour to Vietnam with Randy Raine-Reusch

Release "Outside the Wall", solo album on Za Disc

Vancouver Jazz Festival, with Paul Plimley

World Premiere of *Enchanted Glass*, for zheng and harpsichord, Open Ears Festival, Canada

University of Michigan Artist in Residence

Cross Sound Music Festival, Alaska

2004

World Premiere of *Purple Lotus Bud*, for zheng and string quartet, written for Mei Han by John Oliver and performed with the Borealis String Quartet at the Vancouver Chamber Music Festival

Tanz and Folkfest Rudolstadt, Germany and New Works Calgary, Canada with Randy Raine-Reusch

2003

World Premiere of *When Cranes Fly Home*, a concerto for zheng and orchestra, written by John Sharpley for Mei Han, performed with the China Philharmonic Orchestra March, 2003, in Beijing

Tour to China, Japan, Singapore and Australia (WOMAD), with Randy Raine-Reusch

Kennedy Centre, Washington, DC, with Orchid Ensemble

2002

Sound Travels: Global Internet Exchange with Paul Plimley, Vancouver; Akikazu Nakamura, Tokyo; Ellery Eskelin, New York; Lê Quan Ninh, Toulouse

Vancouver New Music Festival, Canada

Canada Day, National Gallery, Ottawa and Atlantic Jazz Festival, Canada, with Orchid Ensemble

Vancouver International Jazz Festival, Canada, with Frank Gratkowski and Randy Raine-Reusch

Juno Awards, "Best Global" nomination for Distant Wind with Randy Raine-Reusch

2001

Awesome Africa Festival, Durban Film Festival, Durban, South Africa, with ASZA

Canada East Coast Tour, with Orchid Ensemble

2000

Vancouver Sacred Music Festival, Sound Travels Festival, Canada

Festival of Friends, Hamilton, Canada, with Orchid Ensemble

1999

WOMAD, Singapore

Rainforest World Music Festival, Sarawak, Malaysia

Chime Conference on Chinese Music, Prague, Czech Republic

Vancouver International Jazz Festival, Vancouver Sacred Music Festival, Canada

Earlier: Performances and tours throughout China for 15 years, with Zhan You Ensemble





Reviews

Absolument Fascinante! - *Espace Musicale, CBC Radio Canada*

The Zheng Master - *Montreal Gazette*

Mei Han is a magnificent musician her focus, passion and intensity keep the listener riveted, eagerly anticipating every note as the music unfolds with elegance and poise. An eclectic musical experience of the highest quality. - *Wholenote*

Tour de Force! Mei Han is equally at home inside and outside the wall of tradition, giving disparate material a unity of sound and purpose. The rules are clearly hers to break.

- *Mack Hagood, Far Eastern Audio Review*

The material calls for a performance infused with pensive thought and infinite patience, and the Chinese-born zheng master delivered. Han gave each note its own shape: some rose up, others dove down, and still more shimmered with delicate vibrato, all controlled by subtle pressure on the strings behind the harp-like instrument's floating bridges.

- *Alex Varty, Georgia Straight*

Perhaps this disc's best asset is the experience of its creators. Mei Han and Randy Raine-Reusch are adventurous as composers, but it is their command and confidence as players that bring their ideas into fruition. Each note, planned or improvised, subtle or stentorian, is played with power and commitment.

- *Mack Hagood, Far Eastern Audio Review*

They have stepped from the past to the future, trying to construct exciting new forms of expression for the new millennium.

- *Chen Jie, China Daily*

Many of the tunes are built from a spiritual platform, calling to philosophical mysticism or tangible elements of nature.... Whatever the approach, Distant Wind is a linear program of captivating music that succeeds on its own. Mei Han and Randy Raine-Reusch remind us that the best conditions for improvisation begin first with the soul and then with intuition.

- *Alan Jones One Final Note.com*

A highly accessible and attractive album of zheng duets, their mission is to rescue the zheng from the highly hysterical sentimentality that pervades much Chinese music, and then gently propel it down paths, such as improvising over riffs, that a Western mind might naturally explore. Skillful and forceful playing.

- *Clive Bell, The Wire*



Stage Plot



Instrument: zheng

Vocal mics: 1

Instrument mics: 2, C 1000 or SM 81

Mic stands: 3 boom, one on short stand

Monitor: sometimes necessary

Lighting: general soft, no green gels, avoid dramatic lighting as causes shadows on strings