

Bright Sheng is one of the foremost composers and conductors of our time, whose stage, orchestral, chamber, and vocal works are performed regularly throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. Many of Sheng's works bear strong Chinese and Asian influences, a result of his diligent study of both Asian and Western musical cultures for over four decades. The MacArthur Foundation proclaimed him "an innovative composer who merges diverse musical customs in works that transcend conventional aesthetic boundaries." The Foundation predicted that "Bright Sheng will continue to be an important leader in exploring and bridging musical traditions."

2022-23 season celebrated his first home-coming season since 1982, in Shanghai. As the Distinguished Artist-in-Residence at New York University Shanghai, he curated a 10-day festival for the school's 10th anniversary and conducted the festival's opening and closing concerts with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and the Shanghai Baroque Chamber Orchestra, with programs highlighting the New York-Shanghai friendship, combining works of old and new. On August 5, 2023, *Of Time and Love*, his new viola concerto was premiered at Brevard Music Festival, with Roberto Diaz as the soloist, who also commissioned the work.

2023-24 season will see the premiere of *Triumph of Humanity* on November 11, 2023, his most recent orchestral composition to date, co-commissioned by the Palm Beach Symphony and the Freedom Institute, with Gerard Schwarz conducting; and on March 13-14, 2024, the world premiere of *Rooster of Dawn*, an orchestral work co-commissioned by the Chinese National Center for the Performing Arts orchestra, Carnegie Hall, Canada National Center for the Arts Orchestra, led by Jia Lu, music director of NCPA. On March 23, 2024, *Of Time and Love*, receives its Asian premiere, conducted by Sheng and the Suzhou Symphony, with Diaz as the soloist. The performance is repeated a week later by Sheng and Diaz with the Harbin Symphony Orchestra, China.

One of the recent highlights was the premiere of his opera, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, commissioned by the San Francisco Opera on September 10, a 135-minute opera in two acts, with overwhelming public and critical acclaim and a sold-out audience for the run. Within the first week of the premiere, a two-minute online clip of the opera received more than four million hits worldwide. Sheng, as both the composer and co-librettist, collaborated with a dream-team of artists: David Henry Hwang as co-librettist, Stan Lai as stage director, and Tim Yip as art designer. On September 28 that year, the San Francisco Symphony, led by Michael Tilson Thomas, premiered his *Dream of the Red Chamber Overture*, specially written for the symphony's Asian tour of China, Japan, and Korea in November of 2016. In March 2017, *Dream of the Red Chamber* was the closing highlight for the Hong Kong Arts Festival (a co-producer of the opera), sold out six months prior to the performances. Six months later, the opera received its six-city tour in China, with Sheng as the music director and conductor of the production, again, with a sold-out run. In June and July of 2022, San Francisco Opera revived *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the first in the company's history.

Sheng's contributions to the lyric theater began with his appointment as the Composer-in-Residence at the Lyric Opera of Chicago (1989-1992). In collaboration with librettist Andrew Porter, Sheng created his first opera, *The Song of Majnun* (1992), a one-act, Persian "Romeo and Juliet" story. The opera received five productions nationwide and was recorded by the Houston Grand Opera on Delos in 1997. In the following decade Sheng penned two more major stage works, a musical theater/opera *The Silver River* and a full-length, two-act opera *Madam Mao*, commissioned and premiered by the Santa Fe Opera in 2003 and set to a libretto by stage director Colin Graham. It portrays Jiang Qing, Chairman Mao's

repressed, vengeful wife, and the leading architects of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Michael Kennedy of the *Telegraph* (London) hailed the opera as "...extraordinary music and a riveting evening in the theater."

In 1999, at the invitation of President Clinton, Sheng received a special commission from the White House to create a new work honoring the visiting Chinese Premier Zhu, Rongji. The resulting *Three Songs for Pipa and Cello* was premiered by Wu Man and Yo-Yo Ma during the state dinner hosted by the Clintons. In 2001, Sheng was named the MacArthur Foundation Fellow, and received the American Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, as well as an ASCAP Achievement Award the following year.

The Silver River (co-commissioned in 1997 by the Kennedy Center, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and Chamber Music Northwest) was Sheng's first collaboration with librettist David Henry Hwang; and it received a visually stunning production staged by Ong Keng Sen. The production, co-commissioned by the Prince Music Theater in Philadelphia and the Spoleto Festival, USA, the latter gave the premiere in 2000, followed by performances in Philadelphia, Singapore, and as the highlight of the 2022 Lincoln Center Festival.

In 2003, Carnegie Hall presented a Sheng portrait concert in its "Making Music" series with the principals from the New York Philharmonic, and the Shanghai Quartet. In the same week the New York Philharmonic premiered its commissioned work, *Song and Dance of Tears*—a quadruple concerto for cello, piano, pipa, and sheng, featuring soloists Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax, Wu Man, and Wu Tong, conducted by David Zinman. The work was part of the Silk Road Project, founded by cellist Yo Yo Ma, to whom Sheng served as the Artistic Advisor from 1998 to 2003. He also was among the composers chosen by the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Committee to compose music for the opening ceremony.

In the world of chamber music, Sheng has worked with the Takacs Quartet, the Emerson Quartet, the Shanghai Quartet, the St. Petersburg String Quartet, and many others. In 2007, Sheng's *String Quartet No. 5* was commissioned and premiered by the Emerson Quartet and was part of its touring repertoire.

Sheng has enjoyed many collaborations with esteemed choreographers; From 2006-2008 Sheng was the Composer-in-Residence for the New York City Ballet, where he collaborated with choreographer Christopher Wheeldon and conducted the premiere of his new ballet *The Nightingale and the Rose*, based on a novella by Oscar Wilde. In 2002, Helgi Tomasson, the Artistic Director of the San Francisco Ballet, compiled three existing compositions by Sheng to create a new ballet *Chi-Lin*, which the company also brought to New York City Center and the Kennedy Center, conducted by Sheng.

To further his belief that music is a living, breathing art form that should never be set in stone, in 2011, Sheng founded and served as the Artistic Director of *The Intimacy of Creativity—The Bright Sheng Partnership: Composers Meet Performers in Hong Kong*, an annual music festival with new approach to creativity. To celebrate its fifth anniversary in 2016, the festival collaborated with the Hong Kong Philharmonic and Hong Kong Arts Festival for two concerts at the Hong Kong City Hall and Hong Kong Cultural Center, including a Five-Year Retrospective concert and a two-disc Naxos Records release, including his interpretation of Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra.

Committed to the importance of being both a composer and performer, Sheng maintains an active performing career as a conductor and concert pianist. As a guest conductor, he has appeared with some of the most important orchestras, including the San Francisco Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Seattle Symphony, New York Chamber Symphony, St. Petersburg Philharmonic, Dortmund Philharmonic, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, China National Symphony, Shanghai Symphony, San Francisco Ballet, and New York City Ballet.

As a scholar, he has published articles exploring themes of Chinese and Asian musical traditions within global context. Articles have been published in *Asian Art & Culture* of the Smithsonian Institution, *Perspectives of New Music*, and *People's Music of China*; and most recently an article on the creation of the opera *Dream of the Red Chamber* in *Cao Xueqin Study*, one of the most prestigious Redology journals in China. Sheng also undertook the only existing Chinese translation of Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*.

In addition to the Lyric Opera of Chicago and New York City Ballet, Sheng has served as composer-in-residence to the Seattle Symphony Orchestra (1992-95 and 2000-01) the Tanglewood Music Center (2001, where he also taught from 2001 through 2006), the Washington Performing Arts Society (2001-02), the Mannes College of Music (2002-03), the Atlantic Center for the Arts (2002).

Sheng has collaborated with such distinguished musicians as Leonard Bernstein, Kurt Masur, Christoph Eschenbach, Charles Dutoit, Jaap van Zweden, Michael Tilson Thomas, Leonard Slatkin, Gerard Schwarz, David Robertson, David Zinman, Marin Alsop, Neeme Järvi, Robert Spano, Hugh Wolff, Sakari Oramo, Thomas Dasgaard, Yo Yo Ma, Emanuel Ax, Gil Shaham, Yefim Bronfman, Lynn Harrell, Peter Serkin, Chao-Liang Lin, Evelyn Glennie, Alisa Weilerstein, among others. He has been widely commissioned and performed by the top musical institutions in North America, Europe, and Asia, including the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, LA Philharmonic, Minnesota Symphony, National Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestra de Paris, BBC Symphony London, NDR Radio Symphony of Germany, Danish National Symphony, St. Petersburg Philharmonic, National Symphony of Russia, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Santa Fe Opera, New York City Opera, New York City Ballet, and San Francisco Ballet.

Sheng's music has been recorded on Sony Classical, Decca/London Records, Naxos, Telarc, BIS, Delos, Koch International, New World, and several other labels. To date, twelve all-Sheng albums have been released.

Born on December 6, 1955, in Shanghai, Sheng began studying the piano with his mother at age four. During China's difficult time in the 1960's and 1970's, he lived in Qinghai, a province near Tibet, where for seven years he performed as a pianist and percussionist in the provincial music and dance theater; and studied folk music of the region. When China's universities reopened in 1978, he was among the first students admitted to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music where he studied composition from 1978-82. He moved to New York City in 1982 and studied composition with George Perle, Hugo Weisgall, Chou Wen-Chung, Jack Beeson, and Mario Davidovsky; and received his MA and DMA degrees in music composition from City University of New York and Columbia University, respectively. In 1985, as a student at Tanglewood Music Center at the Berkshire, he met Leonard Bernstein, who soon became an important mentor. Sheng studied composition and conducting with Bernstein and worked as his assistant until Bernstein's passing in 1990.

Sheng has taught composition at the University of Michigan since 1995, where he is the Leonard Bernstein Distinguished University Professor of Music. He is also the Helmut and Anna-Pao Sohmen Professor-at-Large at the Institute for the Advanced Studies of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, where he directs the IC festival and other arts related activities. From 2022-2024, he serves as the Distinguished Artist-in-Residence at New York University Shanghai.

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