

Bright Sheng is respected as one of the foremost composers of our time, whose stage, orchestral, chamber and vocal works are performed regularly throughout North America, Europe and Asia. Sheng's music is noted for its lyrical and limpid melodies, a Shostakovich sense of breadth in music phrases, a Bartokian sense of rhythmic propulsion, and dramatic and theatrical gestures. Many of Sheng's works has strong Chinese and Asian influences, a result of his diligent study of Asian musical cultures for over three decades. He was proclaimed by the MacArthur Foundation in 2001 as "an innovative composer who merges diverse musical customs in works that transcend conventional aesthetic boundaries." The Foundation predicts that "Bright Sheng will continue to be an important leader in exploring and bridging musical traditions."

2016-17 season marks a new page of Sheng's career. On September 10, The San Francisco Opera premiered his much anticipated new opera *Dream of the Red Chamber*, a 150' opera in two acts, with overwhelming public and critical acclaim. Within weeks of the premiere, the tickets were sold out for the full run; and within the first week, a two-minute online clip of the opera by *China Daily* received nearly four million hits worldwide. The opera, with Sheng as both the composer and co-librettist together with a dream team of collaborating artists: David Henry Hwang as co-librettist, Stan Lai as stage director, and Tim Yip as art designer. At the same time, on September 28, the San Francisco Symphony, led by Michael Tilson Thomas, premiered his *Dream of the Red Chamber Overture*, especially 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 who co-produced the opera. Again, the entire run was sold out six months prior to the performance dates. In May, his *Postcards* for chamber orchestra was given the American Composers Orchestra premiere, a long overdue event. The season finishes with the world premiere of the 2016 revision of his *Concerto for Orchestra: Zodiac Tales*, by the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington DC, on the farewell concert for Maestro Eschenbach as the Music Director for the orchestra, along with Beethoven Ninth Symphony. September 8-23, he will conduct the SFO's production for a three-city tour in Beijing, Changsha, Wuhan, China.

Sheng's music has been widely commissioned and performed by many of the world's most prestigious institutions, including in North America by the San Francisco Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Santa Fe Opera, New York City Opera, New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra National Symphony Orchestra, Detroit

Symphony Orchestra, Houston Symphony Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, San Diego Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra; in Europe by the Orchestra de Paris, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, BBC Symphony of London, G.B., London Sinfonietta, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Symphony of Wales, G.B., Hamburg Radio Symphony (NDR), Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Dusseldorf Symphony Orchestra, Duisburg Philharmonic, Dortmund Philharmonic Orchestra, Branderburg Stage Opera Orchestra (Cottbus), St. Petersburg Philharmonic, National Symphony of Russia, Warsaw Symphony, Danish National Radio Symphony, Copenhagen Philharmonic, Bern Symphony Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony, Turku Symphony Orchestra, Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra, National Symphony of Spain, Orqesta Sinfonica de Bilbao, Gulbenkian Orchestra of Portugal, Slovenian Radio & TV Symphony, Orchestra of National Opera of Greece, Munich Chamber Orchestra, Paris Chamber Orchestra; and in Asia by New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Sidney Symphony Orchestra, Alliance of Asian Pacific Region Orchestra, Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, China National Symphony, Shanghai Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan, Macao Symphony Orchestra, Macao Chinese Orchestra, China National Orchestra of Traditional Chinese Instruments, Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra, Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, Taipei City Chinese Orchestra, among others.

Sheng has collaborated with many distinguished musicians including Leonard Bernstein, Christoph Eschenbach, Kurt Masur, Michael Tilson Thomas, Leonard Slatkin, Charles Dutoit, Gerald Schwarz, David Zinman, Neeme Järvi, David Robertson, Hugh Wolff, Robert Spano, Marin Alsop, Bramwell Tovey, Eiji Oue, Jahja Lin, John Fiore, Jeffery Kahane, Shui Lan, Thomas Dasgaard, En Shao, Samuel Wong, Sakari Oramo, Muhai Tang, Maxim Valdes, Arthur Fagen, Carl St. Clair, George Manahan, Richard Buckley, Kazuyoshi Akiyama, Xian Zhang, Rossen Milanov, Yo Yo Ma, Emanuel Ax, Peter Serkin, Yefim Brofman, Gil Shaham, Lynn Harrell, Alisa Weilerstein, Richard Stoltzman, Cho-Liang Lin, Edgar Meyer, Andre Schub, Evelyn Glennie, Colin Currie, David Shifrin, Chantal Juliet, Hai Ye Ni, Jane Eaglen, Elisabeth Futral, Joseph Kaiser, Lauren Flanigan, Lisa Saffer, to name a few.

Born on December 6, 1955, in Shanghai, Sheng began studying the piano with his mother at age four. During China's infamous Cultural

Revolution, at fifteen he was sent to Qinghai—a Chinese province bordering eastern part of 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, at Queens College, CUNY, he studied composition with George Perle and Hugo Weisgall, Schenkerian analysis with Carl Schachter, and earned his MA in 1984. He earned his DMA in 1993 from Columbia University where he studied composition with Chou Wen-Chung, Jack Beeson and Mario Davidovsky. During that period, in 1985, as a student at Tanglewood Music Center he met Leonard Bernstein who became his mentor. Sheng studied composition and conducting with Bernstein privately and worked as his assistant until Bernstein's passing in 1990.

During his student years, Sheng's talent already emerged of its own accord, receiving many honors in China, as well as three fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Charles Ives Scholarship Award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and the fellowships and awards from the Guggenheim, Jerome, Naumberg, and Rockefeller foundations.

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 Premiere 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.

Sheng's works are known for their dramatic style and historical signification. Two of his major orchestral works *H'un: In Memoriam 1966-76* (1988) and *Naking! Nanking!—a Threnody for Pipa and Orchestra* (2000), and his opera *Madam Mao* (2003) were indeed inspired by events in recent Chinese history. *H'un*, commissioned and premiered in 1988 by the New York Chamber Symphony, is Sheng's landmark portrait of the Chinese Culture Revolution. In 1993, Kurt Masur and the New York Philharmonic performed *H'un* in six cities on his first NY Philharmonic European tour after giving performances in New York City and in Washington DC. It established Sheng's reputation as a composer. *H'un* was subsequently performed by the Chicago Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Tokyo Philharmonic and many other major orchestras around the world.

In 2003 Carnegie Hall presented a Sheng portrait concert in its “Making Music” series with the principles 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, Wuman and Wutong, conducted by David Zinman. Some of the basic music materials came from Sheng’s first Silk Road cultural journey embarked in the summer of 2000 (Sheng also served as the artistic advisor for Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road Project from 1998 to 2003). During the two-month trip, Sheng followed the path of Zhang Qian, the first Chinese traveler in 138 BC, on the Silk Road in northwest China from Chang An (old capital of China, now Xian) to Kashgar, collected traditional, folk music and sound samples. In 2008, Bright Sheng continued the Silk Road project, a field research trip traveling through part of the southern route of the Silk Road, including Vietnam and southern China. (To experience the trip with Bright Sheng, please visit www.brightsheng.com)

He also was among the composers chosen by the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Committee to compose music for the opening ceremony.

Enjoying being one of the highly successful orchestral composers, Sheng has also demonstrated his gift in the theater. Currently, with co-librettist David Henry Hwang, Sheng’s new opera *Dream of the Red Chamber*, commissioned by the San Francisco Opera, premiered in the fall of 2016. Sheng’s experience from his first appointment in the U.S as the Composer-in-Residence at the Lyric Opera of Chicago (1989-1992) helped shape Sheng as an operatic composer. In collaboration with librettist Andrew Porter, Sheng created his first opera *The Song of Majnun* (1992)—an one-act of a Persian ‘Romeo and Juliet’ story. The opera subsequently received five other productions nationwide and was recorded by the Houston Grand Opera on the Delos label in 1997. Sheng’s natural talent in opera was further proven by two other major stage works, *The Silver River* and *Madam Mao*. *Madam Mao*, a two-act full opera, commissioned and premiered by the Santa Fe Opera in 2003, portrays Jiang Qing, Chairman Mao’s repressed, vengeful wife who was one of the leading architects of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Set to a libretto by the librettist and stage director Colin Graham, the work garnered worldwide acclaim. Said The New York Times, “*Sheng’s [style] is an exquisite blend of the musical East and West... the orchestra writing is brilliant*” Michael Kennedy of the Telegraph (London) called it “...*extraordinary music and a riveting evening in the theater.*” The multi-cultural music theater work *The Silver River* (co-commissioned by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, The Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Chamber Music Northwest in

Portland, OR.), with a libretto by the noted playwright David Henry Hwang, received a visually stunning production staged by Ong Keng Sen, the renowned Singaporean director. The production was co-commissioned with the Prince Music Theater in Philadelphia and premiered by the Spoleto festival, USA, in 2000. *The Silver River* has been performed subsequently in Philadelphia, in Singapore by Theaters Works, and it was a highlight of the Lincoln Center Festival in 2002. It was last presented by the University Music Society at University of Michigan in 2007.

From 2006-2008 Sheng was appointed as the first Composer-in-Residence for the New York City Ballet, where he collaborated with the noted choreographer Christopher Wheeldon on a new ballet *The Nightingale and the Rose*, one of the two commissioned works by the NYCB. *The Nightingale and the Rose* was well received by the public and the critics alike. Sheng's music was admired by other well-known choreographers as well. In 2002, Helgi Tomasson, the Artistic Director of the San Francisco Ballet compiled three of Sheng's extant pieces and premiered a new ballet entitled *Chi-Lin* in San Francisco in February, 2002, with subsequent touring performances in New York City and the Kennedy Center. Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux, the Artistic Director at the North Carolina Dance Theater, choreographed Sheng's *Four Movements for Piano Trio* in 1996 entitled 'Zoomin'. In 2006, as part of the NYCB's Diamond Project, Bonnefoux again choreographed two orchestra works of Sheng *Flute Moon* and *Two Poems from Sung Dynasty* and premiered at the New York City Ballet entitled *Two Birds with the Wings of One*.

Sheng is also one of the most favored living chamber music composers. Sheng has worked with the Takasc Quartet, the Emerson Quartet, the Shanghai Quartet, the St. Petersburg String Quartet, and many others. Among Sheng's chamber music works that have been enjoying frequent world wide performances are *Four Movements for Piano Trio*, *Tibetan Dance*, *String Quartet #3*, *String Quartet #4*, *Seven Tunes Heard in China*, *The Stream Flows*, and *Concertino for Clarinet and String Quartet* (1994). In 2007, Sheng's *String Quartet #5* was commissioned and premiered by the Emerson Quartet. It soon became a highlight of the quartet's concerts in U.S. and Europe.

Sheng's music has been recorded on Sony Classical, Decca/London Records, Naxos, Telarc, BIS, Delos, Koch International, New World, and several other labels. He has eleven discs of exclusively his music on Telarc, Naxos, BIS, Delos and New World Records.

Among the published articles by Bright Sheng, there are *Melodic Migration along the Silk Road-Northwest China* (2002); *The Love Songs of*

Qinghai (1995), both published by Asian Art & Culture, Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution; Bartok, the Chinese Composer (1998), published by Freer Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution; H'un (Lacerations): in Memoriam 1966-1976 for Orchestra (1995, a self-analysis) by Perspectives of New Music; and Leonard Bernstein: Portrait of the Artist by a Young Man (1989) by Ear Magazine of New Music. Sheng has also undertaken the translations of Brahms' Ein Deutsches Requiem, from German to Chinese, in 1996.

In addition to the Lyric Opera of Chicago and New York City Ballet, Sheng has served as composer-in-residences 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 also participated the numerals summer festivals as their composer-in-residence, including La Jolla Chamber Music Summerfest (1993 and 2004), Santa Fe chamber Music Festival (1992, 1993, 1997), Bowdoin International Summer Festival (1994-96, and 2005), and Brevard Music Center (2003-04).

Committed to the importance being both a performer and a composer, Sheng maintains an active performing career as a conductor and concert pianist, as he believes these two are inseparable parts for great music making. As a guest conductor, he has appeared with some of the world's most important orchestras such as the San Francisco Symphony, The Detroit Symphony, The Seattle Symphony, the New York Chamber Symphony, The St. Petersburg Philharmonic, The Dortmund Philharmonic, the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, the China National Symphony, the Shanghai Symphony, Shanghai Philharmonic, among others; and his conducting repertoire includes works by Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Berlioz, Mahler, Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, Bartok, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, as well as Aaron Copland and John Adams. As a frequent artistic director and advisor he has appeared at many of the world's most prestigious music centers and institutions including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, Tanglewood Music Center.

And as a pianist, Sheng has performed with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra, the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, at Tanglewood Music Center, Saratoga Spring, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, Spoleto USA Festival, Eastern Music Festival, and many others.

To further his belief that music is a living, breathing art form and it should never be set in stone, in 2011, he founded and served as the

Artistic Director of *The Intimacy of Creativity—The Bright Sheng Partnership: Composers Meet Performers in Hong Kong*, an annual two-week music festival with new approach to creativity. To celebrate its fifth anniversary, in March and April, 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.

Sheng has been teaching composition at the University of Michigan since 1995, where he is the Leonard Bernstein Distinguished University Professor of Music. He is also the Y. K. Pao Distinguished Visiting Professor of Humanities at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, which he directs the IC festival and other arts related activities.

Bright Sheng's music is published exclusively by G.Schirmer. For more information at www.brightsheng.com

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