

BRIGHT SHENG BIOGRAPHY-Composer/Conductor/Pianist



Bright Sheng
Photo: Peter Shin

Proclaimed "an innovative composer who merges diverse musical customs in works that transcend conventional aesthetic boundaries," conductor/composer Bright Sheng received the coveted MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in November 2001. "Sheng is a fresh voice in cross-cultural music," the Foundation Committee further noted. "He will continue to be an important leader in exploring and bridging musical traditions."

Among the major organizations Sheng has collaborated are: The White House, Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, the Boston Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Symphony, The National Symphony, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, New York City Opera, New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Orchestra de Paris, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, London BBC Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Hamburg Radio Symphony, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Dusseldorf Symphony Orchestra, Dortmund Philharmonic, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, National Symphony of Russia, Warsaw Symphony, Danish National Radio Symphony, Denmark, Finnish Radio Symphony, National Symphony of Spain, Tokyo Philharmonic, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, China National Symphony, Shanghai Symphony, and festivals throughout North America, Europe and Asia.

A strong believer that music should always be a living, breathing art form, and composing and performing are in one entity, Bright Sheng is also a highly regarded conductor and pianist. Among others, his guest conducting engagements includes the San Francisco Symphony, the Detroit Symphony, Seattle Symphony, the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra in Russia, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Dortmund Philharmonic Orchestra in Germany, Grand Rapids Symphony, New York Chamber Symphony, New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, China National Symphony, Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, Shanghai Symphony, Shanghai Philharmonic, and symphony orchestras in Suzhou, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, Wuhan, China, Thailand Philharmonic, Lincoln Center Festival, Spoleto USA Festival, Tanglewood Music Center, Brevard Music Center Festival Orchestra, Bowdoin Summer Music Festival, Asian Youth Orchestra. And he has performed throughout the country including Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center and Lincoln Center. In the fall of 2017, he led the Hangzhou Philharmonic and Wuhan Philharmonic of China for a three-city tour of the San Francisco Opera production of his highly successful opera *Dream of the Red Chamber*, premiered in San Francisco in September 2016.

As a pianist, he has also appeared at some of the most important music festivals music centers in this country including Tanglewood Music Center, Spoleto USA Festival, Brevard Music Festival, Bravo! Saratoga Performing Arts Center, Vail Valley Music Festival, Bowdoin Summer Music Festival, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, La Jolla Chamber music Festival, Seattle International Music Festival Seattle Chamber Music Festival, Eastern Music Festival in North Carolina; and other important concerto halls in Europe and Asia.

From 1998 to 2003 Sheng was the Artistic Advisor to Yo-Yo Ma's "Silk Road Project", and conducted its first workshop at Tanglewood in 2000. From January 1st, 2006 to December 31st, 2007 he served as the first Composer-in-Residence for the New York City Ballet, for

whom he also served as a conductor and composed two new ballets. He has been the Director of the Festival of Contemporary Music at Tanglewood, Composer-in-Residence for the Art Institute of Chicago, Brevard Music Festival, the Winnipeg New Music Festival, Co-Artistic Director of the Seattle Symphony's "Pacific Rim" Festival, Artistic Director of the San Francisco Symphony's "Wet Ink" Festival, Composer in Residence with the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and from 1992-1995 resident composer of the Seattle Symphony. From 1989-1992 he held the same position for the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Born on December 6, 1955, in Shanghai, China, Bright Sheng began piano studies at the age of four with his mother. During the Cultural Revolution he was sent to Qinghai where he worked for seven years as a pianist, conductor and percussionist in a folk music and dance troupe. During that time, he avidly studied and collected folk music of the area. In 1978 when China's universities reopened, he was the number one admission choice by the composition department of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music where he earned his undergraduate degree. He moved to New York in 1982 and received his graduate degree from Queens College (MA) and Columbia University (DMA). He became a student and assistant of Leonard Bernstein in 1985 and studied both composition and conducting under him until the maestro's passing.

Currently Mr. Sheng is The Leonard Bernstein Distinguished University Professor of Composition at the University of Michigan. Since 2010, he has also been serving as the Y K Pao Distinguished Visiting Professor at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, where, in 2011, he founded *The Intimacy of Creativity—The Bright Sheng Partnership: Composers Meet Performers in Hong Kong*, an annual two-week festival with new approach to creativity and music making. For the 2022-24 academic year, he was invited by New York University Shanghai to be the Artist-in-Residence, where he organized a festival of celebration of the school's 10 anniversary.

In 2014, Naxos released a disc of Sheng conducting the Hong Kong Philharmonic of his three concerti written between 2004 and 2012. In 2016, to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the festival, Sheng and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra again release a two-disc album on Naxos, including Schoenberg's *Verklarte Nacht*, Arvo Part's *Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten*, and Sheng's own *Deep Red for Marimba and Chamber Orchestra*. In the year of 2019, he conducted and recorded the release of his *Concerto for Orchestra—Zodiac Tales* (2006, 2016) with the Shanghai Symphony, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra—Let Fly* (2012), and *Suzhou Overture* (2019) with the Suzhou Symphony.

Exclusively published by G. Schirmer/Music Sales, his works can be heard on Sony Classical, Decca/London Records, Naxos, BIS, Telarc, Delos, Koch International, New World labels. There have been 12 discs exclusive of his music released to date.

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