



St Michael's Church, Bishop's Stortford
Sunday 2 June, 3pm



UK Chinese Music Ensemble



- **Jasmine Flower 茉莉花** (*ensemble*)
- **Oath of Loyalty 精忠词** (*voice, guqin*)
- **Autumn Moon over a Calm Lake 平湖秋月** (*erhu*)
- **Poor Wayfaring Stranger; The Captain's Apprentice** (*xiao, organ*)
- **Flowing Waters 流水** (*guqin*)
- **By the River 江河水** (*xiao, ruan*)
- **Farewell at Yangguan 阳关三叠** (*guqin, xiao*)
- **Ode to the Crouching Dragon 卧龙吟** (*ensemble*)

Jasmine Flower (茉莉花)

This is a beloved Chinese folk song that originated in the Jiangnan region. Its exact origins are uncertain and there exist many regional variations, but it has been passed down through generations as a cherished part of Chinese musical heritage. With its delicate melody, this folk song celebrates the beauty and fragrance of the jasmine flower and captures the essence of traditional Chinese aesthetics and the timeless appeal of nature's beauty.

Oath of Loyalty (精忠词)

This is a traditional qin-song dating back to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). The lyrics are from the iconic poem 滿江紅 (sometimes translated as "Red is the River"), which is imbued with themes of loyalty, honour, courage and determination. The poem is popularly attributed to the much-admired Song dynasty general, Yue Fei. The song has a majestic melody and resolute rhythm, reflecting the solemnity and grandeur of the poem. The music builds in intensity, conveying the fervent devotion and evoking a sense of pride.

Autumn Moon over a Calm Lake (平湖秋月)

Originating from Cantonese music, this piece captures the serene beauty of an autumn night by a peaceful lake. The erhu, a two-stringed bowed instrument, lends itself perfectly to expressing the gentle ripples of water and the soft glow of the moonlight. The melodic tune invites listeners to experience the tranquil and meditative ambiance of nature through its lyrical melodies and delicate expressions.

Folk Songs: Poor Wayfaring Stranger; The Captain's Apprentice

“Poor Wayfaring Stranger” is a traditional American folk song that dates back to the early 19th century. The text tells the story of a weary traveller, often portrayed as a poor, wandering soul, journeying through life's trials and tribulations. The lyrics convey a sense of longing, loneliness, and hope for a better life beyond the hardships of the present. “The Captain's Apprentice” is a traditional folk song that possibly originated from the maritime communities of Norfolk during the 18th and 19th centuries, famously collected and noted by, amongst others, the young Ralph Vaughan-Williams, who went on to use the melody in his first Norfolk Rhapsody. Despite very different provenances, both songs exemplify the rich storytelling tradition and cultural heritage of folk music, offering glimpses into the lives, struggles, and triumphs of ordinary people.

Flowing Water (流水)

This is one of the most famous pieces for the guqin, an ancient Chinese zither with a history spanning over three millennia. This piece is a quintessential representation of the guqin repertoire, often associated with the Taoist philosophy of harmony with nature. “Flowing Water” mimics the sounds and movements of a river, starting from a gentle stream and gradually building into a powerful torrent. The guqin's rich, resonant tones and nuanced playing techniques bring the imagery of cascading water to life, embodying the natural world's dynamic and fluid essence.

By the River (江河水)

“By the River” is originally a solo for the guan, a traditional Chinese double reed instrument, but is probably more popularly known in its erhu solo version. The iconic image of a solitary woman waiting by the riverside for a returning spouse is one that spans cultures and nations, and it is this melodramatic subject that the piece depicts. The first section reflects the expansive and turbulent nature of rivers, often symbolising life's continuous flow and the human experience's deep emotional currents. A middle section offers brief respite as memories of happier times soften the ordeal. The piece ends with a return to the main theme with increasing turmoil as the relentless river forebodes tragedy. The dialogue between the xiao and ruan mirrors the interaction between the water's turbulence and the hidden depths of human emotions.

Farewell at Yangguan (阳关三叠)

This ancient piece is based on a famous Tang Dynasty poem by Wang Wei. It evokes the bittersweet emotions of farewell and longing. The guqin sets the stage with its contemplative tones, while the xiao adds a layer of wistful melody, depicting the desolate beauty of the Yangguan Pass. The variations unfold with increasing complexity and depth, capturing the essence of separation and the enduring bond of friendship.

Ode to the Crouching Dragon (卧龙吟)

This song is a musical homage to Zhuge Liang, one of China's most revered historical figures known for his wisdom and strategic prowess during the Three Kingdoms period. It was written for the 1994 television mini-series “Romance of the Three Kingdoms” and has grown in popularity over subsequent years. The piece is characterised by its majestic and contemplative mood, with lyrics expressing Zhuge Liang’s sentiments and principles, and reflecting his intellect and the solemn dedication with which he served his country. “卧龙吟” is not only a tribute to a great statesman but also a reminder of the timeless virtues of wisdom and integrity.

Biographies

Wang Xiao 王潇 (*erhu*)

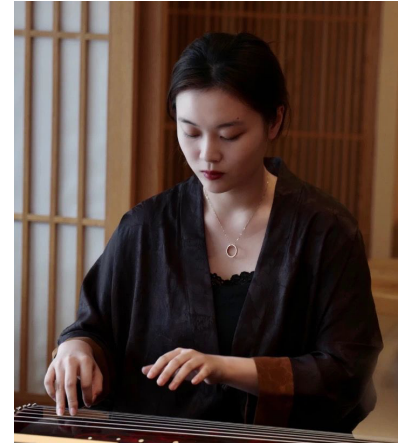
Wang is a renowned Chinese erhu virtuoso based in London. She is a member of the award-winning “Silk String Quartet” of the UK Chinese Music Ensemble and the Third Orchestra, a cross-over world music group. Her professional work includes both traditional and contemporary music, as well as involvement in various studio recordings for films and TV shows. Wang Xiao has performed at prestigious venues such as the Royal Albert Hall, Purcell Room, Barbican, LSO St Luke’s, and Bridgewater Hall. She has collaborated with well-known musicians in contemporary music, such as pianist Lang Lang, cellist Matthew Barley, and composers Gabriel Prokofiev. In 2018, she appeared at the Royal Albert Hall for “Star Trek” with the Swiss 21st Century Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ludwig Wicki. In 2022, she performed with Cheng Yu’s “Silk Breeze” ensemble at the WOMAD festival and recorded music for the latest popular show “Dr. Who”.

Other notable projects include “Shang-Chi and The Legend of the Ten Rings”, “Over the Moon”, “The Mummy 3”, “Singularity”, “Snow Flower and the Secret Fan”, “Age of Conan”, and “Three Kingdoms”, etc.



Zhang Jiaqi 张家麒 (*guqin, ruan*)

A versatile award-winning guqin virtuoso, Jiaqi graduated from the Central Conservatory of Music in China. Previously a key member of the China Youth Chinese Orchestra, Jiaqi has showcased her musical versatility with global performances in the USA, Singapore, Malaysia, and more. She clinched the gold prize at the 4th International "Qin and Zheng" Zither Festival in 2019. In the UK, she has been an active contributor to the Chinese Music Ensemble and London Youlan Qin Society, performing at venues like the Holy Sepulchre Church, British Museum, Bonhams, Christie's, and delivering memorable performances at SOAS, University of London.



Dennis Kwong Thye Lee 李光泰 (*xiao*)

London-based multi-instrumentalist, Lee started his musical career as the principal *xiao* (flute) and *guzheng* (zither) soloist at the Zhuan Yi Chinese Orchestra. He has been playing various traditional Chinese musical instruments since his early teens and has taught and performed professionally for over 40 years. On the *xiao* flute, Lee specialises in traditional and crossover pieces and classical duets with the *guqin* in the “scholarly music” style. He is an active member of the London Youlan Qin Society and performs regularly with the UK Chinese Ensemble. Over the years Lee has performed at various venues including the British Museum, the Victoria & Albert Museum, Covent Garden Royal Opera House, The Bramall (Birmingham), Rich Mix, The Place (Euston), the Trafalgar Square Chinese New Year Celebrations, the Cultural Olympiad “New Music 20x12” at the Southbank Centre, and he performed with Cheng Yu’s “Silk Breeze” ensemble at the WOMAD festival. He studied the *xiao* from Hu Ruijun (London), Zhang Weiliang (Beijing) and Luo Shoucheng (Shanghai), and the *xun* from Wang Jianxin (Tianjin).



Guest performer: **Pavlos Triantaris** (*organ, guqin*)



You are warmly invited to join us for our next recital on **Sunday 28 July at 3pm** with **Mark Jennings (classical guitar)** followed by tea and cake.