



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bard Conservatory of Music’s US-China Music Institute and the Central Conservatory of Music, China, Celebrate the Year of the Dragon with “The Sound of Spring”: A Chinese New Year Concert with The Orchestra Now (TÖN)

ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, NY—The US-China Music Institute of the Bard College Conservatory of Music, in collaboration with the Central Conservatory of Music, China, present the fifth annual “The Sound of Spring”: A Chinese New Year Concert with The Orchestra Now, conducted by Director of the US-China Music Institute Jindong Cai. Performances will take place on **Saturday, February 10, 2024 at 3pm in The Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College** and on **Sunday, February 11, 2024 at 3pm in the Rose Theater of Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Frederick P. Rose Hall** in New York City. To purchase tickets for the February 10 Fisher Center concert, visit fishercenter.bard.edu, call 845-758-7900 (Mon-Fri 10am-5pm), or email boxoffice@bard.edu. For tickets to the February 11 Jazz at Lincoln Center concert, please visit ticketing.jazz.org, or call 212-721-6500.

“The Sound of Spring” offers an authentic Chinese New Year concert of festive contemporary symphonic music from China. This year’s program features erhu virtuoso Zhang Haiyue and dizi (bamboo flute) virtuoso Feng Tianshi from the Central Conservatory of Music, plus renowned Chinese wind virtuoso Guo Yazhi premiering composer Li Xinyan’s new Suona Concerto.

In keeping with the long history and cultural diversity of Chinese society, the concert program includes a number of new works by contemporary Chinese composers inspired by musical traditions and folk customs from different regions. More than half of the repertoire has never been performed in the United States. Music Director and conductor Jindong Cai said: “Every one of us has familiar melodies that have been imprinted in our memories since we were children, and no matter where you come from or where you go, we can all enjoy listening to them. At the same time, to hear music from unfamiliar cultural traditions in distant places stirs the imagination with completely different pleasures and longings.”

The program starts off with Li Huanzhi's *Spring Festival Overture*, inspired by northern Shaanxi folk songs. Composer Ye Xiaogang, steeped in the folk music of his native Guangdong Province since childhood, presents familiar melodies reconstructed with Western orchestration for his *Cantonese Suite*. The young Taiwanese composer Chang Shiu'an's *Diu Diu Diu Diu Dang* is a rhapsodic variation based on a Taiwanese nursery rhyme describing the sound of water dripping from the ceiling as a train passes through a tunnel. At the end of the first half, the US premiere of Hao Weiya's 2023 dizi (bamboo flute) concerto *Blooming in the Spring* evokes the beauty of nature in the countryside.

The second half of the concert begins with “Erhu Rhapsody No. 6,” the latest masterpiece of composer Wang Jianmin with Tibetan folk music at its core. This stirring work is a milestone in the development of modern erhu as a solo instrument, combining the structure of a Western rhapsody with Chinese folk style. The suona concerto *The Magic Land* was commissioned by “The Sound of Spring” and composed by Li Xinyan for wind instrument master Guo Yazhi. Both are on the faculty of the Bard Conservatory of Music. The concert concludes with *Joyful Songs of Mountains and Waters*, composed by up-and-coming composer Wang Danhong in 2023. Wang says she was inspired to write this piece after a visit to the Eighteen Caves Village in southern China, where she heard joyful folk singing in the Miao ethnic style.

The two performances of this year’s “The Sound of Spring” coincide with the first Lunar New Year weekend since New York State declared the Spring Festival an official holiday, demonstrating the importance of this time in the local community. The concerts are family friendly events which will include Chinese instrument demonstrations and new year celebrations in the theater lobby prior to each the performance. **Pre-concert events start at 2pm.**

“The Sound of Spring” is generously sponsored by the Tianqiao and Chrissy Chen Institute. For more information about the concerts visit barduschinamusic.org/events.

About the Artists

Conductor **Jindong Cai** is the founding director of the US-China Music Institute, professor of music and arts at Bard College, and associate conductor of Bard’s The Orchestra Now. Before coming to Bard, Cai was a professor of performance at Stanford University. Over the 30 years of his career in the United States, Cai has established himself as an active and dynamic conductor, scholar of Western classical music in China, and leading advocate of music from across Asia. At Bard, Cai founded the annual China Now Music Festival. In its first three seasons, China Now presented new works by some

of the most important Chinese composers of our time, with major concerts performed by The Orchestra Now at Bard's Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, and Stanford University. In 2019, the festival premiered a major new work by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Zhou Long, *Men of Iron and the Golden Spike*—a symphonic oratorio, in commemoration of the Chinese railroad workers of North America on the 150th anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad.

Feng Tianshi is an acclaimed dizi (bamboo flute) performer and educator. She is a winner of the gold prize from the Wenhua Grand Chinese Instruments Competition organized by the China Ministry of Culture for solo performance and chamber music performance. Feng began studying dizi with her grandfather, Wei Zhiping, at the age of five. She enrolled in the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing for her undergraduate and graduate degrees, studying under dizi masters Dai Ya, Yuan Feifan, and Wang Ciheng. She is currently teaching and pursuing her doctoral degree. In 2018, she was selected to join the Central Conservatory of Music Chamber Orchestra.

Guo Yazhi teaches master classes at University of the Arts in Philadelphia and Berklee College of Music in Boston, and also teaches at the US-China Music Institute of the Bard College Conservatory of Music. Guo graduated with distinction from the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing and lectured on suona there. His awards include the prestigious Pro Musicis International Award (1998). Named as one of China's most outstanding musicians by its Ministry of Culture, he was invited to give a solo performance with suona and saxophone during President Bill Clinton's visit to Beijing in 1998. Guo was appointed principal suona by the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra in 1999. He has performed with many orchestras around the world, including South Korea's Daejeon Philharmonic Orchestra, Belgium's Flanders Symphony Orchestra, Malaysia Chinese Orchestra, and National Chinese Orchestra Taiwan.

Zhang Haiyue is currently a doctoral candidate in erhu performance at the Central Conservatory of Music, under the tutelage of Yu Hongmei, a world-renowned erhu soloist and educator who also teaches at the US-China Music Institute. A distinguished alumna of the middle school of the Central Conservatory of Music, her teachers included Zhu Jiangbo and Liu Changfu. Zhang has won numerous prizes, including first prize in the erhu competition hosted by the 14th Chinese Music Golden Bell Award, the most important instrumental competition of Chinese traditional instruments. Other awards include first place in the Junior Professional Group of the third Wenhua Award; first place in the CCTV Giant Education Cup; and gold medal in the second Dunhuang Cup national erhu competition, Professional Youth Group A.

The Orchestra Now (TÖN) was founded in 2015 by conductor, educator, and music historian Leon Botstein as a graduate program at Bard College. TÖN offers a three-year master's degree in curatorial, critical, and performance studies and a two-year advanced certificate in orchestra studies. The orchestra's home base is the Fisher Center at Bard, where it performs multiple concerts each season and takes part in the annual Bard Music Festival. It also performs regularly at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and other venues across New York and beyond. The orchestra has performed with distinguished guest conductors and soloists including Leonard Slatkin, Gil Shaham, Fabio Luisi, Joan Tower, Vadim Repin, Tan Dun, and JoAnn Falletta. Among TÖN's many recordings are albums featuring pianists Piers Lane, Anna Shelest, and Orion Weiss; *Buried Alive* with baritone Michael Nagy; and the soundtrack to the motion picture *Forte*. Recordings of TÖN's live concerts from the Fisher Center can be heard on Classical WMHT-FM and WWFM The Classical Network, and are featured on Performance Today, broadcast nationwide. More info at ton.bard.edu.

About the Presenters

About the US-China Music Institute

The US-China Music Institute was founded in 2017 by conductor Jindong Cai and Robert Martin, founding director of the Bard College Conservatory of Music, with the mission to promote the study, performance, and appreciation of music from contemporary China and to support musical exchange between the United States and China. In partnership with the prestigious Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, the Institute has embarked on several groundbreaking projects including the first degree-granting programs in Chinese instrument performance in a U.S. conservatory. barduschinamusic.org

About Bard College

Founded in 1860, Bard College is a four-year, residential college of the liberal arts and sciences located 90 miles north of New York City. With the addition of the Montgomery Place estate, Bard's campus consists of nearly 1,000 parklike acres in the Hudson River Valley. It offers bachelor of arts, bachelor of science, and bachelor of music degrees, with majors in nearly 40 academic programs; graduate degrees in 13 programs; eight early colleges; and numerous dual-degree programs nationally and internationally. Building on its 161-year history as a competitive and innovative undergraduate institution, Bard College has expanded its mission as a private institution acting in the public interest across the country and around the world to meet broader student needs and increase access to liberal arts education. The undergraduate program at our main campus in upstate New York has a reputation for scholarly excellence, a focus on the arts, and civic

engagement. Bard is committed to enriching culture, public life, and democratic discourse by training tomorrow's thought leaders. For more information about Bard College, visit bard.edu.

About the Central Conservatory of Music

Established in 1949, the **Central Conservatory of Music (CCOM)** in Beijing is a specialized Chinese institution of higher education for nurturing high-level music professionals. CCOM consists of the Departments of Composition, Musicology, Conducting, Piano, Orchestral Instruments, Traditional Instruments, and Voice and Opera, as well as the Institute of Music Education, Violin Making Center, Orchestra Academy, CCOM Middle School, Modern Distance Music Education College, and a key research center. It currently enrolls more than 1,500 undergraduates and more than 600 graduate students. Functioning as a national center of music education, composition, performance, research, and the social promotion of music, CCOM is a world-renowned institute of music that represents the highest caliber of music education in China, offering a comprehensive range of specialized programs. In 2016, the Central Conservatory of Music established a professional orchestra—the Central Conservatory Orchestra.

PHOTO CAPTION: Conductor Jindong Cai and The Orchestra Now at Jazz at Lincoln Center for “The Sound of Spring” 2023. Photo by Fadi Kheir