

BRIGHT SHENG

STRING QUARTET No. 5 “*The Miraculous*”

To the Emerson String Quartet

(2007)

Program Note

STRING QUARTET No. 5 “The Miraculous,” written between March and July, 2007, was co-commissioned for the Emerson String Quartet by the State University of New York at Stony Brook, Stanford University, and the University Musical Society at the University of Michigan. It was premiered by the Emerson String Quartet on October 18th, 2007. The work is dedicated to the Emerson String Quartet.

The subtitle of String Quartet No. 5, “*The Miraculous*,” is inspired by two sources. Firstly, it is quite unusual to hear a string quartet in which each member is not only a splendid virtuoso, but also a passionate and superb musician. That was the thought went through my mind when I first heard them in the summer of 1983 at Aspen Music Festival where I was a student, new in this country. Throughout its two-and-half decades, the Emerson’s performances have become greatly more profound; yet they have not lost any of their passion and virtuosity.


The second inspiration comes from Bela Bartok’s *Miraculous Mandarin Suite*, which I conducted in early 2007. Although I was always fond of the work, it was only when I was preparing to conduct it did I truly appreciate what Bartok attempted to achieve musically. On the one hand, I do not agree with Bartok’s almost-racist interpretation of what he saw as a “miraculous Mandarin.” On the other hand, I marvel at Bartok’s composition with its swift change of images and constant varying of the tempi—in many sections, which add up to more than two-thirds of the work, almost every measure is in a different tempo. While writing this piece, I asked myself if I could achieve more or less the same “miraculous” effect without imitating Bartok’s devices.

String Quartet No. 5 is based on two very different musical motifs, like two strangers from different cultural backgrounds who meet and become fast lovers. Throughout their courtship, neither of them changes but they get to know and understand each other on a much deeper level. Most importantly, they learn to happily live with each other.

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Joyce White/UAff



Joyce White/UAff
01/30/2007 08:41 AM

To Judith Lochhead/CAS@SUNYSB
cc
Subject Re: Stanford, Michigan, and Washington performance venues--Bright Sheng Premiere 

Hi Judy,

I will contact the three other venues first thing this morning. Thanks for the reminder!

Joyce White
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Judith Lochhead/CAS

Judith Lochhead/CAS
01/29/2007 03:46 PM

To Joyce White/UAff@SUNYSB
cc
Subject Stanford, Michigan, and Washington performance venues--Bright Sheng Premiere

Hi Joyce, just checking to see if you have had a chance to contact the three other venues regarding the Bright Sheng premiere? I've been in touch with Alan Inkles but haven't heard back yet. I'll be contacting the ESQ management next.

all best, Judy


Judy Lochhead
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Thanks, Judy

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Joyce White/UAff
02/05/2007 10:30 AM

To Judith Lochhead/CAS@SUNYSB
cc
Subject Re: Stanford, Michigan, and Washington performance venues--Bright Sheng Premiere 

Hi Judy,

I emailed all of the participants last week to inform them that we received the grant and the date for the Bright Sheng Premiere. I've only just received a voicemail from Alice De Anguera from University of Washington. They had questions about when to send their portion of money and other logistics that I think you would be the best to answer or Alan. Her email is alicede@u.washington.edu.


Let me know what else I can do to help.

Best,

Joyce

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Judith Lochhead/CAS
02/02/2007 05:09 PM


To Joyce White/UAff@SUNYSB
cc
Subject Re: Stanford, Michigan, and Washington performance venues--Bright Sheng Premiere 

Hi Joyce, any word on these venues? Could you prepare a list with contact information for each place? Alan Inkles has agreed to be a liaison with them once you have contacted them.

Thanks, Judy



Joyce White/UAff
02/06/2007 10:37 AM

To Judith Lochhead/CAS@SUNYSB
cc
bcc
Subject Re: Stanford, Michigan, and Washington performance venues--Bright Sheng Premiere 

Hi Judy,

I do not believe that we have received the check as of yet. Let me provide you with all of the contact information that I have for the three participants. I can contact them again, but I am not clear on what other information you would like me to provide. Please advise.

University of Washington, UW World series: Matthew Krashan - Director of UW World Series <krashan@u.washington.edu>, Alice De Anguera - Director of Education and Programs Coordinator <alicede@u.washington.edu>, **Phone: 206-685-2369** "Kamla C Hurst" <khurst@u.washington.edu>, lhop@u.washington.edu-- additional emails copied on correspondences


Stanford Lively Arts: Ruth Mikusko - Programming Assistant <mikusko@stanford.edu>, **Phone: 650-723-2551** Jenny Bilfield - Artistic & Executive Director <jbilfield@stanford.edu>, Kathleen Nicely - Director of Development <nicely@stanford.edu>

University of Michigan, University Musical Society: Michael Kondziolka - Director of Programming <mkond@umich.edu>, **Phone: 734-763-4578**

Best,
Joyce

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Judith Lochhead/CAS

Judith Lochhead/CAS
02/06/2007 09:45 AM

To Joyce White/UAff@SUNYSB
cc
Subject Re: Stanford, Michigan, and Washington performance venues--Bright Sheng Premiere 

Joyce, thanks. I will be in touch with her and copy you. Any payment will be to SBF--the account we establish for the grant when it comes (I assume it has not arrive yet).

Could you please follow up with the other two places--maybe by phone? I'd like to get this taken care of. I'll pass along the information about Alice to Alan.