

## Biographies of the composers

**Chen Peixun** (1921–2006) was born in Hepu County (Guangxi Province). In 1939 he was admitted to the composition department of the Shanghai National Conservatory of Music without having to take any examinations. In 1947 he studied Hindemith's composition techniques under the tutelage of Tan Xiaolin. After graduation he taught in art colleges in Hong Kong, Guangdong, Shanghai and elsewhere. After the founding of the People's Republic of China he served for many years as associate professor, professor and director of the orchestration teaching and research section of the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing; and in the 1980s he taught in the Art Education Department of Hong Kong Baptist College. His works focus on music for piano and with orchestra. His piano works can mainly be divided into two parts, one based on Guangdong music and music for the Chinese *guqin* (a plucked, seven-string instrument), the other being piano accompaniments for songs. His early piano works are mostly based on Cantonese music combined with the rich and varied playing techniques of western pianos. He composed the widely popular *Autumn Moon on the Calm Lake* (1975), and a number of piano pieces full of ethnic references, such as *Selling Groceries*, *Thunder during a Drought* and *Longing for Spring*, all of which aimed to achieve a perfect integration of national style and modern western compositional techniques. In his later years he devoted himself to composing symphonic poems and symphonies such as *My Motherland*, as well as other works reflecting China's profound national heritage and outlook.

**Chu Wanghua** (b. 1941) was born in Yixing (Jiangsu Province), and is active both as a composer and a pianist. He graduated from the Piano Department

of the Central Conservatory of Music in 1963, and subsequently taught there. In 1982 he studied modern composition at the University of Melbourne, Australia, where in 1985 he received a master's degree in music. He played a major role as one of the composers of *The Yellow River Piano Concerto* (1970), contributing mainly to the piano part. For more than half a century Chu Wanghua has adapted or composed piano works such as *Days of Emancipation*, *The Melody of the Zheng Flute*, *The Moon Reflected in the Erquan Spring*, *Xinjiang Capriccio*, *Fishermen in the South China Sea*, *Jasmine Fantasia* and *18 Popular Chinese and Foreign Songs for Four Hands*. His catalogue of works also includes symphonic music, chamber music and vocal music. Chu Wanghua now lives in Melbourne.

His musical works are mainly characterized by his attempts to explore national styles, as well as elasticity, audibility and teachability in his piano works. His life and experience, personality, temperament and creative background have laid the foundation for the unique characteristics of his musical style. His pursuit of the implicit and natural beauty of "Chinese style" is reflected in techniques of musical mode, colour, harmonic texture and rhythm.

**Huang Huwei** (1932–2019) was born in Neijiang (Sichuan Province). In 1954 he graduated from the Composition Department of the Southwest Conservatory of Music (now Sichuan Conservatory of Music), and then taught there. In 1956 he entered the Central Conservatory of Music and studied under Soviet composer Leh Si Gulov (Leonid Simonovich Gurov). He successively served as lecturer, associate professor, full professor and director of the Composition Department of Sichuan Conservatory of Music, devoting his life to theory research, creative activities and music education. He published over 100 pieces of music including works for piano, violin and flute, along with articles, papers and books. In addition, he produced many books on children's songs,

dance music, singing and dancing for large groups, opera, and TV drama music. The piano work *Pictures from Bashu* is his key work. The publication *Sposobin's Harmony Textbook and Keys to Exercises* (2000), which took him 16 years to complete, is his masterpiece of theoretical work.

Huang Huwei's compositions mainly focus on a functional harmony system that integrates traditional harmony with the language of folk music.

**Li Yinghai** (1927–2007) was born in Fushun County (Sichuan Province), and his ancestral home was Huiyang (Guangdong Province). In 1948 he graduated in composition from the Nanjing National Conservatory. He moved to Shanghai, and from 1949 taught at the Shanghai Conservatory and China Conservatory, of which he subsequently became Vice President. He wrote instrumental works, songs and books on music theory. He is the most influential and epoch-making composer in the development of Chinese traditional folk music, and many piano pieces composed or arranged by him have been selected for Chinese textbooks at all levels. His key works *Adieux at Yangguan* and *Flute and Drum at Sunset* achieved the "sinicization" of the art of piano music.

In 1959 he published *Han Modality and its Harmony*, an exploration of the theory of a national style of harmony. It was the first systematic specialised work on the pentatonic mode, and had a big influence on harmonic treatment. The book was pioneering at that time and was regarded as a milestone in the development of the Chinese pentatonic mode. Piano music is the focus of Li's instrumental music. He engaged in an in-depth study of the modes and harmonies of Han national and multi-ethnic music and integrated these with western harmonic theory. He also made many exploratory attempts to portray the charm of ancient Chinese music on the piano, and successfully replicated the style of these ancient works. His piano pieces have been widely performed and studied by Chinese pianists and students.

**Qu Wei** (1917–2002) was born in Changzhou (Jiangsu Province). In his early years he studied at home and abroad. He graduated from the Shanghai Xinhua Art Academy and, from 1955 to 1959, studied at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory. After returning to China he worked as a full-time composer for the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra. While studying in Shanghai, Qu established a strong foundation for music majors, such as in piano performance. His considerable achievements in the use of harmony and polyphony enabled him to compose freely in a variety of musical styles. His first major work was the opera *The White-Haired Girl*, on which he collaborated with Ma Ke and Zhang Lu in the spring of 1945. This work not only had a profound influence on the creation of Chinese operas and other art forms, but was also highly significant for his later works.

**Sun Yiqiang** (b. 1942) was born in Shanghai. He entered the Music High School affiliated with the Shanghai Music Conservatory in 1954 and later studied at the Shanghai Music Conservatory, graduating in 1966 with a Bachelor's degree in piano performance. Afterwards he worked for the Central Philharmonic Orchestra in Beijing. In 1980 Sun went to the United States, becoming a graduate student working towards a Master's degree in piano performance at Washington University in St. Louis. After graduating he settled in America,

periodically giving recitals and also private piano lessons. In 2006 Sun was invited to join the faculty of the piano department at Shanghai Normal University, and in the meantime was invited to teach piano at the Shanghai Music Conservatory as an adjunct professor. In 2011 Sun was invited by the Music Conservatory at SIAS International University in Zhengzhou City to be chair of its piano department.

Besides playing the piano, from an early age he also showed an interest in composition. Among his various works the most popular are the solo piano pieces *Threshing Dance* and *Spring Dance*, which remain widely performed. They are often played by young piano students and pianists.

**Wang Jianzhong** (1933–2016) was born in Shanghai and his ancestral home was in Jiangyin City (Jiangsu Province). He began to learn the piano at the age of 10. In 1950 he was admitted to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and studied successively in the composition department and piano department. After graduating in 1958 he worked as a teacher there. In the 1970s he was a member of the China Central Orchestra. In the late 1970s he returned to his alma mater Shanghai Conservatory of Music to continue teaching, serving successively as associate professor, full professor and deputy dean of the Composition Department.

His musical output mainly focuses on piano works, including solo pieces such

as *Four North Shaanxi Folk Songs*, transcriptions from traditional instrumental music including *A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix*, *Plum Blossom Melody in Three Variations*, *Liuyang River*, and commissioned works for piano competitions such as *Scenes*. Many of his piano works successfully integrate Chinese folk music, winning unanimous praise from audiences at home and abroad. Currently, many of his works have become very popular in Chinese piano teaching and music education, and are frequently performed at major domestic piano competitions.

**Wang Lisan** (1933–2013) was born in Qianwei County (Sichuan Province). He was active as composer, music educator and music theorist. In 1948 he was admitted to the Music Department of Sichuan Provincial Art Junior College, and in 1951 to the Composition Department of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. After 1957 he worked in the Art Troupe of the Northeast Reclamation Bureau of Beidahuang, and in 1963 moved to Harbin Normal University. In 1958 he served successively as Professor and Dean at the Art College of Harbin Normal University.

Wang Lisan's musical output covered a wide range of genres. His key piano works were his *Sonatina* (1957), the suites *Impressions of Paintings by Higurashiyama Kaii* (1979) and *Other Hill* (1980), along with five preludes and fugues in Chinese modes.