

SHANGHAI JAZZ

A Culture Mix

Tuesday, November 19, 2019
Bovard Auditorium
University of Southern California

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Li Jinhui (1891–1967) is considered the father of Chinese popular music.
- Buck Clayton (1911–1991) was an outstanding L.A.-based jazz musician.
- In 1935, Clayton performed in Shanghai with the band Harlem Gentlemen. On that trip, Jinhui encountered Clayton's music, and a unique blend of American jazz and Chinese folk music was born.
- This event presents three suites of Li Jinhui's folk songs, reimagined and orchestrated by Ron McCurdy and Gary Shields. Ron McCurdy is a trumpet player, a professor in the USC Thornton School of Music, and the director of the national GRAMMY Vocal Jazz Ensemble and Combo. Gary Shields is a pianist, composer, music educator, and arts administrator who received his master's degree from USC.

LI JINHUI

Chinese composer and songwriter Li Jinhui is considered the father of Chinese popular music. He composed the first Chinese pop song, "The Drizzle," around 1927, and he is credited with creating *shidaiqu*, a new form of music that fused Chinese folk music with western jazz. While his music was popular with audiences, it was not popular with ruling authorities. The Chinese Nationalist Party attempted to ban Li Jinhui's music, and, after it came to power in 1949, the Chinese Communist government suppressed traditional and popular music, deeming Li Jinhui's musical offerings vulgar and indecent.

BUCK CLAYTON

Buck Clayton was a celebrated American jazz trumpet player and arranger. He was the star trumpet soloist of the classic Count Basie orchestra and later a renowned soloist and arranger. Clayton was born in Kansas and moved to California when he was 21. Before joining Count Basie's orchestra in 1936, he organized one of the first jazz bands to play an extended engagement in Asia. He played in U.S.

Army bands during World War II and then became an active player of swing music in the postwar years. In the course of his career, Clayton played with jazz legends including Billie Holiday, Benny Goodman, Teddy Wilson, and Lester Young.

SHANGHAI'S JAZZ AGE

Shanghai had a thriving arts and night-life scene in the 1920s and '30s. New styles of local cinema and pop music flourished. As jazz musicians toured there from the U.S. West Coast, Chinese musicians fused the sounds of jazz and of the era's Hollywood movies with Chinese folk music to create something entirely new. The new fusion music—known as *shidaiqu*, or “songs of the era”—was very popular. But *shidaiqu* had its critics, who called it “yellow music” (meaning salacious or off-color music). As political tensions mounted between Chinese nationalists and communists, both sides tried to squash this popular music, which they found to be frivolous, colonial, morally questionable, and ill-suited to the propaganda purposes they thought art and media should serve.

But the music lived on in spite of persecution. The actress Zhou Xuan's rendition of “Ye Shanghai” (“Shanghai Night”) is probably the most famous *shidaiqu* song, and Li Jinhui perhaps the genre's leading composer. Today, we can see that *shidaiqu* paved the way for Mandopop.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- ⦿ What did you think of the music performed in this event? Did you hear both Chinese and jazz musical traditions? Could you hear each distinctly or were they more blended together into something different?
- ⦿ How do travel and migration affect creativity?
- ⦿ What do you think of government or political interventions in art?

THE PIPA

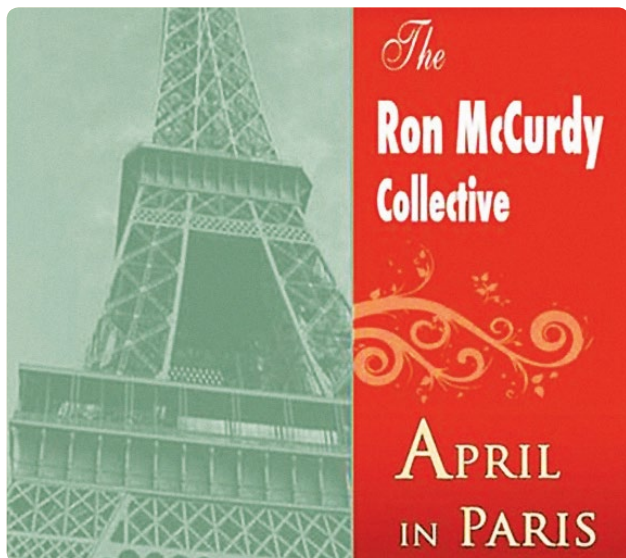
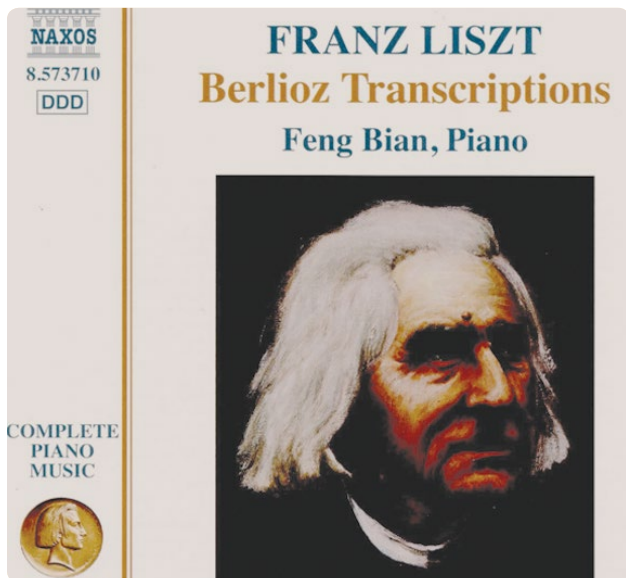
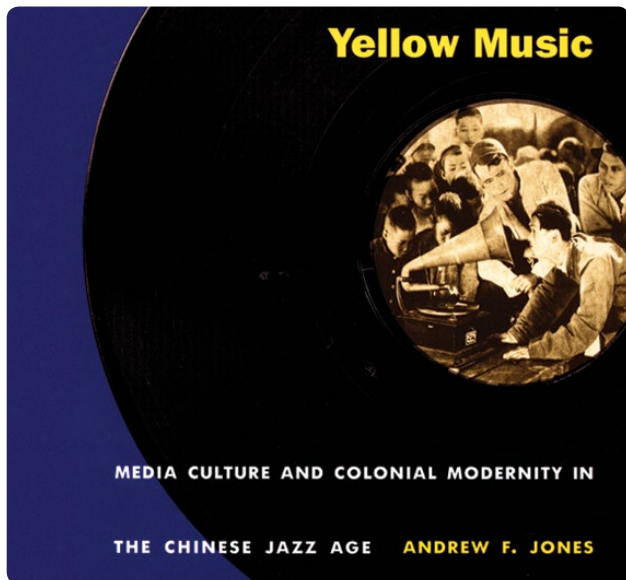
A pipa is a short-necked, four-string Chinese instrument. It dates back to the second century. The modern pipa has 29 or 31 frets. The name of the instrument is derived from finger techniques: *pi* for plucking forward, and *pa* for plucking backward. The pipa is sometimes called a Chinese lute.



Zhou Xuan



Harlem Gentlemen



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- ⦿ USC Thornton School of Music Events
<https://music.usc.edu/events>
- ⦿ Catalina Bar and Grill
<http://www.catalinajazzclub.com>
- ⦿ bluewhale
<http://www.bluewhalemusic.com>
- ⦿ Zebulon
<http://zebulon.la>

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PRINTED MATERIALS

- ⦿ Cybriwsky, Roman. "Shanghai's Dancing World: Cabaret Culture and Urban Politics, 1919–1954." *Pacific Affairs* 84:3 (2011): 562–564.
AVAILABLE DIGITALLY VIA JSTOR AND PROQUEST
- ⦿ Jones, Andrew. *Yellow Music Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age*. Duke University Press, 2001.
AVAILABLE AS AN E-BOOK
- ⦿ Lewis, John. "Ice-T and Ron McCurdy Review: A Raging, Inspired Revival That Would Make Langston Hughes Proud." *The Guardian*, November 22, 2015.
AVAILABLE DIGITALLY VIA GALE CENGAGE
- ⦿ Shields, Gary. *Harpichord Concerto*. Presented in partial fulfillment of Master's Degree, University of Southern California, 2009.
AVAILABLE VIA USC DIGITAL LIBRARY

SOUND RECORDINGS

- ⦿ Bian, Feng. *Franz Liszt: Berlioz Transcriptions*. Naxos, 2017.
AVAILABLE DIGITALLY VIA NAXOS MUSIC LIBRARY
- ⦿ Ron McCurdy Collective. *April in Paris*. Ron McCurdy, 2011.
MUSIC LIBRARY: CD 21550MUS AND DIGITALLY VIA NAXOS JAZZ
- ⦿ Ron McCurdy Quintet. *Once Again for the First Time*. Innova, 2002.
MUSIC LIBRARY: CD 21553MUS
- ⦿ Min, Xiao-Fen et al. *Min Xiao-Fen with Six Composers*. Avant, 1998.
MUSIC LIBRARY: CD 10568MUS