

Zhou Tian

BIOGRAPHY

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Described as “absolutely beautiful” and “utterly satisfying” (Fanfare), the works of Chinese-born American composer **Zhou Tian** (JOH TEE-en) have been performed by leading orchestras and performers in the United States and abroad, such as the Pittsburgh Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Houston Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic, RTÉ National Symphony (Ireland), pianist Yuja Wang, flutist Jeffrey Khaner, guitarist Jason Vieaux, violist Roberto Díaz, Arditti and Dover string quartets, Empire Brass, Eroica Trio, and Tanglewood Festival Chorus. His newest orchestral work, “Concerto for Orchestra,” described as “stunning,” “tonal and engaging” (The Cincinnati Enquirer), was commissioned by the Cincinnati Symphony and premiered in its 2015-16 season finale, conducted by Music Director Louis Langrée. The work was recently released in the orchestra’s latest recording “Concertos for Orchestra.”

Critically acclaimed for his lush and distinctive musical voice, Zhou’s recent commissions include “Trace,” (“Lush, neo-impressionistic” —The Cincinnati Enquirer), by the Cincinnati Symphony, conducted by Mei-Ann Chen; Violin Concerto (“Magical...this is new music I’d love to hear again and again.” —Palm Beach Arts Paper), by the Atlantic Classical Orchestra, conducted by Stewart Robertson and featuring violinist Caroline Goulding; “First Sight” by the Minnesota Orchestra, conducted by Sarah Hicks; “A Thousand Years of Good Prayers,” (“Exquisite, thoroughly successful”—the Examiner), by the Green Bay Symphony, conducted by Christoph Campestrini; and “Red Trees, Wrinkled Cliffs,” by the Curtis Institute for its concert tour around the world led by Grammy-winning guitarist Jason Vieaux and president Roberto Díaz.

One of Zhou’s biggest interests is to seek inspirations from different cultures and mix them seamlessly into to one musically satisfying package. His 2016-17 season, for example, includes works as diverse as “Broken Ink,” a 30-minute, multi-movement meditation on Song Dynasty poetry premiered by Princeton Symphony under Rossen Milanov; “Petals of Fire,” a fierce rhapsody inspired by American artist Cy Twombly’s 1989 painting, premiered by Michigan State University Wind Symphony under Kevin

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Sedatole at the 2017 CBDNA National Convention; and “Viaje” (Spanish for voyage) for flute and strings, of which the Philadelphia Inquirer wrote “[it] fused the composer's Chinese American sensibility with the lore of ancient Spain so convincingly that the exotic flute solos for Stillman sounded like the most natural thing in the world.”

His “The Grand Canal,” a kaleidoscopic large-scale work mixing together two traditional Chinese instrumentalists (erhu and ruan), a Chinese opera singer, and a full symphony orchestra with an optional chorus, was performed during a nationally televised celebration of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. The work was also selected as a theme at 2010 Shanghai World Expo, and received its US premiere by Princeton (NJ) and Columbus (OH) symphonies, conducted by Rossen Milanov.

Other noted orchestral performances have come from the Pittsburgh Symphony conducted by Daniel Meyer, the Minnesota Orchestra and Osmo Vänskä, Houston Symphony and Christoph Köenig, the Indianapolis Symphony and Christoph Eberle, Hong Kong Philharmonic and Rossen Milanov, RTÉ National Symphony (Ireland) and Jiamin Song, Reno Philharmonic and Laura Jackson, Spokane Symphony and Eckart Preu, Winston-Salem Symphony and Matthew Troy, Hawaii Symphony and Sarah Hicks, Asheville Symphony and Daniel Meyer, Curtis Symphony and Benjamin Shwartz, and American Composers Orchestra conducted by Paul Dunkel.

Zhou’s music has been performed repeatedly at prestigious venues around the world such as Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C., National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing, Seiji Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood Festival, Ecoles d'Art Américaines de Fontainebleau in France, Usedomer Musikfestival in Germany, and Mozarteum Brasileiro in Brazil. He has served as composer-in-residence with the Green Bay Symphony and Chicago's Music In the Loft Concert Series. His works have been broadcast on NPR, PBS, and recorded on Cedille, Innova, Fanfare Cincinnati, Archimusic, and Pacific records.

Among Zhou’s many awards and honors are first prize in the Washington International Competition for Composers, first prize in the ASCAP/Lotte Lehmann Art Song Competition, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra Glick Award, the Minnesota Orchestra

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Composers Institute, Symphony in C Composers Award, American Composers Orchestra Underwood Readings, Presser Music Award, three ASCAP Morton Gould awards, and an Excellence Award of Large Symphonic Work in the 16th Musical Composition Award given (every five years) by the Ministry of Culture of China. In 2013, the recording of his String Quartet No. 2 “The Great Wall” was nominated for the Best Classical Album and won Best Instrumental Performance at the “Chinese Grammy” –the Golden Melody Awards. His recording of “The Grand Canal” was included in the 100 Important Audio and Video Publications of 2009 by General Administration of Press and Publication of China, and exhibited at MIDEM, the world’s leading international event for the music industry in Cannes, France. Many of his commissions were supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Born in 1981 in Hangzhou, China, Zhou holds music degrees from the Curtis Institute of Music (B.M.), the Juilliard School (M.M.) and USC Thornton School of Music (D.M.A.). He studied composition with Jennifer Higdon, Christopher Rouse, Stephen Hartke, Richard Danielpour, and Donald Crockett, and held composition fellowships from Tanglewood Music Center, Aspen Music Festival, Henri Mancini Institute, and American Conservatory at Fontainebleau. He taught at Colgate University since 2011, and joined Michigan State University College of Music as associate professor of composition in 2016. Visit ZhouTianMusic.com for more.

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REVIEW QUOTATIONS

- “Absolutely beautiful,” “Utterly satisfying” — *Fanfare*
- “He is unafraid of monumental gestures, but at the same time he wastes nothing, whether notes or our time itself. There are always touches of fine craftsmanship...The strings' luster made me wish I could stop writing and just listen.”
— *American Record Guide*
- “Stunning,” “tonal and engaging” — *The Cincinnati Enquirer*
- “Lush, neo-impressionistic...it made for one of the most creative – and most enjoyable – concerts heard at Music Hall this season. — *The Cincinnati Enquirer*
- “Masterful new [violin] concerto.” “The solo violin plays with soaring melodic loveliness...the effect was magical.” “This is new music I’d love to hear again and again. It is a minor masterpiece.” — *Palm Beach Arts Paper*
- “The first half of the evening [at the Houston Symphony] was an unqualified success. Zhou Tian's attractive *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers* effectively communicated the goals of the composer, which he eloquently and succinctly described from stage. Zhou's harmonic language and orchestration mix Ravel and Barber with a hint of his native China, albeit without the edgy grit of Chen Yi or flamboyant theatricality of Tan Dun. Still, the piece feels first and foremost like an honest musical utterance, which is important in today's day and age. Unabashedly tonal, with a true sense of tension and resolution, the arc of the piece convinces through and through. This is an impressive essay from a 30-year old composer, and Zhou Tian is certainly a compositional voice to watch.” — *ConcertoNet*
- “Not only masterfully crafted but a true masterpiece” — *Classical Voice of New England*
- “An exquisite piece,” “Zhou says he 'wanted to write a piece to convey a sense of spiritual bliss.' In this effort he was thoroughly successful.” — *The Examiner*
- “Evocative” — *Houston Chronicle*
- “Mesmerizing” — *New York Concert Review*
- “Delicate, lyrical, and beautiful” — *Classical Candor*

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