

Xu Ke and Tokyo String Quintet to hold “exotic, fantastical and mysterious” strings crossover party

An extraordinary strings crossover party with the "Paganini of the erhu world" and top-notch chamber musicians from Tokyo will be held in December, featuring erhu master Xu Ke and the Tokyo String Quintet. The event is part of the Music Delight Series presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department.

Music critic Li Meng has hailed the concert as one that brings out diversity in crossovers. "The setting with five string instruments is already complicated enough, but the five artists are not satisfied with this," she said. "In the upcoming concert, erhu player Xu Ke will join them in exploring the question: what kind of varied and layered music will they make when they play six string instruments together?"

Li added, "The pieces especially arranged for erhu and chamber ensemble will lead the audience into an exotic, fantastical and mysterious realm. With no limits imposed, the musicians freely choose their repertoire and 'perform old songs in new ways', savouring the timeless beauty of the instruments and distinctive poetics both old and new in the changing melodies."

Erhu master Xu Ke graduated with distinction from the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing in 1982 and is heralded by the media as "another Heifetz" and the "Paganini of the erhu world". Xu has developed unique and innovative bowing techniques, artificial harmonics in high positions and double-stopping, significantly enriching the huqin's potential for new applications.

In 1993, Xu became the first Chinese huqin musician to sign an exclusive contract with international record company Bertelsmann Music Group, and released albums under RCA Records. He was also the music director of the NHK documentary "Resurrected Tower of the Sun" on Taro Okamoto. He has performed with several world-class orchestras as a soloist including the Philharmonisches Streichquintett Berlin, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Czech Philharmonic Octet. Xu was also a guest professor at the Central Conservatory of Music and is currently a guest professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and the Senzoku Gakuen College of Music in Japan.

Members of the quintet include Akihiro Miura (First Violin/Concertmaster of the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra), Mari Togami (Second Violin/Principal of the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra), Atsuko Aoki (Viola Principal of the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra), Tatsuki Watanabe (Cello Principal of the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra) and Ippei Kitamura (Double Bass of the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra).

The concert by Xu Ke and the Tokyo String Quintet will be staged at 8pm on December 14 (Saturday) at the Auditorium, Tsuen Wan Town Hall. Tickets priced at \$120, \$180 and \$220 are now available at URBTIX (www.urbtix.hk).

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