



NAXOS

Xiaogang YE

The Macau Bride
(Ballet Suite)

Four Poems of Lingnan

Shi Yijie, Tenor

Macau Youth Choir

Macau Orchestra

Lü Jia

Xiaogang Ye (b. 1955)

The Macau Bride – Ballet Suite, Op. 34 • Four Poems of Lingnan, Op. 62



Born on 23rd September 1955, Xiaogang Ye is regarded as one of the leading contemporary Chinese composers. From 1978 until 1983, he studied at the Central Conservatory of Music, China, where he was later appointed Resident Composer and Lecturer. From 1987 he studied at the Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, New York. He has been taught by, amongst others, Minxin Du, Samuel Adler, Joseph Schwantner, Louis Andriessen and Alexander Goehr. Since 1993, he has divided his time between Beijing and Exton, Pennsylvania.

Xiaogang Ye's oeuvre comprises symphonic works, chamber music for various instruments and stage works, as well as film music. He has received numerous prizes and awards, among them the 1982 Alexander Tcherepnin prize, the 1986 Japan Dance Star Ballet prize, and awards from the Urban Council of Hongkong (1987-94), the Taiwan Symphony Orchestra (1992), the China Cultural Promotion Society (1993), the Li Foundation, San Francisco (1994) and the Chinese National Symphony Orchestra (1996). He was a fellow of the Metropolitan Life Foundation and the Pennsylvania Council of the Arts in 1996 and of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation in 2012.

In August 2008 Xiaogang Ye's piano concerto *Starry Sky* was premiered during the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Beijing by Lang Lang. Accompanied by dance and light shows, the live broadcast was watched by 3 billion people worldwide.

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Xu Xin (1944-2013)

Born in Shanghai, Xu Xin was a graduate of the Department of Cinematography and Fine Arts at the Beijing Film Academy and in recent years had held an important position in the cultural life of Macau. He frequently participated in national and international seminars, and published numerous articles on matters related to Macau, where he served as Chinese editor to the Macau Government Cultural Institute. His work for the cinema includes the script of a film on the Macau-born composer Xian Xinghai (2009).

The Macau Bride – Ballet Suite (2001)

The ballet (or dance-drama) *The Macau Bride* was commissioned by the Cultural Institute of the Macau SAR Government. In four acts (I: Prosperity in Macau; II: Pictures of Portugal; III: Storm at Sea; IV: Marriage), it is based on a story set in seventeenth-century Macau and Portugal, in which a Chinese sailor Chon Kou and a Portuguese captain's daughter Maria do Mar fall in love. The ballet had its première in 2001 at the XII Macau Arts Festival when it was directed, to great acclaim, by the distinguished Chinese ballet-master Ying E Ding. A year later the composer extracted two suites from the ballet for concert use, which have been performed many times and enthusiastically received in Macau and other cities in China. The *Suite* heard on this recording is drawn from

both the original and the two published suites.

After an overture suggesting the dangers of the sea, the ballet opens in Macau, a city enjoying prosperity and the protection of the goddess A-Ma, patroness of sailors. A Portuguese ship, the Santiago, loads its treasures, rich wares from China to be taken back to Europe. A Macau-born Chinese sailor, Chon Kou, joins the crew. It is in Portugal at Belém, from where ships set sail for the East, that Chon Kou first sees Maria do Mar and the two fall in love, and sail together, heading for Macau. The third act brings a storm and attack by pirates, who seize Maria do Mar, but the final act brings rescue and marriage in Macau. The ballet programme is accompanied by a broad outline of the narrative, the work of the writer Xu Xin, who played an important part in recent years in the cultural life of Macau, where he had settled. The poem by Xu Xin is given in an English translation by Marie Imelda MacLeod.

Return to Sea ① is taken from the opening of Act III, as the Chinese sailor Chon Kou sails on his long journey home, taking with him Maria do Mar. The second movement, *Blessings and Devotion* ②, from Act I, reflects something of the prosperity of Macau as a trading centre for East and West. *First Encounter* ③ and *The First Glance* ④ depict the meeting of Chon Kou and Maria do Mar, the Portuguese captain's daughter, in Portugal, where Act II is set. *Barra Docks* ⑤ is a harbour on the Macau coast, overlooked by the Temple of A-Ma. The movement opens Act I of the ballet, set in Macau. *Gentle Moments* ⑥, from Act II, reflects the love of Chon Kou and Maria do Mar in Portugal. It is followed by an additional depiction of *Maria do Mar* ⑦. *Unbending Loyalty* ⑧ moves to Act III, where the steadfast Maria do Mar is rescued by her lover from the pirates to whom she has fallen victim. *The Captain's Mansion* ⑨, from Act II, depicts the mansion in Portugal of Maria do Mar's father, captain of the Santiago. The suite ends, as does the ballet, with *Wedding Reception* ⑩, which finds the lovers at last united, married at the great Macau Church of St Paul.

The Macau Bride: Ballet Scenario

by Xu Xin (1944-2013)
(English translation by Marie Imelda MacLeod)

Overture

The sea winds
Ruffle the ancient charts;
The shipping route yearns to resist
The fury of towering waves.

Seagulls fall in with the bleached sails
Calling tales of loves untold;
The silk route cutting through the seas
Casts its memories yet on Macau.

Act I: Prosperity in Macau

The Goddess A-MA
Pulls her protective web around Macau's harbour.

The sea breeze rallies behind
Her vast compassionate soul;
The sun's rays cast a glow
Of beauty and kindness;
Sacred incense wafts up
From the worship of believers;
Red joss sticks light
The desires of ardent followers.

Prayers murmured
Offered up to A-MA:
Patroness of seafarers
Bless us on our way.

Sumptuous silks from Suzhou unravel and fall in folds.
Tea from the dragon's well releases its heady aroma.
Porcelain from Jing De Zheng dazzles in its delicacy.

Afar the sails of a Portuguese ship unfurl,
Coins of Spanish silver tinkle
Against the Arab's golden cash.

Centuries have come and gone
Tides have swelled and ebbed
Yet China's strength has endured
And Macau's prosperity prevailed.

Winds blown from Europe
Opened up the gates to A-Ma's temple
Rainwater falling from Asian skies
Filled the cool depths of Lilau Fountain.

Tides swirl around the Inner Harbour
Lapping at the departing ships.

Chon Kou, a Macau-born sailor
Joins the Portuguese captain
Embarking on the Santiago.
Creating a golden bridge
Between Asia and Europe.

Act II: Pictures of Portugal

Chon Kou, a handsome Chinese lad,
His body toned to its prime,
His will cast in iron
His thoughts as deep as the sea
And a passion fired with desire.

Maria do Mar, a charming Portuguese girl
Her eyes as blue as the heavens,
Her body as soft as a cloud,
Her soul as bright as a glistening pool
Her smile as radiant as the sun.

A chance encounter at Belém
And the two are caught in love.
One flame reaches out to the other.

Under a ceiling of glittering stars,
Summer stands in awe:
Chon Kou's gaze falls on fertile ground
Maria do Mar's heart is quick to respond.

Thunder and lightning
Come hand in hand
Too late to turn back in hindsight.

Under the silvery light of the moon
Summer stands in awe:
Chon Kou's heart
Is lost amongst the flowers
Growing in the garden of Maria do Mar's home.

A soft melody played on harp and flute
A poem pencilled in the sand,
Complicity heightening desire.

A girl in love
Feeds her feelings by day
And caresses her longings by night.
Hidden in a chest,
She sails to the Orient with her lover.

Love, the essence of life,
A flourishing sun. Night raises
A glass of wine reflecting the stars.

Act III: Storm at Sea

Storms destroy the mast and sails
A furious sea rocks the ship.
Pirates covet her precious cargo
And the beauty of the stowaway.

When greed goes unfettered
Peace at sea is shattered.
The captain seeks to reverse the rudder...
But now it is too late.

Act IV: Marriage

Black clouds crush sea and skies,
The girl pushed to the edge of darkness,
Around her a dreadful hush
Calls up the terrors of hell.

Breaking the silence,
The poor girl's sobs
Echo in the shadowy cave.

Maria do Mar, loyal, unswerving
Holds her light aloft,
Hankering after a deeper corner in her heart.

Passion boils the blood,
Passion girds the loins.

Thunder peals like a war drum
Lightning cuts like a honed sword.
Chon Kou is ready to pounce
In his struggle to regain Maria do Mar.

Love fears nothing.
Love is a weapon invincible.
Two lovers in a single embrace
Dissolve in happiness
Under a starlit sky.

Maria do Mar, a milky lotus-flower
Her roots in a distant land
Blooms in the city of the Name of God.

Out of the mud came exquisite beauty.
Out of the peril sprang love anew.

A ship, its cargo passion
Wrecked by blood and fire,
Sails across the vast China Seas.

Maria do Mar's kisses burn
Through Chon Kou's lips
The Hot Tears of a loving mother
Clasping her children to her.

The port of A-Ma
Has always been a cradle of peace
Generation after generation.

The majesty of Saint Paul's Church
Towers over myriad steps.

The light tones of a suona
Accompany the overflowing cup,
A red sedan chair
Pristine wedding gown
And a festive atmosphere.

Chon Kou and Maria do Mar, their hands clasped
Ascend the steps of Saint Paul's Church
To the clamorous joy of Macau's folk, one and all.

Four Poems of Lingnan (2011)

Xiaogang Ye's *Four Poems of Lingnan*, Op. 62, completed in 2011, was commissioned by the Cultural Affairs Bureau of Macau and the Macau Orchestra. Scored for tenor and large orchestra, the work provides settings of four poems about Lingnan, a region of Southern China south of the Five Ridges. The poems were selected from the rich store of Chinese classical poetry written in, respectively, the Tang, Song, Ming and Qing dynasties. The settings express the intention of the composer to add a new dimension to the ancient masterpieces that would reflect the passionate aspirations of artists in today's China towards a break with established conventions.

**Notes supplied by the Cultural Institute
of the Macau SAR Government**

11 I. **Bidding Farewell to a Friend
South of the Five Ridges**
by Li Ying (Tang Dynasty)

The overlapping mountains of old Jiaozhou,
Late in the year I pity you who ride alone.
Xie meets a simple girl by the seashore,
While the Emperor Yue sees a green cow
at the watering-place.
Gorillas cry at the raised ridges
when the moon shines until dawn,
The autumn is embraced by smoke
at the stone-built room.

Looking back at Changan five thousand li away,
One should not feel nostalgia
under the thorny phoenix flower.

12 II. **The Best for Huizhou**
by Su Shi (Song Dynasty)

Under the Luofu Mountain all seasons are spring,
Mandarins and plums will ripen in turn.
I take three hundred lychees each day,
And would not mind staying in Lingnan,
south of the peaks.

13 III. **Bidding Farewell to Li Meizhou**
by Zhang Qiao (Ming Dynasty)

Rain in spring has caused tides to rise a hundred chi,
The fair sail will not fear the raised river level.
The agile swallows can chase one another,
But shrieks are afraid of flying westward.

14 IV. **Ascending the Zhenhai Tower at Chongyang Day**
by Chen Gongyin (Qing Dynasty)

When I empty the wine-flask I need to be drunk
by the trailing fence,
Climbing to the balcony in autumn
one grows to feel a hero.
The five summits from the north lie firmly on the ground,
And at the southern end of the nine boundaries
water seems to be floating on sky.
Chrysanthemums open their petals
displaying a yellow colour like wine,
Wind blows through pine trees and rustles like a fountain.
When one's hair grows white at Chongyang Day
one can only smile,
It is too much to be nostalgic and to question
mountains and rivers.

English versions by Lam Ching Wah

The Chinese texts can be accessed at
www.naxos.com/libretti/573131.htm

Shi Yijie



Born in Shanghai, the tenor Shi Yijie began his vocal studies in his native city and graduated with top marks at the Toho College of Music in Tokyo. After having won a fellowship offered by Toho Postgraduate School of Music, he moved to Europe to continue his studies in Graz. He has won several international vocal competitions, including the Graz 'Ferruccio Tagliavini' International Singing Competition, the Toti dal Monte International Competition in Treviso in 2007, the Festspielstadt Passau Competition and, also in 2007, the Maria Caniglia International Singing Competition in Sulmona. He has achieved considerable success in leading Rossini rôles in Pesaro and has already appeared at major international opera-houses, including the Metropolitan Opera of New York, the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome, the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Florence, the Teatro San Carlo, Naples, the Teatro La Fenice, Venice, the Teatro Comunale, Bologna, and at theatres in Spain, France, Holland and South America, in a career of growing distinction.

Liu Mingyan



Liu Mingyan obtained her Master's Degree from the Conducting Department of the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, majoring in choral conducting. During her studies, she worked with the celebrated conductor and performer Yang Hongnian. She obtained a Bachelor's Degree, majoring in Voice at the Music Education Department of the China Conservatory under the instruction of Zhang Chou. She is currently a vocal music instructor and a choral conductor of the School of Music of the Macau Conservatory.

Macau Youth Choir



Established in 2004, the Macau Youth Choir is a student choral group, formed through a joint initiative between the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau and the Cultural Affairs Bureau. Since 2006, the Choir has been run by the Conservatory of Macau and provides systematic education in basic music combined with choral training and performance practice. The Choir aims to improve its members' musical competence and aesthetic sensibilities and to enrich their extracurricular cultural life. The choir is also dedicated to promoting Macau's cultural heritage to an increasing number of people around the world.

Macau Orchestra



of the arts, education and promotion that epitomizes the high priority afforded by the Macau SAR to enhancing the cultural environment of local residents, particularly teenagers.

The Macau Orchestra is a professional ensemble organized under the auspices of the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macau Special Administrative Region Government. Since 1989, the Orchestra has performed every year at the Macau International Music Festival (MIMF) and Macau Arts Festival (MAF), gradually becoming the nucleus of these two major cultural events. Through its refined performance style and high quality concerts, the Orchestra has become a symbol of Macau's prosperity as an international cultural city. It has worked with dozens of internationally renowned musicians and conductors and is also dedicated to activities related to arts education by targeting audiences of different age groups. All of this has gradually helped to shape an integrated system

Lü Jia



He is also the Artistic Director of the Peking Opera Academy of Beijing University and Guest Professor of the Xiamen Institute of Science and Technology of Huaqiao University. Since September 2008 he has been Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Macau Orchestra.

Born into a musical family in Shanghai, Lü Jia began studying piano and cello with his parents at a very young age. He later studied conducting at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. Under the instruction of Zheng Xiaoying, he graduated at the top of his class one year early, in 1987. Two years later, he went to Germany's Berlin University of the Arts, where he continued his studies under Hans-Martin Rabenstein and Robert Wolf. Lü Jia has conducted 2,000 concerts and operas in Europe and the Americas, has cooperated with more than a hundred opera houses and orchestras, and was the first Chinese conductor to lead the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In September 1989 he won first prize and the Judges' Prize at the Antonio Pedrotti International Conducting Competition in Italy, which lay the foundations of his international conducting career. Lü Jia has been the Principal Conductor of the Trieste Opera, the Orchestra della Toscana (Regional Orchestra of Tuscany), the Lazio Chamber Orchestra, Rome, and of the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra. He has also been a frequent guest conductor with the Hallé Orchestra, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the Dortmund Opera House, and the Milan Giuseppe Verdi Symphony Orchestra. He is currently Music Director of the Arena di Verona, and Artistic Director of the Tenerife Symphony Orchestra.

The recipient of numerous prestigious awards, Xiaogang Ye is regarded as one of today's leading Chinese composers. *The Macau Bride* is a colourful and evocative ballet based on a story from the 17th century in which Chinese sailor Chon Kou and Portuguese captain's daughter Maria do Mar fall in love following a chance encounter in Belém. They set sail for Macau, survive a storm and an attack by pirates, and are finally reunited and married in Macau. The *Four Poems of Lingnan* come from the classical literature of ancient Chinese dynasties, the songs adding powerful new dimensions to ancient masterpieces.

XIAOGANG YE

(b. 1955)

The Macau Bride – Ballet Suite, Op. 34 (2001)*	39:43	Four Poems of Lingnan, Op. 62 (2011)**	18:13
❶ I. Return to Sea	3:42	❶ No. 1 Bidding Farewell to a Friend to the South of the Five Ridges	5:23
❷ II. Blessings and Devotion	3:09	❷ No. 2 The Best for Huizhou	3:29
❸ III. First Encounter	1:33	❸ No. 3 Bidding Farewell to Li Meizhou	4:13
❹ IV. The First Glance	3:01	❹ No. 4 Ascending the Zhenhai Tower at Chongyang Day	5:08
❺ V. Barra Docks	4:07		
❻ VI. Gentle Moments	6:58		
❼ VII. Maria do Mar	3:51		
❽ VIII. Unbending Loyalty	5:42		
❾ IX. The Captain's Mansion	4:16		
❿ X. Wedding Reception	3:25		

WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING

Shi Yijie, Tenor • Liu Mingyan, Mezzo-soprano***
Macau Youth Choir* • Macau Orchestra • Lü Jia

English translations of the Chinese sung texts can be found inside the booklet,
and may also be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/573131.htm

Recorded at Shenzhen Concert Hall, Shenzhen, Guangdong, China, from 4th to 7th July, 2011
Producer: Jakob Händel • Engineer: Andreas Werner • Editors: Jakob Händel and Gerhard Betz
Production assistants*: Zou Hang, Chen Dan, Zhao Li, Liu Chenchen, Cong Xinzhu
Publisher: Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG

Booklet notes: Cultural Institute of the Macau SAR Government
Cover illustration by Dr Ung Vai Meng and Kent Ieong