



Silk Baroque Wu Wei  
Holland Baroque



# Silk Baroque

## J. Steenbrink (1977) / G.Ph. Telemann (1681-1767)

1 What about some bells 7. 21

## J.Ph. Rameau (1683-1764)

2 Tristes Apprêts 6. 31

## J. Steenbrink after Melante

3 Polonois Chinois 2. 53

## Chinese traditional

4 Pferderennen 1. 52

## A. Vivaldi (1678-1741)

5 La Follia 9. 14

## J. Steenbrink / J.Ph. Rameau

6 Prelude for Prelude 2. 02

## J.F. Rebel (1666-1747)

7 Chaos for Wu Wei 3. 17

8 Improvisation (for my father - Wu Wei) 5. 17

## G.Ph. Telemann

9 Harlequinade 0. 45

## G.Ph. Telemann

10 Sey Tausenmahl Willkommen 3. 06

## J. Steenbrink

11 Silk Rondeau (for Maite) 3. 10

## J.M. Leclair l'Ainé (1697-1764)

12 Gavotte 3. 52

## Chinese traditional

13 Dancing song of the Yao Tribe 10. 08

## J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

14 Andante 5. 24

## Chinese traditional

15 Abendmusik 3. 02

Total playing time: 68. 00

Arrangements by Judith and Tineke Steenbrink

## Holland Baroque

Wu Wei, sheng

## Musicians Silk Baroque

Wu Wei Sheng, *Bawu, Erhu*

Judith Steenbrink, Katarina Aleksić, Chloe Prendergast, Anna Jane Lester,

Filip Rekieć, Katarzyna Cendlak, Emma Williams *Violin*

Emma van Schoonhoven, Joseph Tan *Viola*

Tomasz Pokrzywinski *Violoncello*

Michał Bąk *Double bass*

Christoph Sommer *Lute*

Tineke Steenbrink *Harpsichord, Organ*

Matteo Rabolini *Percussion*

Sojeong Im *Soprano*

### Artistic leaders

Judith and Tineke Steenbrink



## Good things stay, new things come

By Judith and Tineke Steenbrink,  
the artistic team of Holland Baroque

### The sheng, a magical miracle of harmony

You are looking at a musical encounter between Wu Wei and Holland Baroque, playing a programme influenced by both eastern and western music. Wu Wei has brought his sheng, an extraordinary ancient Chinese mouth organ, which looks like a bundle of bamboo reeds, cased in a metal bowl. The sheng is a miracle of harmony, melody and rhythmic possibilities. However, it was not Wu Wei's instrument that inspired us to create this album, it was Wu Wei himself. Like a siren, his magical playing enchants audience and musician alike. Wu Wei's abilities bring out the sheng's beauty: whispering, charming, and compelling. Get ready to be enthralled.

### How it all started, the first encounter

We met Wu Wei for the first time at Amsterdam Central Station. Timidly, we drank a cup of green tea and talked a little. We were too shy to get the conversation started, but then Wu Wei said, "Come, I will play you something." With his eyes closed he played like an angel, sometimes silky soft and sometimes mind-blowingly energetic. We were moved and overwhelmed at the same time; this moment of sheer joy stunned us. Wu Wei played so fluently and powerfully that his sound seemed to arise directly from the baroque and at the same time he improvised in an inimitable way. It was abundantly clear that he is a great musician. Effortlessly, he navigated between centuries and continents. One year later, we met in Potsdam. At the invitation of a luthier friend, we played together in a summer house by a lake for two days. Once in a while, the luthier would walk in to listen. We tried out some compositions, explored each other's ideas, and had a wonderful time. It was an idyllic

meeting in which the music dispelled the shyness between us. It got easier to talk; a little bit of English, a little bit of German. All in all, we understood each other just fine, but gradually talking became unnecessary because we connected on a musical level.

### Repertoire

The programme began to take shape as both sides contributed compositions. We looked at the material from all angles: how does the sheng fit with Rameau and Leclair, and much more importantly, do the composers fit Wu Wei? He showed a great preference for some compositions, for instance *Tristes Apprêts* from *Castor et Pollux* by Rameau. It was a perfect fit the first time we played it and it stayed that way ever since. We kept searching: is there room for improvisation? And if so, where exactly? At the same time, we started to gain more knowledge about the Chinese repertoire, the music with which Wu Wei was raised.

Judith Steenbrink writes:

"On a trip to Shanghai, I listened to classical Chinese orchestras, because I wanted to know how the composition structure of the orchestral sound was made. Remarkably, it sounded almost the same to me as western music, however different the classical Chinese orchestra may be. Traditional Chinese music is full of counterparts and bass lines, which make for a kind of classical sound."

However, due to the pentatonic scale, the typical Chinese tone sequence, classically orchestrated pieces still have their own unique sound. We started to orchestrate the pieces ourselves and found room for improvisation. The pentatonic scale became our friend. As time went by, we started to notice the delicacy and elegance of the eastern melodies even more. The more we became absorbed by it, the more beautiful it got.



**Cherish what needs to be kept, and be open to new sounds**

The result is an album with unprecedented sounds. On the one hand European baroque music, and on the other hand traditional Chinese music. Wu Wei is a contemporary musician who propagates an age-old tradition. He is one of today's most important sheng players worldwide. Just like Holland Baroque, Wu Wei is a guardian of ancient traditions and a sound innovator at the same time. It is not for nothing that his sheng case has a sticker on it that says: 'Gutes bleibt, Neues kommt' (good things stay, new things come); something Holland Baroque fully supports.

If the essence of baroque aesthetics is preserved, baroque can be found in many places. For instance, we recognized it in *Abendmusik*. This could have been a slow movement out of a solo concerto for oboe or harpsichord. With Wu Wei, baroque is not limited to the 18th century. It is about gesture, the way the notes take shape,

the sound architecture, each individual instrument, and the ensemble as a whole. Wu Wei and our baroque ensemble share the same love for phrasing, resonance, and expression. All these elements are our tribute to the 18th century.

**During recording**

The recording days were intense. Still, Wu Wei never appeared to be tired or tense. The ensemble was surprised by his almost unearthly attitude. Tineke Steenbrink pointed out the meaning of his name to us: literally, *wu wei* means "to not do". In Taoism, *wu wei* is often associated with the way water behaves. Although water flows and seemingly offers no resistance, it still has the power to crush mountains. Water is not solid, like stone or wood, it is able to go anywhere and can fill the smallest spaces. Water appears to do nothing, yet it does everything. The ultimate goal of *wu wei* is to strive for a balanced situation and thereby, gently and imperceptibly, come into harmony with yourself, others and with



your surroundings. Of course, the sheng magician did not tell us this himself, but we found out through who he is and how he plays music. We admire Wu Wei and thank him for his musicality, calmness and energy. We are warmed by his love for baroque music and inspired by his openness and the ease with which he plays out of this world in every possible situation.

### **Holland Baroque**

Holland Baroque is an original and innovative baroque orchestra. The musicians let their instruments sing, dance, cry, and laugh and use tradition, innovation, surprise, and a dash of entertainment in their work. Since they began in 2006, Holland Baroque has worked with many soloists, composers, choirs and theatre producers.

Encounters with soloists often result in warm friendships and unlock new worlds of sound. The easy blend of Eric Vloeimans' velvety sound with the cornetto shows us that baroque is now. This trumpet whisperer and Holland Baroque were awarded an Edison for their album Carrousel. Touring with piano virtuoso Leszek Możdżer proved that in a baroque orchestra the score can keep changing when the composer is improvising among the musicians. Cellist Giovanni Sollima has composed works for Holland Baroque, and in these he could not have written something more Neapolitan. Again this is a tribute to the past and at the



same time fresh and alive. Holland Baroque and Reinbert de Leeuw became close friends during their quest for his truth behind Bach's St Matthew Passion. Cherry Duyns made a documentary about this process, which was shown in cinemas for months. Bach in the cinema: a unique event.

Founders Tineke and Judith Steenbrink are the artistic team and beating heart of the ensemble. These baroque twins guard the ensemble's sound, create original programmes, and rewrite repertoire according to Holland Baroque's style. After years of musical encounters it is crystal clear to us: baroque can be found in many places. Baroque is now.

Holland Baroque has shared the stage with Lars Ulrik Mortensen, Hidemi Suzuki, Amandine Beyer, Nederlands Kamerkoor, Cappella Amsterdam, Radialsystem, Orkater, Marco Amsbrosini, Dorothee Miels, Aisslinn Nosky, Toshio Hosokawa, Nico Muhly, and many others.

### **Wu Wei**

Sheng virtuoso Wu Wei was born in China and studied the sheng (Chinese mouth organ) at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. In 1995 he received a DAAD scholarship to study at the Hans Eisler Music Academy in Berlin, where he is now based. Wu Wei is a professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, where he has been teaching since 2013. As a sheng soloist, he has helped to develop the ancient instrument into an innovative force in contemporary music through the creation of new techniques, the expansion of the instrument's repertoire and through the integration of different styles and genres.

In addition to many prestigious national and international competitions for traditional Chinese music, he won the 1996 and 2002 Musica Vitale Competition in Germany and the 2004 Global Root World Music Prize. As a soloist he has appeared with many of the world's leading



orchestras and ensembles in prestigious festivals and venues across the globe.

Wu Wei is a prolific composer for the sheng. He has received various composition commissions, such as the foundation Royaumont, "Musica Viva" Munich, the Hanse Culture Foundation, the Civitella Ranieri Foundation New York, and the Cultural Foundation Sachsen.



## Acknowledgments

### PRODUCTION TEAM

Executive producers **Judith Steenbrink, Tineke Steenbrink** (Holland Baroque) & **Kate Rockett** (PENTATONE)

Recording producer **Carl Schuurbiers**

Recording engineer **Jean-Marie Geijsen**

Liner notes **Judith & Tineke Steenbrink**

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Product Management **Kasper van Kooten**

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# HOLLAND BAROQUE

[hollandbaroque.com](http://hollandbaroque.com)

### PENTATONE TEAM

Vice President A&R **Renaud Loranger** | Director **Simon M. Eder**

A&R Manager **Kate Rockett** | Head of Marketing, PR & Sales **Silvia Pietrosanti**



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