

'Hearing China' – Shanghai, China 2016

I recently spent a week in Shanghai at the generous invitation of Ye Guohui and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. I joined 7 other composers from England, Poland, America and China as part of 'Hearing China 2016'. This was a very exciting and stimulating experience and I am very thankful to all those who made this incredible opportunity possible.

Each composer was given a traditional Chinese folk tune and asked to use it as an inspiration for an original orchestral work with a Chinese instrument soloist. I wrote for *Erhu* and based my piece on *A Xi* (Dance under the Moon). Writing this piece was both challenging and rewarding.

The week in Shanghai commenced with a rehearsal with our soloist, a workshop held at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music about traditional Chinese instruments, and a visit to a Chinese opera theatre.



Performers at the opera

Two days of rehearsals with the Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra, my soloist Zhong Xiaotian, and the conductor Zhang Liang followed. The orchestra, soloist and conductor were all exceptional musicians. It was a huge learning experience sitting in the rehearsals with the orchestra, observing how they approached the challenge of learning eight new contemporary works.



Rehearsal with the orchestra and soloist.

The week finished with a press conference, a rehearsal in the concert hall and the final concert at the Shanghai Symphony Hall. Listening to the performances of all the new works was fantastic, as everyone had approached their folk tune and the use of the soloist differently. I have never had an orchestral piece played at a concert like this before. It was an exciting and stimulating experience that expanded my comfort zones.



Rehearsal in the Shanghai Symphony Hall.



My partner, Harry, and I at the concert.

In addition to the musical experiences, the generous invitation also gave me the opportunity to explore the vibrant city of Shanghai. Shanghai is an exhilarating city and the people we met were friendly and helpful.

Everyone at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music was incredibly welcoming and supportive. I am very grateful for their generosity in hosting myself and all the other composers. I am also very appreciative for the support from Victoria University of Wellington, the Confucius Institute, and the Te Koki New Zealand School of Music. Furthermore I would like to express a huge thank you to Michael Norris, John Psathas, and Ken Young for all their time, feedback, and support during the writing process.

Regards,
Louisa Nicklin