

WIN! Acclaimed violinist Zhang Zhang chats about her upcoming show with the Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra



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Chinese violinist Zhang Zhang travels to Zhuhai this month with the prestigious Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra. Ahead of the concert, we sat down with her to discuss the role of classical music in the East versus in the West.

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Why has appreciation for classical music grown in China?

I think the media and Internet of recent years has had a positive impact. And the contribution of iconic musicians makes a difference, such as the grand master Liu Shih Kun who won a prize at the very first Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition in 1958. More recently, the superstardom of Lang Lang influenced the rise of a new generation of young people wanting to learn music.

Classical music is often seen as an elite interest in the West – do you think there is a risk of this in China?

I think the problem of 'elitism' lies in the way Classical Music is being presented and packaged. Music is a universal language; all humans have an instinct for it. Western classical music was created in Europe but it also belongs to all humanity, just like Chinese traditional music or Latin American and African Music. Each has something unique to offer. It is wonderful that we live in an era that we have the facility to access so much through modern technology.



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The best Chinese music students still go abroad to study at foreign universities and conservatories. What does China need to do to reverse this trend?

I think it is a very positive thing for music students from non-European countries to spend time in Europe. Just as any non-Chinese student studying Peking Opera would want to come to China to further their development. Music, as an art, reflects a specific culture's history, folklore, traditions, language and artistic expressions. The first time I went to Leipzig, I visited the Church where Bach used to work. Touching its stone walls made me feel connected to this rich musical heritage, a most memorable and moving experience.

There is a perception that China can create great soloists but not a first-rate orchestra, do you think this is a fair assessment?

We must keep in mind that the symphonic culture is very new to our country and it takes time to build an orchestra. China already has world class concert venues and conservatories; if we continue to invite world-class artistic directors and soloists to work with, regardless of nationality, I am certain China will be known not only for its brilliant soloists but also its orchestral ensembles.

Your father performed for Richard Nixon during his visit to China. Which leader would you most like to play to and why?

I always enjoy playing for Prince Albert [of Monaco] because he is a musician himself and knows many of the pieces we perform, which probably was not the case when my father performed for President Nixon. I doubt the president knew the themes to *The Red Detachment of Women* and *White Hair Girl*!

// May 17, 7.30pm, RMB180-880. [Shanghai Oriental Art Center, tickets.](#)

*****WIN!!!!*****

We have a pair of tickets to the Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra's concert. Simply e-mail win@urbanatomy.com with the subject 'Monte Carlo' by May 13 for your chance to win.